

The 'must-have' tourist experience:
An exploration of the motivations, expectations, experience and
outcomes of volunteer tourists in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Using consumerism as a lens, this qualitative study examines volunteering vacations with 'poor' children in Siem Reap, Cambodia by considering just *what* is being consumed in these popular tourist choices alongside those factors in contemporary 'First World' society that allow and encourage their consumption. Through the use of caring mantras such as 'change lives forever' and 'make a world of difference', vacation providers of what are considered to be a mass-niche product in the competitive global tourism marketplace, offer Siem Reap to potential consumers as one choice from an increasing range of 'Third World' destinations. However, using the concepts of commodification and objectification, I argue that it is the bodies of children that have become the commodities in these vacations, their lives and circumstances objectified as needy and available, in part to fulfil the vacation fantasies of holidaymakers who choose to use consumerism as both a vehicle for the enactment of their compassion, as well as the means by which to satisfy their own search for pleasure and reward. Furthermore, I also argue that privilege - often justified and taken-for-granted as a tool in the good-deed vacation tool-kit - works to obscure significant issues such as race, colonial continuities, global injustice and potential abuse. Through critically engaging volunteer tourism as commodity and consumption I have reframed the often asked questions around these vacations in order to offer a different commentary and perspective to these experiences. The research takes a longitudinal view of volunteer tourism in Siem Reap through the use of semi-structured interviews with potential and past consumers as well as interviews with and observations of vacationers in situ 'doing volunteering'. An exploration of the grey literature from both the commercial and not-for-profit sectors, as well as photographs, add to the arguments presented here.

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Chapter One

The story of how Europeans explored and colonised - and yes, without apology - civilised much of the world is an extraordinary tale of talent, skill and courage

- *Thatcher, 1988.*

Introduction to the study

Travelling to, what are often referred to as, 'Third world' countries for vacations that involve helping communities that are regularly described as 'poor and needy', are increasingly popular holiday choices available from a growing array of volunteer tourism options (Mowforth and Munt 1998; Sin 2009; Simpson 2004; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011). Volunteer experiences that particularly help 'poor and needy' children are common within this trend. Largely based at orphanages or poor schools and ranging from as little as a few hours, but typically around two to four weeks, short-term volunteer tourists are involved in a variety of projects that include taking or assisting with English language lessons; providing 'fun' opportunities for children or, helping with manual chores. Inspired by marketing mantras such as, 'make a world of difference'; 'change lives forever'; 'lift disadvantaged children out of poverty' (Frontier, 2012; Realgap, 2012), vacation providers (or sending agencies) generally sell volunteering experiences at settings where no specific skills or qualifications are required, less still Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) - formerly Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) - type checks or character references; these are holidays after all. However, what is commonly highlighted in the marketing and advertising, is the need for tourists to have 'bags' of enthusiasm; a willingness to 'get stuck in' (i-to-i, 2013; Hindle et al., 2003); a passion for children and, the desire to have lots of fun. These 'personal qualities', will ensure that tourists are able to get the most out of their volunteer vacation time (Jones, 2005). Volunteer vacations are now available in a wide choice of 'Third World' destinations that include countries in Africa, Asia and South America, as well as many regions of India (Mowforth and Munt 1998; Simpson 2004; Sin 2009; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011).

Many sending organisations are commercial enterprises, often branches of conventional tour operators (Morgan, 2010). For example *i-to-i Volunteering*, one of the U.K's largest volunteer vacation providers, is part of TUI Travel PLC whose

brands also include First Choice Holidays and Sovereign Luxury Travel (TUI Travel PLC, 2012). As such, and much like mainstream tourism, selecting and purchasing a volunteer vacation often begins with the simple act of turning on a computer in the 'First World'. Through appealing, easy to use websites, tour operators offer an array of choice from their drop-down selection menus; 'where would you like to go - Asia, Africa, India...'; 'what would you like to do – spend time with elephants (elephantstay, 2010); get involved with orphans (i-to-i, 2012); help the environment...' (latitude, 2012); 'how long would you like to go for'; 'how much would you like to spend'? (projects-abroad, 2012). After selection, final purchase and confirmation is made quick and easy by credit card technology. Alternatively, many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or charity projects offer 'walk-in' volunteering opportunities which tourists can arrange once they arrive in the region.

Cambodia in South East Asia is one such destination. Currently in recovery after decades of turmoil including civil war and isolation, the slow rate of post-conflict reconstruction and a complex move towards democratisation (Öjendal and Lilja 2009; Winter, 2006) means that today, much of the country remains in an impoverished state where systemic corruption affects health care, education, transport services and most basic amenities (Brinkley, 2011; Chheang, 2009). According to the World Bank Poverty Assessment (2006), despite some improvements in the ten years up to 2004, thirty-five percent of Cambodians still live below the national poverty line of just US\$0.61 per day (less than 0.50 GBP). 'The Kingdom of Wonder' (Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia, 2012) is nonetheless, experiencing a rapid expansion in its mainstream tourism sector; as Kaplan (1996) argues, "tourism... arises out of the economic disasters of other countries that make them "affordable" or subject to "development" (p:63). Catering to both the higher-end holiday market as well as to the budget or backpacking customer, airport extension contracts; hotel development; tourist facility expansion and infrastructure improvements have taken place in those areas visited by tourists - and in the case of road and waterway improvements, primarily to connect the main tourists locations (Chheang, 2009). The most popular tourist destination in the

country, Angkor Wat, lies close to the town of Siem Reap. The 'ancient and glorious' UNESCO World Heritage temple complex, now receives visitor numbers exceeding two million a year (Doherty, 2010). As Penny Edwards (2007) argues, in line with the then French protectorate's notion of monumental space, archaeologists and administrators "from the early 1900s, joined forces to convert Angkor into parkland that would appeal to European tourists" (p:126).

Siem Reap has, however, also emerged as an extremely popular destination for volunteer tourists, especially those wanting to spend time with children. Volunteering opportunities are offered by many of the sixty or so orphanages in and around the town (Horton, 2012). Taking advantage of the links that have been created between these child care establishments and elements of the tourist industry (UNICEF, 2011), an increasing number of (predominantly) white, 'First World', middle class, vacationers (Conran, 2011; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Mowforth and Munt 2009; Simpson, 2004; Wearing, 2001) are travelling to Siem Reap specifically to become part of this popular trend. Other tourists are tempted to make visits to projects, NGOs, orphanages or poor schools whilst in the town and perhaps become involved in volunteering activities as part of their overall vacation experience. As a consequence many projects are now heavily reliant on volunteer tourist fees and visitor donations (UNICEF, 2011) with the resultant pressure to continue to attract more tourists and ideally more paying volunteers. Indeed, competition is at times so keen that some orphanages offer tuk-tuk drivers commission to bring tourists to them (UNICEF, 2011); whilst numerous hotels offer reduced accommodation rates to vacationers involved in volunteering projects. However, as I will show the increasing popularity of volunteer tourism in Siem Reap not only speaks to the ability of the tourism industry to find new niche markets but, also signals ways in which the marketplace has become crucial to notions of development (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011).

Recently concerns have been raised (Horton, 2011; UNICEF, 2011; Friends-international, 2012) around the possible link between a seventy-five per cent increase in the number of "residential care facilities" (UNICEF, 2011, p:8) for

children in Cambodia and, what UNICEF describe as, “high levels of residential care tourism” (p:15) in towns such as Siem Reap. The report expresses concern that the increase in the number of these establishments - in a country that traditionally cares for “separated children through kinship networks” (UNICEF, 2011, p:62) - may have some relationship to the numbers of tourists looking to become part of the popular volunteer vacation trend. The report’s authors conclude that whilst “residential care has a negative impact on the development of children... as the law now stands, theoretically anyone can open a residential care centre” (p:65). There is, however, very little academic scholarship to support these particular concerns or other significant concerns around the increasingly popular trend in this town. As Harnng Luh Sin (2009) argues, there is “a critical need for research to provide a firm foundation for a deeper understanding of volunteer tourism – in both its positive and negative aspects” (p:48), .

Rationale and objectives

This qualitative study therefore seeks to understand more about volunteer tourism through a critical examination of the trend in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The research is important on the broadest level because, as history has shown, the best interests of children are not always served by decisions and actions made by adults on their behalf - and generally considered to be for their benefit and betterment. Hindsight provides contrary outcomes from, for example, The Foundling Hospital; child migration policies and wartime evacuation schemes. D’Arcy McNickle’s (1936) powerful short story *Train Time*, tells of Native American children being removed from their homes and families and taken to government run boarding schools where they were immersed in the values and practical knowledge of American society - for their own benefit and improvement. I was struck by the uneasy parallels between a number of the aims of the Americanisation policies as depicted in *Train Time* and, the enthusiasm to provide western-styled opportunities for ‘poor’ Cambodian children in foreign-run orphanages - with the willing support of volunteer tourists

I will argue that, whilst a volunteer vacation is often chosen for the best of intentions, at its core this popular tourist commodity requires that Cambodian children are objectified and commodified as 'charming but needy things' available for 'First World' tourist consumption. In scholarship from tourism, consumerism and feminist studies that considers the notion of the commodification of bodies (Desmond, 1999; Enloe, 2000; Sanchez Taylor, 2011; Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant, 2002), it has also been argued that, as a consequence of being objectified and commodified, people, when seen as bodies, "exist for the use and pleasure of others" (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p:175). I will show that volunteer vacations make use of the bodies, including the lives and circumstances, of children on a scale of intentions that range from genuine (although arguably distorted) gestures of compassion and a desire to see improvement, through to cynical drives for industry profit by way of the exploitation of both child as commodity and, volunteer tourist as enthusiastic consumer. I will argue that there is significantly more to be understood about these helpful vacation choices than their often, 'taken-for-grantedly', positive recognition. To this end, I situate the volunteer tourist trend within a framework of modern western consumerism.

From this broad rationale therefore, targeted research questions emerged and can be stated as:

What is really being consumed in the volunteer tourist experience and how do we consume it?

Who is doing the consuming and why?

How is volunteer tourism able/allowed to be consumed?

As a specific location of volunteer tourism, how significant are these questions to activity in Siem Reap, Cambodia?

In the broadest sense then, this study is about the commodity that is volunteer tourism; it is about the consumers who choose to purchase volunteer vacations in Siem Reap, Cambodia and, it is about factors that shape the consumption of this increasingly popular tourist trend in this increasingly popular volunteering

destination. In a call for “more balanced theories of consumption”, Ritzer, Goodman and Wiedenhof (2003) argue that in order to address both positive and negative characteristics of consumption, a broader range of concerns needs to be dealt with “including consumers, the objects consumed, sites of consumption and the process of consumption” (p:410). Here the volunteering experience will be examined as a commodity; modern consumerism and the centrality of consumption to contemporary culture (Trentmann, 2004), forming a substantial part of the theoretical framework of the research.

As I will show, examining volunteer tourism through the lens of consumption troubles the expressions of helpfulness and benevolence promoted in the marketing literature and, locates the trend firmly within the field of consumerism. It also highlights the concern that the volunteer tourism industry is designing and packaging aspects of poverty for tourists to consume (Simpson, 2004; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011). With this underpinning the volunteer tourist experience can be examined as a contemporary consumer commodity containing, as Jane Radin (1996) describes, elements of personhood. As an example of a commodity that relies on those elements of personhood (Cambodian children) as a large part of its attraction and appeal, it is important that probing questions be asked of these vacations; what is really being consumed here? As Sandel (2012) also asks, “are there some things that money should not be able to buy” (p:93)?

Within this framework, the shape of the questions most often considered around this topic - ‘who are volunteer tourists’; ‘why do they volunteer’ and, ‘what are their experiences’ - is significantly and substantially reworked to offer a new perspective of the trend. For example, now it is possible to consider how far the (discursive) staple narrative of ‘making a world of difference’ - framing (most often white) volunteer vacationing as a decent and honourable activity – is absorbed and reiterated by the consumer and how, as a consequence, this may be instrumental in allowing vacations to be consumed. It is possible to consider how far the abundance of marketing literature, travel blogs, NGO newsletters and social media postings, helps to organise and shape the trends perception as ‘taken-for-

grantedly' positive; and within this discourse, how the identification of binaries - where say the neediness of Cambodians is set against the capability of the volunteer tourists - impacts on the commodity's popularity.

As I will show, the commodity that is volunteer tourism in Siem Reap, Cambodia, is a complex synthesis and intricate association of social, historical, economic and political worlds combined with social categories, structures and relationships (between many actors) - any combination of which can be expressed as the building blocks of this trend, in this town. With these issues at the forefront, links will be made to two other ideas that form important parts of these complex relationships. The first of these is post-colonial critiques of development - and development-orientated work - that highlights a tangle between the enthusiasm to help alleviate poverty in the 'Third World' and, (unseen) issues of race and power (Kothari, 2006). In continuing to narrate these gestures as a story of benevolence and good-will - expressed through (essentially) white, 'First World' ways of knowing, doing and seeing - I will show that there is a commensurate failure to acknowledge and address a complicity in perpetuating colonial performances and assumptions and, by association, global inequality and injustice.

Secondly, I will make use of the notion of compassionate consumerism - essentially the relationship between the charitable gesture and consumption - to examine the growing popularity of the volunteer vacation. Links will be made between a 'new emotional culture' (Füredi, 2004) that, I will argue, has remodelled benevolent responses into "neat, marketable commodities" (Moore, 2008, p:9) and, hence the increasing importance of the marketplace to development and poverty alleviation (Simpson, 2004; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011). I will also argue that this same 'emotional culture' (Füredi, 2004) now rewards gestures of compassion and concern in a way that was previously uncommon and with an authority that is "so compelling as to make refusal to accept its legitimacy tantamount to inhumanity" (Moore, 2008, p:9).

Both these issues will be examined in detail in the review of literature and throughout the thesis. However, what I highlight here is the underlying question that these concepts raise. This is the degree to which the volunteer vacation trend acts to strengthen and reinforce pre-existing understandings about the 'Third World' and 'Third World' people (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011), and pertinently, how those from the 'First World' (know how to) go about helping them. Analogies can, and will, later be made with Edward Said's (2003) study of the discourse of Orientalism - the ways of "dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it" (p:3) - essentially volunteer tourism's 'restructured authority' of, here, Cambodia and the needs of its children.

Volunteer tourism – a brief background

Emerging initially as a form of new tourism (Mowforth & Munt, 1998) and being variously described as voluntourism; gap year breaks; pro-poor tourism; development holidays or good-deed vacations, 'volunteer tourism' (as it is described throughout this study) is a phenomenon that links a tourist experience with some form of helping activity at a vacation destination. At one time considered the preserve of young, aimless, parent-funded members of the upper-classes – as parodied in the viral video 'Gap Yah' (Lacey, 2010) – volunteer tourism has now acquired more mainstream popularity, although young people do still make up the bulk of those who choose this type of vacationing (Simpson 2004; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Wearing 2001). The trend is supported by an ever increasing number of volunteer vacation providers, or senders, which also include NGOs offering volunteer opportunities for the payment of a fee to the project or concern. Now regarded as a mass-niche commodity, these professionalised, increasingly popular and generally applauded holiday choices are lucrative products¹ in the diverse and competitive global tourism marketplace (Simpson 2004; Sin 2009; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011; Wearing 2001).

¹ Whilst it is difficult to accurately identify the overall size and value of this popular trend, sources indicate that in 2008 the volunteer tourist market was worth between £832 million and £1.3 billion (TRAM, 2008). The western European market alone - dominated by the UK - recorded a growth rate of 5-10% between the years 2003 and 2008 and identified Asia as one of the most popular volunteering vacation destinations (Mintel, 2008).

Volunteer vacations are almost entirely associated with movement from the 'First' to the 'Third World', being the holidays of choice for many white, westerner, tourist consumers (Conran, 2011; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Mowforth and Munt 2009; Wearing, 2001). Potential holidaymakers are tempted to a range of destinations by the promise of a holiday that "allows you to be more than just a tourist" (White, 2012); by the chance to feel that you are doing something worthwhile in exotic 'Third World' locations and, by the opportunity to buy-into authentic encounters in a way that mainstream or mass tourism rarely allows - or so the volunteer vacation marketing literature upholds. Coming to appreciate 'just how lucky you are' is also promoted as another appealing incentive for taking one of these vacations (Crossley, 2012). Volunteer tourist testimonies frequently make claims – much like this one - that "you come back a better person, you really do" (Glaser, 2012).

Although easier and cheaper world travel - along with an array of new technologies that facilitate and enhance trans-global movement (Lash and Urry, 1994) - have played a part in allowing the growth of this commodity, a shift in tourism consumption that demands that vacation time now provides 'things to do' as much as (if not more than) 'things to see', is also a significant factor here. Whilst sightseeing was once considered enough to satisfy holidaymakers, opportunities to perform rather than simply 'to gaze' (Urry, 1990) now influence tourist preferences (Perkins and Thorns, 2001). Moreover, as I will show in this research, in the volunteering experience these 'things to do' (directed by travel literature) have come to hold symbolic meaning about places and actions (Edensor, 2001) - a ski holiday in Aspen, Colorado says one thing about an individual; a volunteer vacation with orphans in Cambodia, says something quite different.

Whilst travelling to poorer, less developed countries - once the domain of wealthy explorers and colonisers - *is* now a mainstream tourist option, volunteer tourism can nonetheless help to legitimise a sometimes uncomfortable dichotomy for those seeing themselves as more concerned individuals or 'responsible holidaymakers'. Most volunteer vacations are attached for example, to projects or 'values-driven' (Fowler, 1997) NGOs at the holiday destination. This arguably increases the sense that these vacations are about good-will and benevolent gestures towards the communities that consumers have chosen to visit.

However, in the drive to expand its customer base, the volunteer tourism industry is becoming increasingly specialised with companies now catering specifically, for example: to more mature customers - 'Gaps for Grumpies' - "You can make a significant contribution to the developing world - and have a marvellous holiday. All in eight weeks or less!" (©Madventurer, 2007); to families - 'luxury family volunteering holidays', "whilst you are teaching or renovating, your children can interact with the local kids... in orphanages or schools (hands up holidays, 2012); to corporate groups 'Ethical Incentive trips' - "use it as a good will gesture for a new market opportunity" (hands up incentives, 2010) and even to honeymooning couples (Groves, 2013) - "honeymooning couples can only spend so much time in bed. Honeyteering is a great way to consolidate your new lives together" (hands up holidays, 2012). As I will argue, connections can be made to what Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2000) describe as 'marked differentiation' and the notion that those selling 'classify, organise and label' those doing the buying, "so that none may escape" (p:5).

Companies nonetheless, continue to target colleges and universities, displaying posters around campuses that show young (again, almost exclusively white) volunteer tourists enjoying their volunteering vacations. As I will show, the overriding impression presented in these advertisements is that these holidays are enormous fun. Up-beat information evenings regularly take place with marketing sessions normally featuring past volunteer tourist testimonies as part of their promotional technique. Companies have arguably benefited from high profile

'gappers'² (Simpson, 2005) such as members of the British Royal Family – Prince Harry, for example, having spent eight, well publicised, weeks in Lesotho in Southern Africa, volunteering with AIDS orphans. For the younger vacationers, sending organisations may be regarded as (if not legally) in loco parentis through their planning, coordinating and facilitating of volunteering placements - and often the provision of in-country support during the time overseas.

A further lucrative element of the volunteer tourist business produces and markets a vast range of guidebooks and publications offering help, advice, tips and insights to would-be volunteer tourists (and their parents). Complemented by websites with video postings of volunteer tourists in situ; travel blogs and discussion forums, these supporting products and productions are all available to help make this particular vacation commodity an “experience of a lifetime” (IFRE, Volunteers Abroad, 2012). As I will argue, in a market economy that provides abundant choice to the insatiable consumer (Campbell, 1993), volunteer tourism - a vacation commodity that offers far more than sun, sea and sand - is very big business.

An introduction to my own story

Norman Denzin (2012) argues that good research should be written “out of those spaces and experiences that carry the sting of memory, those epiphanies, and turning point moments that leave a mark on you” (p:1); others talk about an “intuitive sense of knowing [that encourages] a circular, holistic perspective” towards research projects (González, 2000, p: 644); whilst H.L. Goodall (2003) “encourages us to make our work personal, interactive, and self-reflexive” (p:58). It is important, therefore, that at this stage I state my positionality by offering a brief sketch of my own story and as such, acknowledge an awareness of how it (may have) affected my findings. This reflective narrative describes how I came to be a volunteer tourist:

² Defined as a person taking some time-out to travel and often also volunteer, usually between school and university or university and employment.

“In 2008, my then nineteen year old son Tom and I spent six weeks as volunteer tourists teaching English to orphans in Siem Reap, Cambodia. This had not entirely been a random decision. I had a bachelor’s degree in Childhood, Educational and Culture and, a master’s degree in Social Research in which I had explored the relationship between the philanthropic urge and the best interests of children as recipients of benevolence. I also had over fifteen years’ experience working in primary schools and childrens groups, as well as involvement with various childrens charities. Tom had worked in primary schools as part of his high school work-experience module and helped at youth clubs and with Cub Scouts. I had recently come to the end of a number of personally challenging years and was eager for a little time for my own interests. I had dreamt of doing something different, perhaps a little daring – at least for a fifty-one year old woman from a small North Yorkshire town. Travelling abroad to teach English to orphans seemed a fantastic idea. It would provide Tom and me with an opportunity to put some of our experiences and learning into practise, as well as the chance to spend some quality mother-and-son time together. The opportunity, nonetheless, came at a period in my life when I could afford the time and money for an adventure.

We chose a British run orphanage in the town which appeared ideal for our needs. The reasonable volunteering fee would be paid directly to the British expatriate orphanage manager in Cambodia; everything therefore felt ‘above board’ and legitimate. I did a little research, mostly on-line, and remember that my main concern was to avoid making ‘cultural faux pas’; a number of personal emails testifying to my eagerness to get this side of our trip right. Excited at the prospect of our adventure, I booked flights; applied for visas; found affordable travel insurance and, started our course of inoculations. Family and friends sent us off with all good wishes and considerable admiration; the local press reported that we were “forging links” between North Yorkshire and Cambodia (Mason, 2009).

Once in Siem Reap and at the orphanage, it only took a short while for me to begin to feel uneasy about what I had bought into. I was surprised that, for example, the teaching methods and resources at the orphanage were of such a poor quality and

even argued with the manager about their cultural inappropriateness. I felt that classes had little continuity, were poorly planned and were regularly being left to the sole devices of young unskilled volunteers. Our own experiences also told us that the pastoral care of the children was lacking and often insensitively handled, most of us volunteers having a very limited knowledge of Cambodian culture or poverty on any serious scale. Most worryingly, we both felt that the children and their orphanage home were also being used as an attraction for other tourists visiting the town. Children, for example, were being taken out to large hotels to give Christmas Carol recitals to holidaymakers there and, on one occasion the orphanage was used as the setting (and the children as 'props') for an international corporate teambuilding day. I felt disappointed and confused."

Whilst this introductory chapter does not allow a detailed expansion of these thoughts and reflections, neither is it useful to allow them to stand alone. Concisely then, here are some of the questions the experience raised for me. For example, how significant was my pre-existing knowledge of certain etiquettes and protocols (already held social capital, perhaps) to even allow me to consider the volunteer vacation option; what cultural views and resources informed, shaped and motivated my desire and decision to go to Cambodia - no less to an orphanage? What ideas (and from where did they originate), influenced our expressions, and indeed, our enactment, of the codes and conventions of 'doing volunteering' and, how did the privileging mechanisms of volunteer tourism find their way into (expressions of) a sense of self - ideas of being 'good tourists' - and connectedly, into understandings of morality, compassion and decency. Pertinently, what were our understandings of our own good intentions and how did these work to conceal any thoughts of the potential harm we may have been doing? These are all issues that will be explored in this thesis.

A short introduction to methods

This research takes the form of a qualitative study using both semi-structured interviews with volunteers - to explore narratives and biographies - as well as interpretative ethnographies in NGO and volunteer vacation settings in Siem Reap.

Due to limitations of time and resources, longitudinally following one group of volunteer tourists - through 'thinking about' becoming a volunteer tourist; being a volunteer tourist and, having been a volunteer tourist - was outside the feasibility of this project. I therefore made the decision to take a wide-angled view of the trend by interviewing participants who were at any one of these three different stages in the vacation process. As such, I interviewed individuals who were considering Siem Reap as a volunteer vacation destination; individuals who were (at the time of interview) volunteers in the town and, those who had returned from their vacation. Far from being a compromise, it was intended that this design would provide rich, focused narratives from these consumers.

I carried out an extensive examination of grey literature – marketing and publicity material; travel guides; NGO newsletters; travel blogs – both online and hardcopy. Four visits to Siem Reap between 2009 and 2012 - in addition to six weeks as a volunteer tourist in 2008 - allowed an in-depth investigation of the consumption of the volunteering vacation in this one specific location.

A widely scattered sample group however, made it necessary to employ creative methods of data generation. For example, the social networking site Facebook (FB), having effected the creation of an on-line community of present and past Siem Reap (and at times potential) volunteer tourists, was used extensively. As a member of this group or forum it was possible to observe and participate in connections (and disconnections) of volunteering experiences in Cambodia. I also used the medium as a tool to conduct interviews as well as to arrange face-to-face meetings.

As I will show, photographs play an important role in the consumption of volunteer tourism beyond advertising, promoting, recording and sharing experiences. Photographic images were therefore considered a source of data and regarded as a significant element in this research. I was particularly interested in photographs and videos made by volunteer tourists and especially those posted on Facebook or in travel blogs. Photographs used in marketing were also examined and used to

develop, enhance and complement interviews, observations and biographies of the volunteer tourist.

Finally, my personal and research diaries, fieldnotes and correspondence - with NGOs and volunteers for example - represent an important part of my research. My own positionality, not only as a white, 'First World' female researcher but also as a past volunteer tourist in a children's orphanage in Siem Reap, were significant factors in both the design and implementation of this project. These thoughts and reflections (along with a large quantity of photographs) were extensively drawn upon when considering the consumption of these vacations. A full discussion of methods is presented in chapter three of this thesis.

Definitions and the use of some terms in this study

In order to limit definitional confusion and enhance clarity, it is necessary to outline how some terms, descriptions and definitions are used in this study. As Richard Popkin (1943) argues, "definitions in social science are more than logical entities; they are primarily value judgements" (p:491) and as such, it is with some caution that certain words and descriptions are now introduced. Arriving at some of these decisions was far from easy and in several cases required compromises that represent the best option, rather than the deepest commitment to meaning.

1. Volunteer tourism/tourist

For John Wilson (2000) volunteering is understood to be a helpful act that would normally involve a deeper obligation than say the spur-of-the-moment gesture of assisting an old person across a busy road. Wilson does not refer to any inclination of good intent in his definition of helpful behaviour nor does he suggest that the volunteer may seek reward or gain for their action. Volunteering for Wilson (2000) is the simple act of (albeit sometimes loosely) planned assistance. Making the link from volunteering to volunteer tourism, however, is a little more problematic. As Wearing (2001) argues, the concept of volunteer tourism remains difficult to differentiate from other forms of alternative tourism. Considered part of a broader trend in 'alternative', 'sustainable' and 'responsible' tourism practises, volunteer

vacation choices today range from taking part in projects that care for baby orangutans in Sarawak Malaysian Borneo to spending time with orphaned children in Peru. As volunteering is what all of these activities (in part) involve, it becomes difficult to make clear distinctions between the different examples. Furthermore, many of the alternative trend vacations available on the market also involve some form of helping behaviour or activity.

Any one tourist may fit into a number of different tourist typologies even during the period of a single vacation. It is possible for instance, to be a back-packer for six months and within that period become a volunteer tourist for four weeks or, to be part of a package tour for two weeks and during that time become a volunteer tourist for a day. These types of scenarios are not unusual and do not help with efforts to provide a clean definition of volunteer tourism – again making links to the concept of ‘marked differentiation’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2000) and the continuing expansion of the volunteering vacation product range.

Stephen Wearing’s (2001) definition in *Volunteer tourism: experiences that make a difference* is, however, frequently used:

The generic term ‘volunteer tourism’ applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organised 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 (p:1).

Whilst this definition is useful it does exclude those participants who may not have planned to be volunteer tourists but, who whilst travelling or on a mainstream vacation, decide to take part in volunteer tourist activities. Furthermore, many NGOs or charitable projects offer ‘walk-in’ volunteering opportunities (an option taken by a considerable number of the participants interviewed or observed as part of this study), and may as such be described as impulse consumers of volunteer tourism. Whilst for some the thought of ‘doing some volunteering while out there’

may have been considered, decisions to actually go ahead occurred in an opportunist rather than an 'organised' (Wearing, 2001) manner.

Some tourist may, for example, specifically search out opportunities whilst others, although having not considered volunteer tourism as an activity, during their vacation see things that attract them to the idea or encounter other tourists who recommend or encourage them to try the experience out. Still others may become volunteer tourists in order to gain some of the benefits that go along with the activity – discounted accommodation rates; a chance to experience 'the authentic' – "to get under the nails of the... culture" (ecoteer, 2010); camaraderie and friendship with fellow travellers/tourists. Konstantinos Tomazos' (2010) description of volunteer tourism as a 'nomad concept' is particularly apt and whilst a brief outline has been offered here, further explication will be made at relevant points in the study.

2. Defining 'worlds'

Considerable difficulty lay in deciding which terms (from an available assortment) would be the most appropriate to describe different areas/societies/economic regions of the world; as again Popkin (1943) searchingly asks "what is [this] definition a definition of?" (p:492). I argue that none are ideal and most simply make dualistic distinctions. 'Developed and underdeveloped' undoubtedly represents a Eurocentric view that sees Europe and the 'western' world as being fully developed whilst other societies/places are, in contrast, therefore defined as moving from a primitive towards a civilised state. There is arguably some improvement in the pairing 'developing and developed', although as Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick (2009) contend, the very notion of development remains closely tied to models of the west. Even so, 'developing world' now often replaces 'third world'; 'third world' it has been argued, being based on out-dated and misleading socio-political and economic divisions and significantly, requiring a 'first world' counterpart as endorsement. Whilst the terms 'global north and global south' are becoming more widely used, certainly amongst northern NGOs, many volunteers in Cambodia hail from Australia and New Zealand which presents

further complications in this particular study. The terms 'majority world and two third's world', at the same time as seeming clumsy and pedantic, are also arguably another example of the question, 'what is this definition a definition of' (Popkin, 1943)?

I was inspired, however, by Paulette Goudge (2003) and her research on racism in a 'Third World' development and aid context. Goudge (2003) asserts that, "definitions of who is developed and who is under- or un-developed are formulated" (p:27) - and continue to be defined - by members of, what she describes as, the 'self-designated First World'. Throughout her thesis '*The Whiteness of Power*' (2003), she determinedly uses the words 'First' and 'Third World's (bravely, I argue) making the point that whilst the use of these terms are often avoided - and sometimes frowned upon - in development discourse (although certainly not always) the concept remains firmly rooted in much of the discipline and practise (Goudge, 2003; Kothari; 2006; Latouche, 1993; Osterhammel 1999; Pieterse, 2001). 'Third World' references are, however, still extensively used in tourist guides; in volunteer tourist marketing literature; on NGO websites and, in the media. In order to highlight this, wherever it is possible in this thesis, the terms 'Third' and 'First Worlds' will be used, although to acknowledged the knotty (and yet deliberate) nature of this decision, I (as above) make use of capitalisation and inverted commas.

3. Whiteness

It is important to state here that the use of the term 'whiteness' (whilst this will be discussed in detail later in the thesis) will follow Charles W. Mills (1997) assertion that whiteness be understood "not really [as] a color at all, but [as] a set of power relations" (p:127). Whiteness in this study will therefore be concerned with, for example: performance; understandings and, how whiteness is used (Ahmed, 2004; Black, 2002; Dyer, 200; Enders & Gould 2009; Fanon, 2004; Heron, 2007; Kothari, 2006; Leonardo, 2009; Lipsitz, 1998; Mills, 1997; Warren & Hytten, 2004), particularly when volunteering in 'Third World' environments. Essentially, the term will be employed as an indicator of what, for example, Leonardo (2009) expresses

as “the issue of unearned advantage” (p:75); what Lipsitz (1998) describes as, the contemporary rewards of whiteness and, what Heron (2007) talks about in her discussion around (white) stories of innocence and “of not seeing our participation in domination” (p:153/4). In my classification therefore, ‘Whiteness’ will be explored as a factor that *enables* the choice and enactment of volunteer tourism as a commodity - as well as a pointer to understanding *what* is being consumed; *how* it is consumed and *why*. Again, depth and breadth will be added to these arguments throughout this thesis.

4. Personal pronouns

Influenced by the work of Barbara Heron (2007), the personal pronouns ‘we, us and our’ as opposed to the words ‘they, them and their’ will be made use of at points in this thesis. As Heron (2007) argues in her own work, this does not reflect an effort to make all participants the same – on the contrary – it is rather to place herself (as I also wish to place myself) within the body of her/my research “and [importantly] to signal that I see myself implicated in the issues I raise in respect to relations of domination” (p:18). Nonetheless, I heed Heron’s caution of the difficulties in navigating this double role (my own as both researcher and past-volunteer tourist) and draw attention in my study to where these difficulties arise because of these merged positions.

That I make use of my own personal diaries and reflections, as well as email correspondence relating to my own volunteering experience - and which importantly, were made without an awareness of this subsequent project – places me firmly, I consider, within this research. Like Heron (2007), however, it is not my intention to “inadvertently suggest a greater degree of consensus than exists, or to make it appear that I am speaking for all who participated in this study” (p:18). Primarily my intentions are both a combination of the desire to unmask my own position and agency (Katz, 1992) along with an acknowledgement of the complexity, uncertainty and incompleteness of my own contradictory and shifting subjectivities (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Rose, 1997). Significantly, however, I wish to make it apparent that I too was/am that volunteer tourist.

5. Poor children

As Laderchi, Saith and Stewart (2010) assert, “while there is world-wide agreement on poverty reduction as an overriding goal of development policy, there is little agreement on the definition of poverty” (p:243). Likewise, in Wearing’s (2001) widely used definition (above), ‘volunteer tourism’ is characterised by actions that are deemed to ‘aid or alleviate material poverty’ (p:1). Much of the volunteer tourism grey literature makes extensive use of the terms ‘poor children’ or ‘poor child’ but with little or no reference to, for example, other sub-groups of disadvantage (my word) or any edifying discussion of the terms. Whilst a detailed debate on definitions of poverty is beyond the scope of this thesis, what is significant as I will show, is that ‘poor children’ or ‘poor child’ are emotive terms:

...with slippery meanings; words which refer to concepts, yet which are capable of being used or received in fundamentally different ways; words which convey diverse and complex associations, yet which can become so valorised or debased... as to become meaningless or misleading (Dean, 1992, p:79).

The use of the term ‘poor Cambodian child’, as I will show, can convey all these concerns but crucially, can also conceal other “dimensions of oppression” (Dean, 1992, p:87) and disempowerment. For these reason I will apply inverted commas when using the terms ‘poor’, ‘poor child’, ‘poor children’ but will not avoid their use entirely as an indication of their continued and unchallenged application in volunteer tourism discourse.

6. The holidaymaker

Finally, I use tourist, vacationer and holidaymaker interchangeably as the difference between these terms, even as it has been examined in other areas of research, is not considered relevant here. As I will show, however, many volunteer tourists choose to be identified as ‘travellers’. As Grewal (1996) describes, tourists and travellers are distinguished historically through the roots of upper-class exploration and ‘day-tripping’ associated with the working classes. In contemporary

contexts, the image of a traveller may be used to differentiate those who see themselves as more independent from those they see as part of the mass tourist movement.

Thesis structure

To establish the underpinnings of this research it is necessary to place volunteer tourism in Siem Reap within historical, social, political and geographic contexts, drawing these conditions together - integrating and synthesising them - to provide a framework for examining the principal concerns in this enquiry: 'what is being consumed in volunteer tourism in Siem Reap'; 'who is doing the consuming'; 'how is it consumed', 'how is it able to be consumed' and 'why'?

In **Chapter Two**: The review of literature, I therefore expand on the concept that it is consumption that forms the anchor and broad base of this research; as Ritzer, Goodman et al. (2003) contend, "no serious theory of contemporary society can ignore the importance of consumption" (p:410). The chapter is divided into the following sections: consumption, consumerism and commodities: a brief overview; tourism: commodity, consumption and consumer; framing the 'other' – the 'Third World' commodity; 'First World-ness' – including whiteness - as a badge of benevolence; commodification of bodies; objectification; childhood as a species of commodity.

Linking to these ideas - indeed flowing throughout - is reference to post-colonial scholarship that offers a critical view of the concept of development ('First World' actions made on behalf of 'Third World others') that is informed by the assertion that development is based on the recognition of global difference (Kothari, 2005). Whilst Pieterse (2001) acknowledges that the terrain of development is multifaceted and intricate, his description of development as the structured involvement in "collective affairs according to standards of improvement" (p:3), is useful within the context of this study. That a development agenda is so readily and taken-for-grantedly associated with this trend of tourism (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011) provides the imperative, I will argue, to make these links and connections.

Closely interconnected is the notion of whiteness as a badge of benevolence and the well-rehearsed narratives of good intentions and generosity that are associated with “privileged people help[ing] underprivileged people” (Enders and Gould, 2009, p:428). Here, as Colin Slater (2013) argues, are often the traces of what he terms as ‘colonialisms’; a palimpsest of assumptions and understandings “that continue to shape the ways in which western societies view (and construct) *other* cultures” (p:2, italic in original). Drawing on critical Whiteness theory, links will be made to the volunteering vacation and the “racialized assumptions that continue to underwrite the discursive constructions of the space of the “Third World”, [and of] notions of the North as more advanced” (Heron, 2007, p:150); in essence to the argument that I will go on to make, that it is the continuity of the civilising mission that informs much of volunteer tourism practise and consumption.

I will also consider the notions of the objectification and commodification of bodies, and argue that whilst presented in tourism scholarship, these links can also be made use of to examine other contexts and forms of consumption. Drawing on Martha Nussbaum’s (1995) model of “Seven Ways to Treat a Person as a Thing”, I will show how these can effectively be applied to practises within volunteer tourism and especially when considering the bodies of children as essential elements of this trend.

In the final section of the review I consider historical underpinnings of childhood and childhood innocence. An important point of discussion in this section is how contemporary knowledge of both these concepts are often characterised by adults within the frame of Western modernity (Stephens, c1995) even when directed towards diverse cultural contexts of childhood. I also explore what Giroux (2000) describes as the ‘myth of childhood innocence’ and the notion that adult fantasy perpetuates a vision of this special place as inherently pure and magical. As such, this chapter introduces the idea that these are significant concerns within the volunteer tourism trend.

In **Chapter Three** I describe my research methods and my reasons for making these choices. I discuss decisions to make use of personal diaries and reflexive accounts both from my time as a researcher but also those from one year before the start of this study, when I was a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap. The use of the internet both as a place to be researched (volunteer tourism marketing websites; travel blogs; NGO newsletters; YouTube video postings; volunteer tourist testimonies, for example) as well as a medium for research (online interviews; arranging meetings; maintaining contact with gatekeepers; booking flights and arranging visas) is also examined.

In providing an overview of the fieldwork site, I draw Siem Reap into the study and discuss how I maintained connections and contacts when back in the UK. I also describe here the particular concern of negotiating my own privilege as a researcher researching privilege and some of the tensions this created for me in the field.

Chapter Four is structured around the question 'who are we and why we buy it? Outlining the difficulties in defining the volunteer tourist and the volunteering experience, I suggest that whilst three dominant and contrasting perspectives provide only a limited view of the trend, these common themes do, however, go some way to understanding how as volunteers we see ourselves and how others see us in this role.

In the second part of the chapter I consider motivation and examine how motives of mainstream tourists are closely related to those of the volunteer, even as volunteers work hard to differentiate themselves from conventional practises of holidaymaking. Through examining participants' narratives, I conclude that whilst a number of tensions exist between our expectations and our reflections of our vacations, the current shape of volunteer tourism – because it is a product – provides little or no space for reflection or learning.

Chapter Five is concerned with themes that offer insight into how volunteer tourism is able to be consumed. The central concepts that are developed are compassionate consumerism and, what I describe as ‘taken-for-granted-ness’. Here I introduce the connections between compassionate gestures and actions and entertainment and how this trend has informed the volunteer tourism product. Secondly, I draw on Charles W. Mills (1997) seminal work *The Racial Contract* and other whiteness theory scholarship to unpack the argument that volunteer tourists often chose not to know things that are already known as a way to justify their own advantage and privilege.

Chapter Six is considered to be a pivotal chapter in that it is here that I ask ‘just *what* is being consumed in the volunteer tourism experience’. Making the argument that it is the bodies of ‘poor’ Cambodia children, objectified and commodified as consumable ‘morsels of otherness’, I also explore how this connection makes links to the fantasy trope in the tourist experience as well as the desire to reconnect with symbols of (lost) childhood innocence. It is here that the notion of abuse is considered as well as the view that a mystification of childhood innocence (Giroux, 2000) can work to distort concepts of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 2007) as good intention.

Chapter Seven considers the photograph and the role of the image in how volunteer tourism is consumed. Photographic images hold particularly strong associations with tourism. As Bourdieu (1990) describes, the holiday photograph can be understood as an attempt “to consecrate the unique encounter... between a person and a consecrated place, between an exceptional moment in one’s life and a place that is exceptional by virtue of its high symbolic yield” (p:36). The meaning of the photographic image, as I will argue, extends beyond that of preserving a record of places visited and events experienced. Images used in marketing and the social media, I will also show, have much to do with the production of the ‘concerned consumer’. I will also consider in this chapter, the specific contexts of the circulation (Hoelscher, 2008) of photographs made in orphanages and poor schools in Siem Reap.

Chapter Eight reflects on the study's findings in relation to the research questions and the review of literature. I consider the strengths and limitations of the work and recommendations for future research within the context of the volunteer vacation.

Chapter Two

'Boy, have we got a vacation for you'

Review of literature

Introduction

Having introduced the research and volunteer tourism as a popular vacation choice; provided the broad rationale and objectives of the study - as well as a précis of my own position in relation to the trend - I now move to a discussion of the literature that underpins this study and significantly, to how this literature will be used to develop this thesis. As a process, reviewing the literature helped inform the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings that guided the progress of the analysis; as a product, it now furnishes the reader with a roadmap of how this particular project relates to, and makes connections with, other research and scholarship (Boyne, 2009). However, the construction of this thesis is such that a good deal of the underpinning literature is provided in each chapter to support the various arguments that are specifically being presented there.

It is my intention, therefore, that in this review I will introduce and provide analysis of scholarship from the anchoring themes and ideas that link together these chapters and arguments, as well as showing how this particular vacation commodity can be included in these important conversations. The anchor and broad base of this thesis lays in consumerism and consumption, a frame that will narrow down to consider tourist consumption; consumption of the 'Third World' and, the commodification of children who, as I will argue, are consumed as a significant element in these popular vacations.

Consumption, consumerism and commodities: an overview

Mica Nava (1992) argues that "consumerism is far more than just economic activity: it is also about dreams and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity" (p:167). These ideas, it has also been argued, are fuelled by a wide range of urges and desires motivated by the search, through consumerism, for pleasure and happiness (Campbell, 1993; Edwards, 2000; Holt and Schor, 2000;

hooks, 1992; Nava, 1992). For Colin Campbell (1993), key to consumer behaviour in “the contemporary industrial world” (p:206) is the “longing to experience in reality those pleasures created and enjoyed in [the] imagination” (p:205); the notion that individuals first imagine what it would be like to have or to do, at times long before the decisive acts of purchasing and consuming. Indeed, whilst it is widely argued that mainstream tourism and fantasy enjoy a close relationship (Dann, 1976; Paradis, 2004; Urry, 1995), in this thesis I will expand the idea to show how these notions also inform volunteer tourism to ‘Third World’ destinations.

Campbell’s (1993) seminal work on the cultural origins of modern consumerism continues to be a major text for researchers interested in the field. Importantly, in the context of this study, the work also represents a shift in focus away from issues of production, onto questions of consumer behaviour and significantly here, of pleasure-seeking motives and drives inherent in consumer decisions. Pertinently, the historical notion of consumerism and “pleasure [as] a natural accompaniment of virtue” (Campbell, 1993, p:121), makes important links with volunteer tourism largely, as I will show, in the now widely promoted alliance between compassionate gestures and personal recreation and/or pleasure.

Whilst this alliance is evidenced in events such as Live Aid and extravagant charity balls, in the context of this research, links will be made with advertisements that, for example, promise an enormously enjoyable vacation with orphans in Cambodia. Scholars such as Moore (2008), Nickel and Eikenberry (2009), Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) and Kothari (2006) challenge relationships such as these, their work as such having been a significant influence here. These associations will be developed further both in this chapter and throughout the thesis.

Tim Edwards (2000) argues that despite an increasing academic interest in consumption - as well as associated concepts and practises such as consumer culture; consumer society; consumerism and the consumer - definitions remain varied and various. Furthermore, a widening interdisciplinary interest also adds to the complexity. In part, he contends, this is due to consumer society and

consumption having three distinct elements. The first of these is concerned with “the significance of the commodity”; the second with “the conceptual flipside” of production (Edwards, 2000, p:3) and the third, with the act of consuming itself. Indeed, viewing volunteer tourism through the lens of consumerism allows that due regard is paid to all these aspects in the consumption of these vacations.

Significantly however, Edwards (2000) asserts that the link between all three of these elements is that of commodification. The notion of commodification has a direct relationship to this exploration of volunteer tourism and the important question of just what is being consumed (having been commodified) in these vacations. Alongside commodification, the concept of objectification is also relevant to the arguments I will make in this thesis and in particular, that the ‘poor’ Cambodian child is an essential commodity of these vacations in Siem Reap. I will return to this idea later in this review in the section that considers the commodification and objectification of bodies and again, throughout this thesis.

However, whilst historically consumption has been considered from a range of perspectives which include its significance in the protection of status and class (Veblen, 1934); economic exploitation through production and, the everyday matter of basic needs, more recently the importance of consumption to the construction of self, has gained considerable focus. Although here links will be made to the importance of ‘status and class protection’ in the context of volunteer tourism, other valuable connections will be made to scholarship that explores the relationship between the construction of personal narratives and tourist behaviour. These connections include, for example: constructions of self and tourist preferences, including destination and tourist typology; constructions of self and symbols and gestures of compassion and awareness (as expressed in this choice of vacation); constructions of self and cosmopolitan credentials associated with a consumption of the exotic and, constructions of self and the holiday body (Bell, Holiday, Jones, Probyn and Sanchez Taylor, 2011; hooks, 1992; Hutnyk, 1996; Heron, 2007; MacCannell, 1999; Moore, 2008; Pratt, 1992; Trentmann, 2007; White, 2002). As Trentmann (2007) argues, even though much is dependent on

external conditions and systems, as a result of motivation and behaviour, consumers themselves also help to inform consumption practises; no less, as I will show, in the social practise of volunteer tourism.

Douglas B. Holt and Juliet B. Schor (2000) assert that few, if any, elements of life have yet to be touched by the marketplace and argue that “vast new arenas... from education and health care to culture itself” (p:xix), are now part of consumer culture. Consumerism is now considered to be an increasingly dominant feature of lives and societies, both nationally and internationally (Edwards, 2000). Whilst viewed on a continuum from, at one extreme the source of total freedom and complete happiness to, at the other a thing intensely dystopian and nihilistic, Edwards (2000) suggests, that despite differences in interpretations and understandings from within various schools of thought, the centrality of consumerism to society as a whole, is rarely in dispute.

What is significant here, however, are debates around, what Sandel (2012) describes as the moral limits of marketing. As he contends, “the reach of the markets, and market-oriented thinking, into aspects of life traditionally governed by nonmarket norms is one of the most significant developments of our times” (Sandel, 2012, p:7). In the context of this research, Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) argue, for example, that volunteer tourism can be understood as a “neoliberal form of development practice, in which development is not only privatized but packaged as a marketable commodity” (p:111). A central concern of this thesis is the extent of the market reach - as volunteer tourism is staged as a touristic experience - in the drive to alleviate poverty for children in Siem Reap.

Margaret Jane Radin (1996), for example, demonstrates concern when she argues that there are some items that challenge the notion of the trade of things for money. She terms these as ‘contested commodities’ and goes on to assert that many have connections to issues such as poverty, racism or damage to innocents. As such, she continues, these commodities often have a complexity that becomes more problematic with efforts to unravel them. High profile transnational

adoptions, as one example, brought to public attention in the cases of Madonna and Angelina Jolie, illustrate Radin's concerns. Here, as Katz (2008) describes is "the niche marketing of children" (p:14) - of babies as "baubles" (p:13) – but problematically alongside, (some may consider) humanitarian concern. As Radin (1996) claims, these are commodities that are complex to unravel. Contested commodities can also be associated with the sale of other 'mysterious things' (Marx, 1975) such as ova, sperm and embryos; tissue and organs; with prostitution; surrogacy and, as I will argue, with tourist experiences of 'Third World' lives.

A further notion that provides important background to this work is that of compassionate consumerism; a concept which Nickel and Eikenberry (2009) describe as "the marketization of philanthropy" (p:974). Compassionate consumerism is linked to social practises such as awareness-ribbon wearing (Moore, 2008); nationwide fundraising days such as Children in Need; mass musical events in aid of the world's hungry, as well as practises such as fair trade marketing and charity endorsed goods.

By considering the impact and consequences of these (often) international development concerns, I will show how a blurring of consumerism and benevolence – what Moore (2008) describes as the notion that "compassion... become[s] a commodity like any other" (p:71) - informs the volunteer tourism model. Here I draw upon scholarship that argues that despite the abundance of these campaigns and practises, their effect may be to confuse the realities of poverty and global inequalities, rather than creating views of global cooperation and action (Kothari, 2006; Moore, 2008; Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009; Simpson, 2004; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011).

According to Nickel and Eikenberry (2009), for example, this conflation results in the understanding that "one can celebrate a culture of global capitalism while sympathizing with its victims" (p:978). Compassionate consumerism - along with supporting scholarship - is developed in Chapter Five which discusses social conditions that work to allow or enable the consumption of volunteer vacations.

The wider concern that these ideas raise is how far compassion and concern for others, may be prejudiced by the practises of consumerism; or indeed be devalued by economic exchange. As I will show, focusing this research on the volunteer tourist as consumer and Cambodian children as tourist commodities, allows that these concerns can now be articulated - and the question be asked, what is the association between a 'First World' vacation product and 'the Third World poor'?

Natan Sznaider (1998), however, argues against those who assert that marketised compassion and humanitarianism are contradictory and incompatible; that "the world of capitalism is devoid of tender feelings towards strangers" (p:120).

Sznaider (1998) questions the contention that markets deplete a society's "moral legacy" (p:120) and concludes by claiming that modernity does allow the "contradictory feature... [of being able to be] moral in the morning and an individualist in the afternoon" (p:136). This argument can be related to the trend of volunteer tourism where volunteers are often seen, as I will show, to be 'moral in the morning' - as they perform their volunteering tasks - and individualistic 'in the afternoons' and evenings - as they practise the hedonism of vacationing. Whilst Sznaider's (1998) argument and the background in which it is based are certainly credible, the views of those whom he is critical are also compelling.

For example, economist Fred Hirsch (1977) describes what he terms as the 'commercialization effect', a notion that the quality of a product or activity is reduced by its being commercially supplied. Citing prostitution, Hirsch's argument is that here is "the prime example of a value (sexual relationship-emotional concern) negated by price (Zelizer, 1994, p:20). For Sandel (2012) the question is what role the market should play in social relations that involve the dignity and respect of human beings. Hirsch (1997) and Sandel (2012) like many others (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2000; Holt and Schor, 2000; hooks, 1992; Nava, 1992; Radin, 1996; Zelizer, 1994) express great concern at "the relentless commodification of all areas of social life" (Holt and Schor, 2000,p:viii).

Finally, in this section of the review I reflect on the works of Zygmunt Bauman and Daniel Miller by briefly comparing and contrasting their distinct theories of consumption. Whilst Bauman - often described (some would contend problematically) as *the* theorist of consumption - has argued that consumer culture produces individuals who are either 'seduced or repressed' (Bauman, 1987; 1990; 1992) by the market, Miller (2001) - challenging the view that sees consumption as simultaneously harmful and insignificant - asserts that, "what most of humanity desperately needs is more consumption, more pharmaceuticals, more housing, more transport, more books, more computers" (p:227-228). Both scholars I would argue, offer valuable interpretations to this thesis; Bauman presenting a challenging analysis of the 'fluid' role of consumption in modern, developed societies; Miller providing a reappraisal of the critical perspective – critiquing the critiques of consumerism – by suggesting the existence of greater creative possibilities in the connection between people and commodities. Furthermore, what the differing theories also offer is an appreciation of the broadness of thinking on consumerism, no less the definitional variations of notions such as 'consumer culture' and 'consumer society'; of the very concept of the commodity - from diverse models to what Miller (2001) describes as the 'material'. It is worth briefly unpacking these contrasts a little further here.

Zygmunt Bauman (1999), for example – having characterised a shift from "older types of modern society [to] postmodern society" (p:36) – argues that, whilst today's consumer society offers a seemingly endless range of products that provide (those with the means to purchase) promises of happiness and satisfaction, consumer behaviour also carries a degree of individual responsibility that, of itself, is capable of producing unhappiness and dissatisfaction. In thinking about constructions of self and self-identity for instance (which Bauman sees as intrinsically bound up with matters of consumption), the fear of making wrong choices is an ever present possibility (and hence risk) for the potential consumer; and as Alan Warde (1994) asserts, Bauman is particular alert to the weight of identity construction in issues of consumerism. As a consequence - and what is especially significant to this study - Bauman argues that an important role of

marketing (and principally the advertisement) is to soften this anxiety by presenting notions of expertise and assurance in consumer opportunities and preferences. This may be achieved, for example, through celebrity endorsement, quasi-scientific facts and figures (nine out of ten cats prefer...) or "information" (Adorno, 2001, p:85) in the advertisement that the same choices are being made by those considered to be suitable co-consumers (people like 'you'). A spin-off of this process however, is that the route to 'certainty' is only achievable through the act of purchasing (Bauman, 1988); a concept, I will show, that has much to say to the choice, purchase and consumption of the volunteer vacation.

In contrast, Daniel Miller (2001) contends that the field of consumerism is often employed as a channel "to castigate society for its materialism" (p:225) by those who simultaneously enjoy the benefits of the same consumer society. His call is to move away from 'recycled' arguments to, what he describes as, "sufficiently nuanced" (Miller, 2001, p:227) critiques. In this way he continues, the importance of "morality to the academic analysis of consumption" (Miller, 2001, p:241), can be realised and as such, crucial concerns around 'Third World' poverty for example, avoid being lost within a wide-sweeping "anti-materialistic ideology" (p:225). Furthermore, Miller (2001) expresses concern in the problematic contention - as he sees it - that when consumer desires are aroused through advertising messages then "any subsequent relationship of identity that we forge through them must be inauthentic" (p:229). His concern, as he asserts, lies primarily in the implication that it is other people that are interpreted as gullible and shallow and never those engaged in research and critique. In this respect Miller acts both as a balancing influence in my own critical framework as well as offering guidance to the degree and direction of reflexive engagement, again in this particular thesis.

But as Holt and Schor (2000) contend, "the literature on consumer society is vast" (p:xxiii) and in a brief consideration of Zygmunt Bauman and Daniel Miller alone, processes of consumption and theories of consumerism are recognised for their complexity and contradictory character (Miller, 2001). As such it is impossible to consider all interpretations or to master the full range of possibilities in just one

PhD project - and indeed unnecessary. Nonetheless, the predominance of consumer practise to today's society is quite clear. In this regard, drawing on scholarship that provides the relevant and germane underpinning for this thesis, the next section of this review will consider consumption that relates particularly to tourism.

Tourism: commodity, consumption and consumer

The notion of travelling for pleasure is recognised as a quintessential example of modern consumerism (Lash and Urry, 1994; MacCannell, 1999; Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008; Urry, 1990). Contemporary literature that considers tourist practise has, however, experienced a number of important shifts in focus since the 1980's. This has been produced in part by a widening of understanding of consumption and the commodity as outlined in some of the debates above. Critically engaging volunteer tourism in Siem Reap as commodity and as consumption, I therefore, now turn my attention to scholarship and debates on tourism; the tourist and, understandings of touristic consumption.

As Telfer and Sharpley (2008) contend, tourism has emerged since the 1980s as one of the most significant and yet contentious 'socio-economic forces' (p:1). Alongside the vast increase in the number of individuals who are able to travel they argue, has also been an exponential increase in tourist destinations and ways of doing tourism. John Urry (1990) asserts nonetheless, that holidays – tourism, vacationing, travelling for pleasure - are essentially "about consuming goods and services which are in some sense unnecessary" (p:1); about the search, it is also said, for satisfaction and happiness. As such, and alongside the increased interest in consumerism, as Salazar (2004) argues, tourism "can no longer be conceived of as merely what happens at tourist destinations and encounters involving tourists away from home" (p:88). The broader the theoretical and empirical concerns with consumption, consumerism and consumer society, the wider and deeper investigations of tourism have – and continue to - become. Nonetheless, as Urry (1990) argues, the fundamental nature of travelling for pleasure is "multi-faceted

and particularly bound up with many other social and cultural elements” (p:135); and as such, is itself a complex social practise (Rojek and Urry, 1997).

Urry (1990) claims, however, that tourism is a subject capable of revealing “aspects of normal practices which might otherwise remain opaque” (p:2) and therefore, this dynamic and complex phenomenon must cease to be regarded as having only limited sociological appeal. The, at times, lightweight view of tourism may be due in part to what Ritzer, Goodman and Wiedenhof (2012) describe as thinking on consumption being subordinated to thinking on production - even social theorists, they add, seeing themselves in the same terms, ‘producing rather than consuming’ (p:425). Furthermore, whilst Graham Dann (2000) is in accord with the importance of tourism as an area of contemporary concern, he also asserts that it is not only sociology but a “rich kaleidoscope of multidisciplinary insights” (p:368) - history, anthropology, economics, philosophy, geography, political science - that contributes to its greater understanding. Recognising this view, use has been made of an eclectic range of literature to examine the place of volunteer tourism in these conversations.

The study of tourism (and particularly as consumption) has, as such, much to offer a range of investigations of the social world (as have, I will argue, the intricacies and nuances of the specific trend of volunteer vacationing). In the context of this research, for example, wider debates that make significant connections to tourism consumption include: the objectification and commodification of bodies (Bartky, 1990; Desmond, 1999; Sánchez Taylor, 2001; Scheper-Hughes, 2001; Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant, 2002); the ambiguities of contemporary compassionate consumption (Hanlon, 2002; Moore, 2008; Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009; West, 2004); the commercialisation of childhood (Giroux, 2000; Katz, 2008); exoticification (hooks, 1992; Nguyen, 2005; Said, 2003) and, the relationship between charitable tendencies towards the ‘Third World’ and “contemporary capitalist social hegemony” (Hutnyk, 1996, p:221). All of these concepts will be considered in relation to the commodity of volunteer vacations with ‘poor’ children in ‘Third World’ destinations.

Up until the late 1980s, however, as Urry (1990) then argued, despite the significance of consumption to the understanding of tourism in general, the idea remained extremely challenging because, he suggested, of a vagueness in the character of “just what [was] being consumed” (p:33). In his seminal analysis of *The ‘Consumption’ of Tourism*, Urry (1990) described a range of reasons why this may have been so. These included his argument that up until that time, focus had been too firmly fixed on the tangible things that tourists were known to consume; “the hotel bed, the meal, the ticket” (p:26). For Urry, tourist services demand as much, if not more, examination as the physical, knowable signs of tourist consumption.

As Appadurai (2003) also later described, “services are a dominant, even definitive feature of the world of commodity exchange” (p:55). Those services which particularly relate to volunteer tourism have therefore provided important focus in this study; and no less their connections to other important concepts. As an example, I will show how colonial links (Heron, 2007; Kothari, 2006) can be made to the provision - and often expectation - of ‘suitable’ accommodation and facilities for volunteer tourists during their vacations and, how these ‘services’ are often prioritised by vacation providers.

In the years that followed Urry highlighting his concerns, tourism research and social science enquiry purposefully shifted away from the too-narrow focus on consumption of the material. As a consequence, a fundamental transformation occurred in what is now understood about the nature of the tourist commodity; an understanding that has helped to provide a deeper, broader body of scholarship around just what is being consumed in the tourist experience. Perhaps Dean MacCannell (1999) best illustrates this shift in interpretation when he describes “new species of commodities” (p:11). He argues that now focus has moved away from “a pair of pants to a packaged vacation: from a piece of work to a piece of no-work” (MacCannell, 1999, p:11). Understanding what is being consumed, these scholars appear to agree, is pivotal to understanding many other aspects of tourism consumption. In the context of the volunteer vacation, for example, this brings to

mind the blurred conflation of the notion of 'working' as a volunteer when on 'holiday'.

There are now so many different ways to be a tourist that framing is, however, particularly difficult; tourism being a remarkably elastic concept. Tourists may, for example, choose to visit the Taj Mahal in northern India; whitewater raft through the Grand Canyon; spend a week in Disneyland, Paris or, stay in a tent in the middle of a neighbour's field. This 'marked differentiation' as Adorno and Horkheimer (2000, p:5) describe, ensures as they argue, that the market provides something for everyone – everyone, that is, that can afford to pay. By categorising consumers they claim, products can be turned-out to match every desire – and where no desire exists, perhaps this too can be created.

Boorstin's (1961) notion of tourism as a pseudo-event makes connections here, especially his view of the contrived nature of tourist experiences; as well as tourist satisfaction with commoditised products. MacCannell (1999), nonetheless, provides the image of "the middle class systematically scaveng[ing] the earth for new experiences to be woven into a collective, touristic version of other peoples and places" (p:13) and goes on to contend, that for some tourists "the differentiations *are* the attractions" (p:3, italics in the original). Indeed research from Caruana, Crane and Fitchett (2008) argues that there even exists a marketized form of independent tourism where "a myth of independence... operate[s] as a powerful marketing differentiator" (p:269). Whilst this particular form of tourism, as I will show, makes many links to volunteer vacationing, so too do Boorstin's (1961) notion of "the thicket of unreality" (p:3) and of a 'scavenging of the earth' (MacCannell, 1999) in holiday experiences such as the ones that are the focus of this thesis.

Tourism is, furthermore prone to trends and fashions, presenting more challenges to even defining the breadth of the topic. Now there is the steady addition of new market niches ('differentiations') to tempt and attract, with descriptions such as: dark tourism (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2009; Lennon and Foley, 2006); slow tourism

(Fullagar, Markwell and Wilson, 2102); slum tourism (Frenzel, Koens and Steinbrink, 2012); cosmetic surgery tourism (Bell et al., 2011) - even the looming reality of space tourism. Studies also consider the consequences on tourism of the rapid growth and application of technology (Buhalis, 2003; Cooper, 2006); the impact of the climate change debate (Becken and Hay, 2007) and the effects of terrorism (Ravi, 2011; Sloboda, 2003); the exotification of everyday life (hooks, 1992) on holiday choices and, improvements in medical science allowing the benefits of longer and healthy lives and, as such tourism consuming time.

Research from many of these areas provides unique and interesting perspectives to the examination of volunteer tourism. For example, Bowman and Pezzullo (2009) claim that much of the research on, what is termed as, 'dark tourism', is "trapped in questions of authenticity versus commodification, which falsely present[s] the matter as one of either/or, suggesting that such places must be serious or frivolous, educational or entertaining..." (p:195). Here links with the pleasure/poverty, compassion/fun dichotomies of volunteer tourism can be made, encouraging that deeper questions are asked around compromise and conflicting interests, for example.

It is interesting that Bowman and Pezzullo (2009) also suggest that dark tourists appear to blur the meanings of their vacation activities. This notion is useful when considering the fusion of fun and poverty; a fusion, as I will show, that is promoted as a positive feature of the volunteer vacation agenda. Furthermore, as Stone (2008) considers in his research of dark tourism sites and exhibitions, providers of dark tourism attractions "may even dismiss the view that they belong to the wider tourist industry" (p:158). This has much relevance to the analysis of my research where, as I will show, volunteers worked hard to deny their own tourist status as well as the expression of their 'volunteering' as a holiday. Useful links can also be made back to questions of the moral and ethical appropriateness of some things even being available as tourist products – sites of death and torture; the poverty and disadvantage of others – and connectedly, of tourist motivation in these areas.

Research on cosmetic surgery tourism (Bell et al., 2011) and particularly the notion of tourism and embodiment – of the “I’ve been on holiday body” (p:11) – also makes connections, I will show, to the volunteer tourist body. For example, as observations from my fieldwork revealed, volunteer tourists in Siem Reap are often distinguished by how they mark their bodies, for example, choosing to wear orphanage or project t-shirts (even when not at their volunteer placement); local market-bought clothing and ethnic-style tattoos (homogenising cultures and ethnicities) and, friendship bracelets and necklaces made by, and/or bought from, local children. Volunteer tourism, I argue, has a place in conversations such as these and particularly where the ‘tourism-ness’ (Bell et al., 2011) of alternative trends is explored.

Pertinently, Bell et al., (2011) also argue that cosmetic surgery tourist destinations take advantage of “ideas, images, myths and stories about place in order to attract visitors” (p:152), a notion that again has much to say to this study and the promotion of volunteer tourism. I will show, in Siem Reap narratives have been established around this trend of vacationing, although many NGOs and charity organisations argue that in reality, ‘need’ is frequently more pressing elsewhere in the country (ConCERT, 2012; UNICEF, 2011); and most often in those places that tourists find less appealing to visit.

Despite Urry’s (1990) concern that too great an emphasis had in the past been placed on the tangible, it is important, however, not to neglect this area. For example, Hutnyk (1996) talks about “exotic tidings” (p: 154) - those things that are brought back from vacations – asserting that, “every purchase tells a story” (p:154). Ming Jeng Shen (2011) makes a connection between cultural souvenirs and authenticity and argues that different levels exist in the desire for the authenticity of souvenirs; Boorstin’s (1961) notion of tourist satisfaction with commoditised products, again linking here. Material items, they argue, do have a relevance to the experiences that have been consumed, whether presented as gifts or placed in a drawer back home and forgotten. For Hutnyk (1996), the material souvenir is imbued with a notion of consumption that extends way beyond the object as thing.

Souvenirs, he argues, must also be understood as symbols of cultural experiences consumed; of differences consumed; of frontiers consumed; “of status itself [no less than] in the context of a history of plunder” (Hutnyk, 1996, p:152). Even when thinking about the material then, the foggy nature of just what is being consumed in tourism continues to stretch and challenge the ways of seeing.

Urry (1990) further argues that “in relation to tourism it is crucial to recognise how the consumption of tourist services is social” (Urry, 1990, p:25) and so again, following his other earlier concerns, a good deal of scholarship is now focused on, what he describes as, the embedded-ness of tourist consumption within social relations. Such studies provide valuable insight into tourism communities and, into the relationship of these communities to each other (Hutnyk, 1996; MacCannell, 1999; Mowforth and Munt 1998; Telfer and Sharpley 2008). As Jonas Larsen (2008) contends, “tourists never just travel *to* places: their mindsets, routines, and social relations travel *with* them” (p:27, italics in original). As such, the kind of individuals we are in our own environment is now recognised as having a good deal to do with the kind of tourism we choose to consume; as well as the kind of tourists we are when away from home. What these studies argue is that vacations are chosen to reflect existing values and social relations; individuals that see themselves as ‘responsible’, for example, are likely to seek out a ‘responsible’ vacation option (in all its incongruities). These ideas are particularly important when considering the marketing of the volunteer vacation as a responsible and positive choice.

The embedded-ness of these social relations in tourism consumption also makes important links to motivation - motivation being an area that receives a good deal of attention in tourism literature. For example, the framing of the world into a series of places to be visited, often determined by a ‘First’ and a ‘Third’ criterion as Desforges (2000) contends, makes close links with motivation, social relations and consumption. Here too connections will be made in this study to factors such as, managing narratives of self through the vacations individuals choose to consume. Rojek (1997) also suggests a western lifelong predisposition to ‘witness’ significant places - even as these places are constantly being revised.

These motives are encouraged by an array of supporting products such as the series of 'Places to see before you die' publications (Schulz, 2003). Significantly, however, 'must do' experiences are now marketed as enthusiastically as 'must go' places and volunteer tourism speaks to the ability of the tourist industry to develop and define new products to meet this amalgamation of desires and longings – and pertinently, for us to define ourselves through what we choose to consume.

For MacCannell (1973), a wish for authentic experiences is central to tourist motivation; whilst for Urry (2001) the search for 'difference' – at least of "some sense [of] contrast with everyday experience" (p:12) – is a key motivating factor in choosing a vacation. The sense of difference also extends, Urry argues, to other peoples' tourist experiences. Within the context of this study, post-conflict Cambodia is considered to be a country that "represents an opportunity to "explore" a place that has yet to be incorporated into the heavily populated tourist circuits of neighbouring Thailand and Malaysia" (Winter, 2006, p:44). Combined with the appeal of an activity that mainstream vacations do not generally offer, here is a new and exciting destination and the opportunity to become involved in what others may not have experienced.

Other research (Dann, 1977; Desforges, 2000; Hutnyk, 1996; Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011) suggests strong links between identity and travel, particularly for young people who use the experiences inherent in visiting other than western destinations, as both a "stretch[ing] out" and a "narration" of their identities (Desforges, 2000, p:176). For other vacationers, as Desforges (2000) argues, tourism allows them to "define themselves according to their individual experiences of the world" (p:935). Dann (1977) and Desforges (2000) suggest that tourism choice may also provide the opportunity to redefine or characterise yourself as the sort of person you would really like to be.

Tourist selection is also often based on a desire for the satisfaction of knowing that the same choices are being made by those considered to be appropriate co-consumers (Urry, 1990) – for example other independent backpackers (Caruana et

al., 2008); other cultural sightseers or other volunteer tourists. Once again the market can reap the benefits of 'marked differentiation' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2000). Whilst interrupting an understanding of the tourist as motivated by the search for difference, or a sense of distinction from the everyday (Urry 2001), the view that tourist choices are inclined towards the preferences of those considered fitting others, is clearly described by Appadurai (2003) when he talks about "the knowledge that goes into appropriately consuming the commodity" (p:41). Here I will also make links between the notion of 'appropriately consuming' and the pre-existence of a middle-class, 'First World' knowledge of certain etiquettes and protocols – of a social capital that allows volunteer vacationing to even be an option. The concept is also evident, as I will show, in expressions, enactment and codes and conventions of 'doing volunteering'; of ideas of being 'good tourists' with good intentions and, of understandings of morality, compassion and decency needed to (appropriately) consume this vacation product.

Appadurai's argument (2003) also supports the view that narratives of self can be motivating factors in the choice of tourist activities or destinations. As Herbert Marcuse (2002) contends, "people recognise themselves in their commodities" (p:11) and, as such in the importance of consumer decisions. A connection can also be made here to Hirsch's (1977) notion of positional goods in that, as he contends, an item or activity's value can be based on the opinion that others do not possess it. As I will show, marketing from vacation providers and NGOs attracting fee paying volunteers, often focuses on the uniqueness of these vacations (despite their mass appeal); on the notion, for example, that potential vacationers who go-ahead and make these choices, can consider themselves to be extraordinary and special.

It has been argued that tourist motivation - and hence consumption - may also be linked to life style factors and significant life time landmarks (Dann, 2000, Desforges, 2000). Whilst much focus has been on younger vacationers, healthcare advancements, for example, now allow an ageing western population to make extended and more adventurous post-retirement travel particularly achievable. In a study of the senior citizen tourist market, Dann (2002) suggests a link between

feelings of declining status and age-related social discrimination and, the possible ego-enhancing properties from tourism and travel; these particular experiences may be explored, he suggests, as the consumption of a product that offers rejuvenation and the chance to revitalise self-esteem.

When thinking about the motivation of more mature volunteer tourists in my study, it was useful to consider Dann's (2002) assertion that the desire to (re)establish an independent self, after perhaps retirement or family responsibilities, may have appeal to these tourists. Nonetheless, career break opportunities; widespread support of the gap year and, even voluntary redundancy packages now allow many westerners to make tourist choices that were once the privilege of the upper classes (Dann, 2002).

Research shows, however, that effective tourism marketing and advertising requires an expert understanding of the desires and motivations of the consumer (Fodness, 1994; Goossens, 2000; Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008). In this way, vacation providers can "persuade, lure, woo and seduce" (Dann, 1996, p:2) potential clients into becoming actual clients. As such, the tourist industry is seen to exploit many of the tourists' desires and longings, marketing and promoting for example, as I will show, authentic experiences; new and unusual destinations; rejuvenation and, promises to get away from it all. Potential volunteer vacationers, I will argue, are equally tempted by marketing promises to fulfil their particular dreams and fantasies – an argument that forms the basis of Chapter Six where I explore *just* what is being consumed in this tourist trend.

Framing the 'other' – the 'Third World' commodity

Ravi (2011) argues that "postcolonial critique of tourism sees the tourist as one of the most virulent perpetrators of neo-liberalism, turning "the exotic" natives into commodities and objects of curiosity" (p:220). She continues, that where discourse promotes the protection and conservation of the 'traditional' for tourist consumption, "it replicates colonialist tropes of Otherness and categories of privilege and poverty" (Ravi, 2011, p:220). In the 1988 film *Cannibal Tours*,

documentary filmmaker Dennis O'Rourke followed a group of western tourists through village communities of Papua New Guinea. O'Rourke described the film as "an attempt to discover the place of 'the Other' in the popular imagination" (Camerawork, 2013) in what are often viewed as 'civilised/primitive' encounters. Indeed, there has been discussion amongst scholars as to who the cannibals (the consumers; the devourers) of the title actually are (King, 2000; MacCannell; 1992). These discussions are also relevant to how the 'other' is framed in volunteer tourism discourse and practise.

Within sociological exploration the objectives, desires, identities and experiences of 'First World' tourists to 'Third World' destinations have received much focus (Hutnyk 1996; Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Said 2003; Simpson 2004; Sin 2009; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008; Urry, 1995). Contemporary enquiries now offer a diverse set of scholarship to broaden understanding of the relationships between 'us' and 'them'; between us and us and, between them and them in relation to tourism and travel. In this section of the review, literature will be considered that offers insight into how the 'other' is framed in volunteer tourism discourse and how this informs interactions between 'us and them' in 'Third World' destinations. Salazar (2004) argues, for example, that a desire by vacationers to "see the last remnants of 'otherness' before they are (supposedly) gone" (p:93), results in a perpetuation of the notion of 'the other' as something different and unique; as such, as a thing to be consumed as a part of the tourism experience.

Telfer and Sharpley (2008) assert that, as globally the number of tourists continues to increase, so too do the number of regions and countries that are opening up to receive them. Within almost all of these regions – even some of the most remote places on earth where tourists venture - host/visitor interactions are taken to be almost inevitable. Indeed, much scholarship has considered the complex relationship between tourism in general and the people and communities that tourists visit (Enloe, 2000; Hutnyk, 1996; MacCannell, 1999; McGehee & Andereck 2009; Mowforth and Munt 1998; Sin 2009; Telfer and Sharpley 2008; Urry 1995). It is always hoped that these encounters will result in a positive experience, both for

the receiving community, as well as for the tourist. Nonetheless, whether in Siem Reap or Sierra Leone, just for example, relationships and encounters are specific to a particular place at a particular time and involve a diverse (whilst at the same time, exclusive) set of individuals from differing social, cultural and personal backgrounds. Nonetheless, despite the range of places now visited, people from receiving communities are often referred to homogeneously as 'locals'.

Mowforth and Munt (1998) contend that when looking specifically at tourism in 'Third World' destinations, some outcomes "are rosy" (p:269), whilst others are considerably less positive - at one extreme, tourism being held responsible for destroying communities and ways of life that first attracted the tourist consumer. At the other extreme Cohen (1988), for example, argues that tourism can be seen to help preserve cultural traditions and rituals by generating a demand for tourists to see or experience, as such placing a new value upon them. Tourism literature offers valuable perspectives on encounters between tourists and hosts in a wide range of settings; historical periods and, tourist typologies. Nevertheless, to develop this thesis it was necessary to consider a broader scholarship that deals with notions of 'otherness' and how the 'other' is framed. As I will argue, this is because in the volunteer vacation great importance is placed on the appeal and opportunities for, what are often described as, 'real' encounters with 'real' people in 'real' communities.

Echtner and Prasad (2003) argue that advertising and marketing of vacations to 'Third World' destinations tends to reflect the particular interests and desires of white, 'First World' holidaymakers. As such, they continue, representations are often removed from the actualities of a place and its people. To reflect the desires of cultural tourists say, a country (as well as the people who inhabit it) may be marketed as unspoilt, mystical and exotic; to reflect the desires of young, sun-seeking, hedonists, the same country may be shown as colourful, vibrant and carefree.

Furthermore, Sturma (1999) contends that, what he describes as a “representational loop”, allows that (often) colonial stereotypical images are “replicated and reinforced [until they] in turn become part of the... language of tourism [again about a place and its people]” (p:713). In the context of volunteer tourism, this supports the argument that I will make in this thesis, that images of ‘needy Third World others’ are used in much the same way as the carefully chosen images in mainstream marketing are also used to reflect the particular desires and interests of the consumer – long, golden beaches or colourful nightlife, for example. Furthermore in the case of the volunteer tourist, as I will also show, often these are consumers who also wish to disassociate from the images of conventional styles of holidaymaking. Lyons and Wearing (2008) describe volunteer tourism as “the new ‘poster child’ for alternative tourism” (p:6) and as such, marketing reflects the availability and accessibility of the ‘other’ to these particular tourists.

It is, however, important to understand the manner in which the ‘other’ is identified and represented in the volunteer vacation. As Said (2003) contends, “the construction of identity....*is* finally a construction [that] involves establishing opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from ‘us’” (p:332, italics in original). In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Said (2003) argues that discourse that establishes binary oppositions also establishes hierarchical contrasts – in the volunteer vacation between, for example, expressions of developed and undeveloped; modern and primitive; plentiful and in need. Furthermore, in volunteer tourism discourse, as I will argue, the capable, enthusiastic, western volunteer tourist is placed in direct opposition to the (as described) needy, sometimes incapable but otherwise beautiful (exotic) ‘other’. These notions help to define and shape, as Escobar (1991) claims, a ‘First World’ reality of the globe – as well as here, a ‘Third World’ that is available for consumption. At the same time, the notion is reinforced that development is something that is done for ‘others’ in ‘other’ places; a notion that also informs volunteer tourism.

Acknowledging that theorists have argued against the “simplistic binary structure” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2001, p:23), the concept will, however, not be discarded here because as I will argue, the binary model is rigidly adhered to in volunteer tourism discourse (also helping to reveal more about how the ‘other’ is framed in the trend). Furthermore, it has been argued that these descriptions continue to be worryingly associated with the colonial image of ideological domination and control as they remain based on power structures of privilege and authority (Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Heron, 2007; Hutnyk 1996, Kothari, 2005; Simpson 2004). As Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) also argue, a further outcome is that the ‘other’ remains passively positioned; volunteer tourists as those who make development happen. The simplistic binary, as I will argue then, is still very much at work in volunteer tourism discourse.

Furthermore, Salazar (2004) also argues that, “...when the ‘self/other’ binary opposition is deconstructed, it becomes clear that concern for ‘others’, understanding of ‘others’ and care of ‘others’ can impinge on the ‘self’ in a positive way” (p:104). Indeed, as Simpson (2004) argues, it is the ‘needs of populations’, which are a key concept championed within the rationale of these vacations. As I will show, it is through discourses of improvement, assistance and support that the volunteer vacation is framed in terms of the help and benefit tourists provide to other communities. Whilst volunteer vacations are described as “holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society” (Wearing, 2001, p:1), the marketing widely reiterates and reaffirms this perspective. As I will argue, volunteer tourism discourse (which includes photographic images) effectively reaffirms the view, as Heron (2007) also demonstrates, that ‘the other’ is in need of Northern, or developed ‘First World’ intervention and, support.

Connectedly, it has also been argued that within the notion of otherness is frequently embedded the stereotype (Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Heron, 2007; Hutnyk 1996, Kothari, 2005; Simpson 2004). Volunteer tourism discourse that relates to Cambodia and Siem Reap carries, as I will show, many stereotypical

images of, for example, Asianness, Cambodian-ness, exoticness; no less, neediness and 'Third World-ness' – essentially, what may be described as a homogenous 'otherness'. For Homi Bhabha (1990) the stereotype is far from a passive depiction but, he asserts, is rather an instrument of power which whilst holding knowledge of 'the other', also reveals knowledge of the self. This knowledge is also held within the perception of, as Said (2003) describes, "we are this, they are that" (p:237). Whilst Said (2003) also claims that these understandings are a product of the colonial era, Barbara Heron (2007) argues that such notions continue to be circulated and "freely reproduced in [western] popular culture" (p:3). As such and as I will show, in this research volunteer tourists arriving in Siem Reap, often have what Said (2003) describes as a preconceived notion of the people who live there; how they act and look.

The consequences of these representations and knowledge, as Simpson (2004) argues, is that a geography is produced – a simplistic 'north/south' construction of the world - that "legitimizes the validity of young unskilled international labour as a development solution" (p:682). Furthermore, framing the 'other' as in need and available, reaffirms understandings of self as competent and capable. In Simpson's (2004, 2005) research on volunteering during gap year vacations, she asserts that enthusiasm and willingness are frequently described as the most important qualities required to make a difference to the lives of children or even entire (host) communities. In short, connections can be made to how volunteer tourists in places like Cambodia are represented as the embodiment of expertise and whose know-how - even in its most basic form ('no skills required') - surpasses that of the (framed as) 'poor and needy other'. These views are in line with the principal argument of *Orientalism* (Said, 2003), in that the manner in which these understandings are gained, is far from innocent. What Said (2003) argues is that how we come to know the 'other', is the outcome of a process in which our own interests (the 'First Worlds'; the west's) are central.

Some studies describe how the outcome of gap year volunteer vacations can help break down "prejudices about the placement country, dispelling simplistic and

uniformed views about ...the population” (Jones, 2005, p:94;). Jones (2005), for example also argues that young volunteers may even “acquire a sophisticated and wide-ranging understanding of the culture of the host country” (p:95); an outcome he describes as being the result of a positive “cross-cultural experience” (p:94). However, this particular study as Jones reveals, was “commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) drawing heavily on the views of the Informal Consultation Group on Gap Years – an advisory body comprised of key stakeholders across the gap year sector” (Jones, 2005, p:15). I would argue that it is likely that the key stakeholders would be keen to have these more positive outcomes noted. Other research, from Palacios (2010) for example, whilst claiming that the programs in his study appear to produce some benefits in terms of global engagement, concludes that the advertised “goal of development aid seems to not only be unrealistic in this context but undesirable” (p:874).

I favour the view of studies that are more critical of, for example, the pedagogical effectiveness of these types of vacation (Conran, 2011; Crossley, 2012; Hartley, 1992; Heron, 2007; Illich, 1968; McGehee and Andereck, 2008; Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009). In her study of volunteer and gap year-type vacations Simpson (2004) for example, explored the particular question of what gap year volunteers learned about ‘the others’ they encounter. She asserts that most vacations of this type lack an engagement with the serious issues of social injustice, even as tourists spend time in environments where they are likely to have the opportunity to directly witness some of these concerns. As a consequence, most often concepts of ‘us and them’ are reinforced rather than challenged. Simpson (2004) concludes that “currently, the gap year industry promotes an image of a ‘third world other’ that is dominated by simplistic clichés, where the public face of development is one dominated by the value of western ‘good intentions” (p:690). This claim is supported by Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) who also describe how participants in their research expressed the view that helping others during their volunteer vacation gave them an invaluable opportunity to “learn more about those who they saw as dissimilar to themselves” (p:116).

This research has also been influenced by other studies that highlight the concern that notions of us and them are reinforced by development-oriented experiences. Barbara Heron (2007), for example, has explored the relationships between African people and white, female Canadian development workers in Zambia. Her research is particularly valuable here as she draws both on critical race and colonial and postcolonial studies to examine the desire, as she describes, to go out to the 'Third World' to help. Heron (2007) argues that engagement with the 'other' often progresses from an initial "recoil from apparently insurmountable difference [to the eventual] embrace of romanticized Otherness" (p:66). Pertinently however, she also asserts that in her study, she observed two particular reoccurring indicators of 'Othering'. Firstly she contends, African people were always understood to be 'available' - there to be befriended or helped; for "meeting across difference" (p:66) - and secondly, that the Canadian women assumed the right "to be in the Other's space... and entitled to intervene in the Other's existence" (Heron, 2007, p:66). Despite the complexity and range of encounters in these spaces – with fellow development volunteers; other foreigners; African workmates and domestic workers – Heron (2007) concludes that "the tales we tell are of our earnestness and innocence: our struggle for true relations across difference and the ultimate purity of our participation in the relationships" (p:90).

This has great resonance I would say, with Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) powerful concept of 'anti-conquest' which she defines as "the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (p.7). As I will show in my study, the significance I take from both Pratt (1992) and Heron (2007) – and the connection this makes to the next section of this review - is the argument that in development-oriented activities (which includes the volunteer vacation), it is the 'other' that acts as a counterpoint to our own virtuous gestures.

Finally in this section, I wish to make another connection here between consumption and the notion of otherness by citing bell hooks' (1992) concept of, what she describes as, the appeal of "getting a bit of the other" (p:344).

Considering the pervasive nature of the consumption of exotic otherness, hooks (1992) examined the desires of young, white middle-class American men who deliberately seek out sexual encounters with black women. The appeal of these encounters, hooks (1992) claims, is rooted in a search for personal transformation. The broadness of her complex but compelling argument is, that through the consumption of exotic otherness - be it sexual, culinary, touristic, musical, for example - it is hoped that the consumer will be changed in some interesting and exciting way. Consuming the other is considered to bring sophistication, taste or maybe style to those who consumer - depending on the context. The appeal of black rap music to white, middle-class young men, for example, has been associated with a search for adolescent coolness and street credibility (Gladwell, 1997); the "consumption of commodified Asianness", (Nguyen, 2005, p:53) with the desire for cosmopolitanism or international sophistication. Transgressing the boundaries of the 'others' cultural spaces, bell hooks (1992) argues, enables the consumer to "reenter [their own] world no longer the same" (p:346).

This concept is pertinent to volunteer tourism and vacation choice. Arguments from tourism literature, for example, have shown that vacation choice is often based on the desire for personal transformation; a change of identity; renewal; personal betterment; a cathartic experience (MacCannell, 1999; Ryan, 2002; Urry, 1995). Again, here is the notion that the experience of (consuming) the other may be based on a search for change. In volunteer tourism, as I will show, there are many references to the sense of a life changing experience; to claims of never feeling the same again; to personal enrichment and self-actualisation (Giddens, 1991).

To summarise this section of the review, the course of this project has been influenced by a good deal of literature from a range of disciplines that considers how the 'other' is framed. That the practise of volunteer tourism makes substantial connections to this scholarship, signals ways in which the trend has a firm place in these conversations. Furthermore, through a close examination of volunteer tourism discourse as I will show, the concern has been raised that argues that, how

the 'other' is framed determines, if or how, colonial images of ideological domination and control - structures of power, privilege and authority (Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Heron, 2007; Hutnyk 1996, Kothari, 2005; Simpson 2004) - are maintained or abandoned. This will be developed further in the next section that explores how 'First World-ness' – including whiteness – can, when worn as a badge of benevolence, also be justified on the grounds that privilege can best help the 'less-privileged other'.

'First World-ness' – including whiteness - as a badge of benevolence

Scholars engaging Whiteness studies, critical race theory and/or post-colonial critique to social practises where links can be made with the consumption of volunteer tourism, have provided support and direction to the progress of this study (Ahmed, 2004; Black, 2002; Dyer, 200; Enders & Gould 2009; Fanon, 2004; Grewal, 1996; Heron, 2007; Kothari, 2006; Leonardo, 2009; Lipsitz, 1998; Mills, 1997; Warren & Hytten, 2004). For example, Barbara Heron (2007) and her study of white, Canadian female development workers in Africa; John Hutnyk (1996) and his research on the relationship between tourism, charity and poverty in Calcutta; Kate Simpson (2004, 2005) and her work on the gap year holiday trend; Uma Kothari (2005) and her critiques of development studies; Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and her seminal book exploring travel writing and European expansion and, Didier Fassin (2012) and his account of humanitarianism; to name but a few. However, far from providing a list of scholarship consulted, the intention here is to indicate the broad base of concepts with which this study makes connections and from which the background is provided.

These connections include, for example: tourism consumption as a powerful, socio-economic and political force; the 'Third World' (and specifically its) poverty as a space "endowed with meaning through lived experiences" (Wynveen, Kyle and Sutton, 2009, p:136), to be consumed by the 'First World'; the trend's increasingly popular appeal within the formidable 'north to south'/'west to east' tourist industry agenda; compassionate consumerism as a significant contemporary social practice - in particular the alliance between fun and benevolence - and, the

exotification of childhood innocence as “a mystifying ideology and... vehicle for commercial profit” (Giroux, 2000, p:61). What I will describe in this section is how ideas from this broad and eclectic range of scholarship have been built upon to guide and inform this research.

Whiteness theory, for example, considers the relationships between whiteness, power and privilege. As such, scholarship provides critical interrogation to the manner in which institutions, practises, systems and discourse, re-enact and play-out white privilege in everyday life (Endres and Gould 2009; Nakayama and Krizek 1995; Twine and Gallagher 2008; Warren and Hytten 2004). Whilst there appears to have been limited engagement of Whiteness theory to critically interpret the commodity of ‘Third World’ volunteer tourism, I argue that this can be regarded as a particularly useful tool with which to explore the practises and discourse that underline this trend; an almost exclusively white, leisure experience consumed by ‘First World’ tourists in countries such as Cambodia. Uma Kothari (2006), for example, pertinently asserts that due to an assumption that development takes place in non-racialised spaces and outside of racialised histories, then few strains are placed on the understanding that something good is being done here. With this in mind, I heed Ruth Frankenberg’s (1993) warning that when considering any process from within a vast range of interrelationships, there may be “tremendous risks in *not* critically engaging whiteness” (p:1, italics in original).

The possible confusion, however, between Whiteness/whiteness; white-skinned or white culture is recognised in a number of studies concerned with identity and whiteness (Enders and Gould 2009; Leonardo 2002; Slater, 2013; Warren and Hytten 2004), although many acknowledge that whiteness is of itself a product; a result of many and varied experiences, thoughts, influences, understandings and deliberations that create not only a colour-less, centred, norm but also a relational construction of a racialised other. However, for Charles W. Mills in his seminal work *The Racial Contract* (1997), the distinction can be simply understood in terms of the separation between “whiteness as a phenotype/racial classification [and]

Whiteness as a politicoeconomic system” (p:106); a distinction that I favour in this study.

Mills (1997) assertion is indeed supported by many leading academics in this field. Zeus Leonardo (2009), for example, talks about whiteness, not as a reference to all white people but rather, as a “collective racial epistemology” (p:111). Within this understanding, he goes on to argue, race is a structuring principle that, whilst often interpreted as a naturally occurring phenomenon, is “part of the assumptions that ultimately inform how people construct their world” (Leonardo, 2009, p:110). For Charles W. Mills (1997), the supremacy of whiteness is also “a system that white people (who enjoy its privileges), nonetheless, “just take for granted” (p:2). This is due in part he continues, because white people have different choices. It is scholarship such as this that informs whiteness in this research; the central concerns, that is, being with performance and understandings; with how whiteness is used and expressed when being a volunteer tourist; of how volunteer tourism necessitates “acting a certain way” (Slater, 2013, p:4).

George Lipsitz (1998) goes further and argues that “whiteness has a cash value” (p:vii). White Americans, the focus of his argument are persuaded, he contends, to invest in their own white status in order to continue to reap the benefits and rewards that their racialised position in society brings. He refers to this notion as ‘*The Possessive Investment in Whiteness - how white people profit from identity politics*’ (1998). Links will be made in this thesis to volunteer tourism marketing literature that emphasises personal development for the volunteer tourist as a result of, what may be described as the ‘investment’ in a volunteer vacation. As I will show, with competition for jobs and university places driving the need for CV enhancing experiences, volunteer placement companies and the media focus heavily on the benefits of these vacations to the tourist.

Furthermore, as Heath (2007) also contends, “the gap year has a strong historical association with privilege” (p:99). As she goes on to argue, today’s middle-class families struggling to ‘maintain their class position’, are prepared to pay-out for gap

year or volunteer tourist type activities, in an effort to maximize future educational and career chances for their children; what again may be described as a 'possessive investment' (Lipsitz, 1998).

Zeus Leonardo (2009) talks about "the collectivity known as whiteness" (p:111) which is a concept that can be used to understand assumptions about who volunteer tourists are in Cambodia. Whiteness, as I will argue, supposes a level of affluence at the tourist destination - whether by other white individuals or by many Cambodians. There is the cost of flights, for example, as well as other vacation expenses - visas, insurance, medical immunisation programmes - the cost of time away from work; accommodation; the price-tag on the volunteer tourist product. Whiteness, can also express an individual's sense of adventure; a certain style or taste – choosing Cambodia not Thailand; Siem Reap in preference to the beach at Sihanoukville, for example.

Significantly too, Sarah White (2002) in her study in Bangladesh of race in development, suggests that white workers there enjoy a "position of marked racial privilege" (p:408). She goes on to describe how, whilst discussions about matters of race in development circles were largely considered a taboo, "privately many will admit that race has 'got something to do with it'" (White, 2002, p:407). As I will argue, the notion of 'marked racial privilege' informs ways in which volunteer tourism is both experienced and performed in Cambodia. For example, tourism services in Siem Reap, as I observed in my research and will be unpacked in this thesis, claim to "open [their] arms in warm embrace to [the] people that matter most" (sidewalkneverdie, 2012). That the volunteer tourist, like the development worker, enjoys these positions of privilege, is a central concern of this study.

However, at the same time it is important, as Twine and Gallagher (2008) describe, to be aware of 'essentializing accounts of whiteness' [by] recognising that race is but "one of many social relations that shape individual and group identity"(p:6) and I would add, behaviour. That the volunteer tourist is part of other privileged collectives – not only those based on 'whiteness' – will also be considered.

Durkheim (1984), for example talked of a 'collective consciousness' of shared moral positionings which can function as a unifying force; as I will show in this research, a collective of individuals with the same desire to 'make the world of difference'. Pertinently, Durkheim (1984) also talked about how solidarity can occur when groups reject other groups' viewpoints or situations. This is relevant to tourism in Siem Reap where, in my research volunteers often expressed their position as quite distinct from that of mainstream tourists; as MacCannell (1999) contends "tourists dislike tourists" (p.10), at least that is, tourists not doing tourism in the same way as themselves.

Here I make a link to the notion of compassionate consumerism. Sarah Moore (2008) found in her study of *Ribbon Culture*, that many wearers "viewed other ribbon wearers as compassionate and caring" (p:142). By association, Moore (2008) goes on to suggest, individuals must consider themselves to possess these same qualities. Referring again to Marcuse's (2002) argument that "people recognise themselves in their commodities" (p:11) and now alongside notions of the collective (Durkheim, 1984; Leonardo, 2009), I will show that it becomes possible to identify ways in which whiteness and/or 'First World-ness' can signal a group notion of being benevolent and compassionate. Such links encouraged me to see the broad complexities of volunteer tourism as a social practice as well as to continue to pay attention to the many connections to privilege and race.

Returning to the concept of white privilege, some scholars have argued that the advantages of whiteness can be rationalised and justified as a tool of benevolence (Enders and Gould, 2009; Heron, 2007; Hunter 2010; Kothari, 2006; Warren and Hytten, 2004). For example, Enders and Gould (2009) made a study of a cohort of students who - whilst their university course linked them to projects in the community - had also pertinently been exposed to critical theories of whiteness as part of their wider programme. At the end of the course, although many students "seemed to accept that they had White privilege" (p:433), Enders and Gould (2009) concluded that most upheld the notion that their privilege could be justified on the grounds that it helped them to more effectively help people of colour in the

community. In this way, they went on to suggest, students were “attempt[ing] to justify and normalise their complicity in white privilege instead of challenging it” (Enders and Gould, 2009, p:421).

By seeing their privilege as a positive item in their charitable tool kit, students were clinging to their racial identities - and the privileges it carried for them. These discourses of paternalistic white benevolence, as I will argue, also speak to the ability of volunteer tourism to sustain the view that these vacations are racially neutral and removed from racialised histories (Kothari, 2006). They also echo the colonial mission in the form of a sense of duty; the obligation of tutelage and, universal salvation (Osterhammel, 1999).

As White (2002) describes however, “the silence on race is a determining silence, which both masks and marks its centrality to the development project” (p:407) and as such here, matters of race, racial advantage and ways in which this advantage is rationalised and justified are pertinent, as I will show, to an understanding of volunteer tourist consumption.

Once again, however, I am drawn to Pratt’s (1992) description of anti-conquest narratives. As she describes, these narratives act to neutralise power and authority by showing the ‘other’ in a romanticised and exoticised light and the explorer (here volunteer tourist) as the ‘innocent’ bearer of kindness and generosity. Again the argument is being made that white privilege is rationalised and becomes part of the process that informs an understanding that justifies its existence (if its existence is even recognised) as an instrument with which to do ‘good’ things. Against this, as I will argue, the importance of John Hutnyk’s (1996) contention - that the desire to ‘offer help’ or ‘do something positive’, has “to be understood more closely within the global framework of contemporary capitalist social hegemony” (p:221) - becomes more pressing.

Finally, in an attempt to challenge the fixed notions of dualism often associated with issues of whiteness, Warren and Hytten (2004) suggest that individuals take

different stances towards their own privilege. These they describe metaphorically, relating attitudes – as well as the consequences of these attitudes - to a mask that is worn on the face. Their argument, that the mask represents the transient nature of white positions, also reflects their findings that individuals often reveal different ‘faces’ at different times and that even within each metaphorical description - torpedied, missionary, cynic, intellectualizer and critical democrat (p:325) - there is a shifting nature of white identity. For example, those wearing the ‘missionary mask’ are viewed as individuals most wanting to see change although at the same time, they often lack knowledge of the depth and complexity of the real political issues. As Warren and Hytten (2004) describe, ‘missionaries’ are those who either volunteer to “help those of colour who suffer under the weight of racism... [or] save other White folks from racism” (p:327) often through arguments with family and friends. By contrast, the ‘torpedied mask’ is characterised by feelings of guilt, embarrassment and regret at their own racial privilege. These individuals tend to react to whiteness issues by stagnating conversations and reducing “complex social systems to the site of an... obsession with their own implications” (p:327). Warren and Hytten (2004) as well as Nakayama and Krizek (1995) offer valuable insights into whiteness identity and its implications for the consumption of volunteer tourism, whilst also clearly recognising the complexity and dynamics of what is often regarded as an invisible, colour-less space (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995).

Commodification of bodies

With the theme of consumerism forming the anchor, I now move on to describe literature that considers the commodification and objectification of bodies and show how these concepts had a formative influence on this project. Once again, it is scholarship from a range of disciplines that has enabled me to see that links between tourism, compassion and consumerism are both broad and complex. I begin with the concept of commodification and then, in the second part of this section, move on to consider the notion of objectification.

The commodification of bodies is described by Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant in their powerful analysis of *Commodifying Bodies* (2002), as a broad concept that

“encompass[es] all capitalized economic relations between humans in which human bodies are the token of economic exchanges” (p:2). Many easy to identify examples fit this definition: the sale of organs; commercial sperm banks; slavery; marriage dowries; mail-order brides; certain methods of international adoption, to name but a few. The commodified body, as these examples show, may be offered entire and intact or, fragmented into parts or components; the process may involve the transitory use of an-other body not always representing, that is, ‘a buy to keep’ arrangement - surrogate mothering is an example. Here, through capitalist market mechanisms, a functioning female body is effectively loaned for the period of gestation by another person(s). Likewise, in prostitution or sex work, the economic exchange results in the temporary use/experience of ‘an-others’ (most often female) body. Whilst opinion exists that what is sold in prostitution is a service and not a body (van der Veen, 2001), Appadurai’s (2003) contention that “the term “commodity” is used... to refer to things that, at a certain *phase* in their careers and in a particular *context*, meet the requirements of commodity candidacy” (p:16, italics in original), allows the understanding that sometimes the body is a commodity, in other contexts, the same body it is not. As I will show the concept of ‘a thing split in two’ (Lefebvre on Marx, 1968) is pertinent to the notion of the Cambodian child - child as child; child as commodity for the volunteer tourism industry.

Goulding (1998) significantly argues that the essentials of the manufacturing process are replicated in many economic exchanges that involve the human body. Through a systematic series of operations, the body is turned into what can be described as a commodity – a thing that can be bought and sold. In the commodification process, the product - a body or body part, for example - is defined and sourced; it is transformed into the thing to be marketed; advertised; a deal is struck; payment is made/received; then, in some circumstances maybe, packaged and dispatched; the exchange is completed. Globalisation and modern communication networks facilitate these processes (Ritzer, 2001), as well as stimulating supply and demand. An array of technologies, as Ritzer (2001) describes, impact on consumption habits and patterns; the credit card; global

internet advertising and marketing; the secure transfer of payments; rapid and safe storage and movement of goods (here, body parts and whole bodies) – technologies which are themselves being constantly improved, refined and updated. These technologies have also arguably increased the availability of, as well as the access to, bodies (and parts of the body) for sale - and indeed of a customer base that creates the market that is prepared and able to buy. In the example of human sperm, Diane Tober (2001) talks about the abundance of “web pages for infertility clinics, sperm repositories, egg banks and ... ‘private gamete brokers’” (p:155) and claims that the exchange process of this particular commodity is now, not only mainstream but, global.

In her research of the sale of human organs and tissue, Scheper-Hughes (2002) is particularly concerned with the inequality between buyers and sellers. The example of an Indian woman offering her kidney for sale to an American businessman, in order to buy medicine for her sick child, can be used to illustrate the imbalance that particularly concerns her. Here the woman’s kidney has diminished to what Scheper-Hughes (2002) describes as a commodity of “last resort” (p:65). When one individual is reduced to selling a part (or the use) of their body, the market she argues, has clearly become problematic. Furthermore, Scheper-Hughes (2002) claims this imbalance is often concealed behind the defence of neoliberal market choice and the argument that exchanges such as these provide a win-win situation for all – the Indian woman has money for medicine, the American businessman his health. This justification is, however, extremely problematic. At the least, the Indian woman’s own health and well-being is now compromised due to her reduced renal capacity – let alone her dignity and worth. For the American, the notion is progressed that anything can be bought by those with enough money to buy, if there are those willing (or desperate enough) to sell. As a contested commodity (Radin, 1996) however - and the difficulty in unravelling these scenarios – what if the medicine was the difference between the life and death of the child?

A range of social practises have been set against the notion of the commodification of bodies by scholars. Wacquant (2002), for example, in his study of prize fighters in Chicago, uses the notion of commodified bodies to reveal issues and themes that have remained dormant in other examinations of similar spectator sports. He asserts that the boxers' body is produced, promoted and marketed by "those that hold the economic levers of the game" (Wacquant, 2002, p:183). Wacquant concludes however, that far from being a concept that is hidden from the fighters, most are aware of, and complicit in, the economic exploitation of their bodies - seeing themselves as either like 'prostitute', 'slave' or "commercially valued livestock" (Wacquant, 2002, p:182).

In an earlier piece of research on the same subject Wacquant (1995) tellingly describes how prize boxers use their bodies as a form of capital; as "simultaneously his means of production, the raw material he and his handlers (trainer and manager) have to work with and on.... [which] properly managed... is capable of producing more values than was 'sunk' in it" (p:67). As such, the gym becomes the factory for producing the commodity. As I will show, viewing the relationship between body as commodity; managers and trainers as handlers and, the gym as the place of production influenced my thinking about the bodies of Cambodian children as commodities for volunteer tourism; the tourist industry (in all its complexities) as handlers; the orphanages or poor schools as sites of production, sale *and* consumption.

In contrast is the phenomenon of childrens' beauty pageants, particularly popular in America but increasingly gaining a following in the UK. Henry H. Giroux (2000) argues that child beauty pageants symbolise a humiliating spectacle that commodifies the bodies of those children who - having been "cosmetically transformed into Lolita-like waifs" (p:48) - take part in these popular parades. He goes on to assert that "pageants are often embraced as simply good, clean entertainment and defended for their civic value to the community" (Giroux, 2000, p:58). Popular support views pageants as the route to lucrative modelling careers

or as helping to build childrens' confidence and self-esteem – or even justified by the simple defence that little girls love to dress up.

As I will show, links can be made between Giroux's concerns about beauty pageantry and volunteer vacations with Cambodian children in Siem Reap. Both claim, for example, to be positive experiences for the children; to teach social skills and attributes that will help improve their futures; that children have fun and enjoy the attention they receive. In arguing that "there is a certain irony in appropriating the language of self-esteem to defend child beauty pageants" (Giroux, 2000, p:54), again the difficulty is raised of unravelling the notion of a contested commodity (Radin, 1996). Significantly, both child beauty pageantry and volunteer tourism are lucrative businesses that have "produced a number of support industries" (Giroux, 2000, p:51). Pertinently, I will argue that like the children in the beauty pageant, the multi-faceted Cambodian child (as well as the multi-faceted nature of their condition), is also reduced to the simplicity of 'an object' as a part of the marketing process.

By drawing on scholarship such as this (Giroux, 2000; Radin, 1996; Scheper-Hughes, 2002; Wacquant, 1995, 2002) it is possible to look closely at the objectified positioning of Cambodian children as adorable and needy, against the (marketed) aim to improve their bodies, lives and circumstances, via the vacation options of strangers. Furthermore, as I will examine in depth in Chapter Six, these critiques also provide valuable insight into concepts of abuse in what are often considered to be benign and trivial practises (Giroux, 2000).

Tourism literature has also considered many examples of the commodification of bodies in the vacation industry. Sánchez Taylor (2001), for example, challenges the image of 'sex tourism' as being the exclusive sphere of the western male when she considers sexual-economic holiday relationships with local men, sought out by 'First World' women vacationers in the Caribbean. Conceding that whilst there are a number of significant differences to these 'relationships', she concludes with the important assertion that these "sexual-economic exchanges... are massively

unequal in terms of economic and political power, usually also unequal in terms of racialised power” (Sánchez Taylor, 2001, p:761). An understanding of the notion of racialised power, in touristic situations such as these, is of particular value to this thesis.

Commodification of the body as an issue in tourist consumption has also been theorised by Thomas Carter (2008) in his interesting study of the ‘phantomism’ of Cuban citizens. Here he claims, efforts are made by the Cuban state to fulfil foreign tourist desires to “experience life in socialist Cuba before it disappears” (Carter, 2008, p:242). There are similarities with Jane Desmond’s (1999) exploration of live hula dance performances for tourists in Waikiki. Whilst describing dancers as presented to tourists as culturally ideal “specimens” (p:xiii), Desmond (1999) also considers the relationship, in these public stagings of bodies, between those being viewed and those doing the viewing. As I will show, scholarship that considers the commodification of the body in tourism often too, also makes connections to an understanding of how the ‘other’ is framed in ‘Third World’.

A study of volunteer vacations with ‘poor’ children, I argue, has a place in debates such as these. Indeed, I believe that approaches which fail to take difficult ideas such as the commodification of bodies into account, may not adequately capture, or make clear, the complexity of the relationship between volunteer tourism and Cambodian children. Furthermore, the assertion, again from Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant (2002), that these economic exchanges are often “masked [and marketed] as love, altruism, pleasure, and kindness” (p:2) signals ways in which the commodification of childrens’ bodies are justified and rationalised as also being about love, altruism and pleasure. Significantly too, the direction of flow of many of these economic exchanges – from the sale of body parts to the volunteer vacation - essentially remains in favour of the ‘First World’ (Scheper–Hughes, 2005).

Objectification

Feminist scholars in line with the Kantian position have described objectification as the reduction of human beings, in all their complexities, to a single component or

utility (Bartky 1990; Dworkin 1989). Essentially, an objectified person is seen as an object; as Martha C. Nussbaum (1995) describes “one is treating *as an object* what is really not an object, what is in fact, a human being” (p:257, italics in original). Nussbaum (1995) enabled me to see that an examination of volunteer tourism requires an understanding of objectification. In the context of childrens’ bodies and volunteer tourism there is also considerable significance in the contention from Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) that, when human beings are objectified as ‘bodies’ this allows that those bodies then “exist for the use and pleasure of others” (p:175). That the volunteer tourist industry places such weight on the fun (pleasure) element of ‘doing volunteering’, signals ways, I will show, in which objectification may be considered crucial to the marketing and advertising of these vacations.

In this respect I have drawn upon Nussbaum’s (1995) model of “Seven Ways to Treat a Person as a Thing” (p:257). Nussbaum suggests that being subject to one or more of a cluster of actions (out of the seven she identifies) by an objectifier (in my study volunteer tourism), sufficiently warrants the description of being objectified. Furthermore, for Nussbaum (1995) the operation of these ‘treatments’ on one individual or group of individuals by another individual or group of individuals, provides “at least signposts of what many have found morally problematic” (p:258). I therefore considered the case of Cambodian children and volunteer tourism against this particular model. What follows is a summary of how I see the objectification of Cambodian children in relation to Nussbaum’s (1995) model of “Seven Ways to Treat a Person as a Thing” (p:257):

1. “*Instrumentality*: The objectifier treats the object as a tool for his or her purposes”: Here I will argue that the bodies of Cambodian children are used as a marketing tool by the industry to sell volunteer vacations; that volunteer tourists use volunteer vacations with children to fulfil their own desire to travel to the ‘Third World’ and to enjoy the benefits that this vacation choice promises to provide them.

2. *“Denial of autonomy: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination”*: I will argue that the bodies of children represent a perceived need for western/‘First World’ intervention – as well as an entitlement *to* intervene. I will show how volunteering discourse sustains the notion that the ‘First World’ has the answers to alleviating the wretchedness of the ‘other’; and claims that Cambodians are unable to do *these things* for themselves or for their own children.
3. *“Inertness: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity”*: I will argue that bodies of children are treated as ontologically ambiguous - beings in the own right, or ‘becomings’ (adults), or ‘poor’ or as available? I will argue that as volunteer tourism promotes the notion of preparing children for the world of work frequently through English language learning, the ‘objects’ are deemed to lack agency in their own futures. I will show that children are viewed as a stagnant element of the Cambodian landscape – the bodies of the children are there when the volunteer arrives; they remain there (as if motionless) when the tourist leaves.
4. *“Fungibility: The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types”*: I will show how vacations with children are only one choice amongst many available to the volunteer tourist. Interchangeable with other ‘needy’ people in other countries or towns in Cambodia or, with animals, environmental projects, for example. The choice (interchangeability) rests with the volunteer tourist when they make their vacation selection.
5. *“Violability: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, or break into”*: I will show how the bodies of Cambodian children lack the boundary-integrity of their equivalent western/‘First World’ counterpart. Volunteers are able to handle, hold, play with and photograph Cambodian children in a manner that would be considered inappropriate (or indeed even impermissible) in comparable environments in the ‘First World’ (most especially schools and places of residential of care).

6. *“Ownership*: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.”: I will argue that an experience with children is an essential part of the volunteer tourism product. Being ‘personally involved’ is the expressed wish of many potential volunteer tourists. Volunteer tourist experiences represent an economic exchange which can also signal ownership.
7. *“Denial of subjectivity*: The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account”: I will show how children become homogenised and generic, despite the multifaceted nature of their needs and circumstances. Children are defined as poor, needy and/or orphaned (in all the different definitions and connotations of these terms). Personal narratives become ‘profiles’; the childrens’ unique life experiences are described as ‘typical’. It is assumed that all Cambodian children will *love* volunteer tourists.

Responding to Nussbaum’s model, Rae Langton (2009) suggests further features that indicate objectification. These too are relevant within the context of this study. Langton (2009) argues, for example, that the objectifier reduces a person to a body or body parts and hence to their physical appearance. As I will show, in much marketing literature for volunteer vacations and in the vacationers’ own narratives, children are often defined by their smiling ‘faces’ or lovely dark ‘eyes’, for example. Langton (2009) also suggests that the objectifier treats the person as if they are silent, “lacking the capacity to speak” (p:228/9). Again it is possible to identify this feature, as will show, in testimonies that reflect the volunteer tourists’ accounts of their experiences, particularly those that describe how good the children made *them* feel.

It has been argued that whilst objectification is a notion that is particularly difficult to define - terms being used such as ‘slippery and ‘multiple’ (Nussbaum, 1995, p:251) - Nussbaum (1995) concludes that “the treatment of human beings as tools of purposes of another, is always morally problematic” (p:298). Whilst much scholarship is concerned with objectification in the sexual realm (Papadaki, 2012),

objectification in the realm of childhood or children is particularly disturbing and so again, as with commodification, I am arguing that when examining the complex relationship between volunteer tourism and Cambodian children, this concept should not fail to be taken into account.

Childhood innocence: a species of commodity

An understanding of volunteer vacations with 'Third World' children requires that account is taken of how notions of childhood shape and inform the motivations, expectations and reflections of 'First World' tourists. For LeVine (2007), the nature of childhood is not "comprehensible without detailed knowledge of the socially and culturally organized contexts that give [it] meaning" (LeVine, 2007, p:247) and as such, within the context of volunteering vacations in 'Third World' countries, I would argue that the culturally different understandings of childhood and notions of childhood innocence, are extremely relevant. Giroux (2000) asserts for example, that even within the west, adhering to a myth of childhood innocence - where "children are often portrayed as inhabiting a world that is untainted, magical and utterly protected" (p:39) – results in the range of childrens' experiences being lost in the enchanting glow of adult fantasy. As I will show however, an even wider range of childrens' experiences are in danger of being lost when these 'magical' views and perspectives are expanded into 'other' cultures in, what may similarly be described as 'the enchanting glow of adult tourist fantasy' (Giroux, 2000). For Cannella and Viruru (2004) whose study of childhood focused on issues of power in education, there remains a constant need to re-evaluate "the biases that cause us to privilege one set of knowledge over the other" (p:5).

These are important assertions when considering the international context of the volunteer vacation and the complexities of childhoods that are involved there. Here I refer to the (past) childhoods' of vacationers as well as the current childhoods' of Cambodian children as the two collide in the contact zones – "the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographical and historical disjunctures" (Pratt, 1992, p:7) – of the volunteer vacation. As I will argue in Chapter Six, where I asks 'just *what* is being consumed', volunteer vacations with

Cambodian children represent the consumption of a complex tourist fantasy of childhood and of a nostalgia for childhood innocence, that at times has little bearing on the lives of children in other contexts. As I will also show, there is furthermore, a desire by some volunteer tourists to use these vacation experiences to reunite with their own childhoods past.

However, it is the contention of Radhika Viruru (2005) that, “when particular forms of belief about children are imposed in diverse cultural locations, I would suggest that a ... form of civilised oppression is enacted” (p:20). With this argument in mind, I see that it is important to examine and evaluate scholarship that provides a background to the cultural understandings of childhood and historical notions of childhood innocence; pertinently of the societies from where the volunteer tourists come - understandings which continue to have significance to our relationships with children today. As such, here in the finally section of the review, I briefly outline what I consider to be the historical underpinnings that inform contemporary ‘First World’ notions of childhood and childhood innocence.

Philippe Aries (1996) contends that “it seems... probable that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world” (p:31) and that childhood as we now perceive it, is unlikely to have existed until the early modern period. For many centuries, he argues, children were regarded as adults in miniature who, once weaned would have been dressed in the same way as the male or female adults of their class. For those from the working classes, this age would also correspond to their entrance into the labour market (Aries 1996). Although Aries’ theories have attracted a good deal of criticism, much of which is based on his methodology, he remains extremely influential in the field of childhood studies and notably for his assertion that childhood is essentially a European-based, modern invention.

From the mid-eighteenth century, however, the European notion of childhood came to be recognized as a “temporal passage....into the social world of adults,” (James and Prout, 1990, p:11); a special time by its own definition. It was also from this period that representations of childhood as a time of innocence came to

dominate western thought. The Romantic era, for example, and the language that underpinned this period, often merged notions of childhood with images of nature and the rural idyll; children in paintings with animals or in natural settings against trees or hills. Children in art were also often positioned figuratively closer to God and therefore notionally to all things good (Higonnet, 1998). This can be seen clearly in the many cherub-like images of children from the period; their angelic, chubby bodies depicted against religious backdrops and settings. Even when portrayed earthbound, children were often shown staring innocently heavenwards, as if this was where their true existence lay. In examples from art and literature, came enduring depictions of children and childhood as uncontaminated, un[adult]erated and inherently pure. Significant to this study, it is from this period that the imagery of innocence as the defining feature of childhood, “gradually permeated popular consciousness” (Higonnet, 1998, p:17).

Significantly too, it was also from this era - when childhood explicitly separated children from adulthood - that children were positioned as passive beings, lacking control of their own circumstances and fate and incomplete in respect of those qualities that adulthood epitomized. It is indeed argued by a number of childhood sociologists, that children continue to be placed in a position of ontological ambiguity requiring that they “be understood as incomplete and as in a state of becoming” (Lee, 1998, p:461). As such, lacking in their own agency - not yet (adult) beings - children are often considered to be worthy only of interest as an unfinished product. “The imperfect state of childhood”, as described centuries earlier by Locke (2004, p:20), becomes not only that special place that children uniquely occupy but, significantly the place where adults have a power over them that “arises from that duty which is incumbent on [adults]” (p:20).

Whilst representations of childhood as transitory and of an uncertain nature have endured into modern western society, in the context of the objectification of the Cambodian child, as I will argue, it is in the notion of powerlessness that close links can be made back to Nussbaum’s (1995) themes of objectification. Here particularly in the idea of *inertness* “where the objectifier treats the object as

lacking in agency and activity” (p: 257), can the notion of objectification be especially identified.

Contemporary western society then has inherited two clear representations of children and childhood, chiefly defined in terms of innocence and temporality (Richter and Norman, 2010). Innocence, on the one hand is capable of emphasizing vulnerability and helplessness, perhaps most notably in the public imagery of children in advertisements, charitable campaigns and news reporting (O’Barr, 1994); temporality on the other hand highlights that special place and time that will eventually come to an end. Significantly, however, childhood is also a place and time that as adults, we have all already passed through. In combination, therefore, whilst it has been argued that innocence and temporality become synonymous with compassion and sentimentality and an assumed need for adult intervention (Edstrom et al. 2008; Richter & Norman 2010), these perspectives can also represent ‘*denial of autonomy*’, ‘*inertness*’ and ‘*fungibility*’ (Nussbaum, 1995).

For example, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is aimed at protecting and nurturing children and childhood and “has elicited tremendous international interest and support, as evidenced by the unprecedented rate at which states have become parties to it” (Stephens, c1995, p:35/6). However, it has also been argued that the same declaration, “defined by adults within the framework of Western modernity” (Stephens, c1995, p:35), often fails to recognise fundamental cultural differences, socio-economic variations and, for example, the possible “effects of isolating children further from their family and community” (Boyden, 1990, p:208) following say, the advocacy of child welfare measures on humanitarian grounds. Others argue that the Convention not only pays insufficient respect to an array of family shapes and styles, but also presents a dichotomy between the professed rights of children to a political voice and “the endemic overriding of ...children’s stated wishes” (Olsen, 1992, p:211). As such, Bilson and White (2005) contend, there is a paradox in relation to the two major imperatives of the Convention - “to act in the child’s best interest and to ensure that [a] child’s

views are heard and duly considered” (p.222). This paradox, as I will show, has a good deal of relevance to the concept of volunteer tourism.

Gary Cross (2004), however, extended the notion of innocence in his exploration of early 20th century American advertising particularly associated with merchandising in “shop windows, comic strips, new holiday rituals and toys and novelty goods” (p:184). The connections he made between childhood and consumerism are also pertinent to my own research. Describing, for example, what he termed as a ‘look of wondrous innocence’ he claims that this was the special look that western parents would strive to see on the faces of their children and that modern consumerism provided them with a channel through which it was possible to achieve it.

As this ‘look’ came to represent the happy child, Cross (2004) argues that an association was established between childrens’ happiness and consumerism. He concludes that as a result, adults became informed of good-parenting – signified by happy children - through advertisements from a wide and eclectic range of commodities from toys to soap powder; refrigerators to cigarettes. As with compassionate consumerism (Moore, 2008) and marketised philanthropy (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009, p:974), a recognition of these links provides a broader view of volunteer tourism.

In summary, as I will show, these ideas and insights – the special place and unfinished temporality of childhood; the perceived vulnerability and helplessness of children; the ‘duties incumbent’ on adults; the look of ‘wondrous innocence’ (Cross, 2004) and its association with consumerism; the objectification of childrens’ bodies and, the social and cultural contexts that give childhood meaning (LeVine, 2007) – provide a firm base from where I will argue that Cambodian children within the volunteer vacation trend have become yet another “new species of commodities” (MacCannell, 1999, p:11) within the relentless drive to commodify (Holt and Schor, 2000) and the insatiable desire to consume (Campbell, 1993) .

Conclusion

In this review of literature I have presented scholarship from those areas that informed the central concerns of this research. Asserting my critical engagement with volunteer tourism as commodity and as consumption, I have also provided a roadmap to show how the major themes connect and relate to each other from the broadness of consumerism to the nuances of the commodification of childrens' bodies and, the historical and political contexts of the notion of childhood innocence. These conceptual and theoretical underpinnings will help guide the reader through the major arguments that will be developed in the body of this thesis.

As I will show, the trend of volunteer tourism and the appeal of Cambodia's 'poor' children – a place where the 'Third World' and capitalism intersect - can and should be included in these important conversations. As Nickel and Eikenberry (2009) contend, "today, when we attempt to engage in philanthropic action... we find that often the only space to do so is the very venue (the market) that creates the need for philanthropy in the first place" (p:967). Again, by placing scholarship that considers the desire to perform compassionate deeds for 'others' together with theories of consumerism, it is possible to better explore decisions to take volunteering vacations over other holiday choices. And finally, by also placing tourism scholarship alongside post-colonial critique of the sanitised and race-neutral discourses of development and development-oriented work (Heron, 2007; Kothari, 2006; Osterhammel, 1999; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011; White, 2002), now allows, as I will show, that obscured elements of race and privilege - and significantly ties to colonial legacies or continuities - can be revealed within the noble intentions of volunteer tourism; likewise in the power embedded in helping 'Third World others', through the purchase of a 'First World' vacation product.

Chapter Three

Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made

- *Kant*

Methods

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the literature that provides the underpinning and anchor to this study. I also indicated the relationships I am making between this broad and somewhat eclectic range of scholarship and my own ideas around the consumption of volunteer tourism in Siem Reap. In doing so the overarching framework that I have applied to this study was made known. The objectives of this chapter are now to describe the practical procedures used to look for answers to the research questions posed and, to discuss what decisions were made to employ which particular methods. To achieve this it was necessary to consider, for example, the fundamental concern of what was needed to be known to achieve the aims of the study; what methods were available to solve this first problem; what were the limitations of the best options and finally, on what grounds would I reject other ideas?

Understanding volunteer tourism as a consumer commodity and, the volunteer tourist as a consumer, required that the trend be examined within the context of consumerism and the story of consumption as benevolence (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009). It was therefore considered necessary to explore the marketing and NGO presentation of volunteering vacations for example, as well as the voices of volunteer tourists. As a result there was a need to think about different methods and data sources in the research design; one relating to data concerning social discourses perhaps, the other concerning individuals, their motivations, understandings and personalities.

As Mason (2006) describes however, whilst “the integration of different methods [can] often be highly productive” (p:33), this approach can also be quite problematic. The requirement to weave together different approaches and strategies therefore needed to be considered as well as ways in which these differences could or would support each other. For example, whilst volunteer

tourists regularly post detailed testimonies of their vacations on websites used for marketing, how might these accounts differ in meaning to narratives offered to me in a face-to-face situation? Successfully incorporating these differences was essential in order to avoid the risk of simply “assembling an untidy bag of methods” (Mason, 2006, p:34).

As I indicated in the introductory chapter, whilst the volunteer tourists’ voices were considered key to this project, limitations of time and resources meant that following one group of individuals through the process of considering a vacation; consuming a vacation and, reflecting on the experience, was outside the feasibility of this project. The decision was therefore taken to explore volunteer vacation consumption holistically by envisaging that individuals were part of three separate groups or, at three different stages in the vacation process (whilst all being connected by volunteer tourism in Siem Reap). As such, what may be described as a wide-angled view of the trend will be presented in this thesis; the research providing a longitudinal perspective of vacation expectations and motivations; of lived experiences and, of outcomes and reflections - rather than a single view of the experiences of individual volunteer vacation consumers. Far from being a compromise, as I will show, this design provided rich, focused narratives from a range of consumers across a spectrum of ages, genders and home locations.

Sample

Potential volunteer tourists; volunteer tourists in Siem Reap at the time fieldwork was being conducted there and, individuals who had previously spent time as volunteer tourists, whilst deemed to be meaningful data sources, were also a globally scattered company of individuals. These factors - along with availability and accessibility - were amongst the central concerns in determining issues of sampling and selection. Another factor relevant to determining the sample was established from the literature on alternative tourism (which includes volunteering), that suggests that tourists are often profiled as eighteen to forty year olds, predominantly white, middle class and from the ‘First World’ (Hutnyk, 1996; Salazar, 2004; Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009; Wearing, 2001).

Whilst the last three of these criteria were borne out by my own observations in Siem Reap, I noted (an observation supported anecdotally by a number of NGO managers and workers) that an increasing number of early-retirement aged (fifty years and over) individuals and couples were also enquiring about and/or becoming involved in volunteer tourism activities. This was further up-held by awareness through my research, of the growth in vacation providers specifically targeting this age group: *Gaps for Grumpies* (gapsforgrumpies, 2012); *50plus volunteering opportunities with Planet United* (unitedplanet/volunteer-abroad/50plus, 2012); *Senior-friendly Volunteer Vacations with transitions Abroad* (transitionsabroad/seniors, 2013), to name but a few. I therefore considered it necessary to include this age group in the population of the sample. The other variable was based on gender, and whilst reviewing the literature provided little guidance here, the intention was therefore to interview roughly the same amount of men as women.

As Patton (2002) argues, determining sample size is dependent “on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p:224). However, he also contends, that justification, description, and explanation of all sampling decisions are essential in the research design. To this end he asserts that in the design stage it is advisable to establish a minimum “for planning and budgetary purposes” (Patton, 2002, p:246). My original aim had been to recruit six to eight participants from each of the three groups but to build flexibility into the research design which would allow for adjustment as the research unfolded (Patton, 2002; Mason, 2006). A total of eighteen to twenty rich, in-depth accounts were considered sufficient in a study of this type, as well as offering a manageable quantity of interview data. (See Appendix 1 for brief biographical vignettes of interviewees).

It was possible as I will show, for me to remain reasonably close to the original number of participants interviewed.

1. Potential volunteer tourists.

At the planning stage, the hardest to find group were those defined as potential volunteer tourists. At the beginning of the research period only one possible participant had been identified from this group who, having made contact with me asking for information about volunteering in Cambodia, had also agreed to be interviewed. As an eighteen year old female school-leaver who said that she intended to travel with friends, it was hoped that snowball sampling may help to find one or more other participants from this contact. Whilst it was possible to conduct this particular interview, further contacts did not, however, materialise.

Fortunately, early in 2010, I received emails from two further females (via friends of friends) who again had heard of my time as a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap and were making enquiries about vacations for themselves. I contacted the women and both agreed to be interviewed, one subsequently deciding to take a volunteer vacation in Cambodia. This particular participant maintained email contact during her six week volunteering vacation in Siem Reap and agreed to be interviewed by me again on her return.

The second contact, a British expatriate living in Spain, in the meantime decided to take her vacation in an orphanage in Vietnam with a commercial vacation provider she had previously used. I was able to interview her before she went off on this particular vacation. However whilst in Vietnam she decided to fly down and take a 'look' at Siem Reap with a view to planning a vacation there in the future. By coincidence this coincided with my second fieldwork trip in the town and a meeting was therefore arranged to interview her and her travelling companion whilst they were briefly in Siem Reap. Both participants ultimately decided, however, that 'their hearts were in Vietnam and not Cambodia'.

It became clear that an alternative strategy for identifying potential volunteer tourists had to be found. During my first fieldwork trip to Siem Reap in January 2010, I had made visits to eighteen NGO's and charitable projects that took

overseas volunteer vacationers. Managers, founders and chair-people were all interested and supportive of my work to explore the motivations and expectations of potential customers. One particular NGO agreed to share anonymised enquiries from interested individuals, groups and families. Most usefully, however, during the principle fieldwork period in 2011, I was able to approach walk-in enquirers at his office and three in-depth interviews were subsequently conducted. In this way it was possible to make six in-depth interviews with potential volunteer tourists as planned. I also had sight of, around fifty anonymised enquiry and application forms from individuals interested in spending some time as a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap - another extremely valuable source from this particular group.

2. Volunteer tourists in situ.

In respect of interviews with volunteer tourists in situ, again NGOs and project settings were invaluable in both helping to locate and allow access to volunteer tourists. Here the strategy of having previously met and spoken to managers and project leaders (establishing and maintaining relationships) proved to be particularly beneficial. I conducted eight face-to-face interviews with tourists either at the volunteer settings, at a mutually agreed location in or around the town or at the guesthouse. The necessity to allow respondents to feel comfortable and able to speak freely was always a consideration and as such I allowed them to suggest the venue. I was aware however that in the interest of my own safety, I would ultimately decide if these suggestions were suitable – which they were in all cases.

In addition observations of volunteers were made at a range of settings often resulting in informal conversations with volunteer tourists. As soon as possible after these encounters, I would endeavour to make extensive field-notes. The use of a small digital recorder meant that these reflections were frequently made as dictation to self. Five face-to-face interviews were also conducted with project managers discussing their experiences and attitudes towards volunteer tourists and the volunteer tourist trend in Siem Reap. These provided valuable background information. Fortuitously, twelve young volunteer tourists from a large volunteer vacation provider were staying at the same hostel in January 2011. This provided

many opportunities to observe the group and individuals and on two occasions to accompany them to their placement.

3. Past volunteer tourists

From my own experience in Cambodia in 2008 twelve possible participants who had been in Siem Reap at the same time were contacted via Facebook messaging or email. Of this group nine were women and three were men. Although these twelve volunteer tourists were in town during the same period, only three of us had spent our vacations at the same orphanage. I had met the others as part of the 'volunteering scene' around town and exchanged details. It was also possible to snowball from this group as Facebook revealed a network of other volunteers beyond these personal contacts who were also contacted or contacts were offered by this initial group of volunteers themselves. The common experience of having spent time as volunteer tourists in Siem Reap helped, I believe, to establish trust and understanding between myself and the participants and importantly, of the research issues. In total eight in-depth interviews were conducted with past volunteer tourists; four face-to-face and four via email and/or social networking.

Grey Literature

Alberani, Pietrangeli and Mazza (1990) contend that "the importance of grey literature (GL) as a means of primary, unconventional communication is accepted in almost every scientific field" (p:358) and provides topical and important material that complements, highlights and enhances both the academic literature and qualitative data (McGarth, Sumnall et al., 2006). The second principle area of the research design, therefore, focused on the grey literature – marketing and publicity material including volunteer tourism marketing websites; travel guides; NGO newsletters; travel blogs; volunteer tourist testimonies; social media and YouTube video postings; project leaflets and flyers, for example. Sources were explored both online and hardcopy.

To this end, I also subscribed to industry publications such as Travel Mole VISION On Sustainable Development – "the first online community for the Travel and

Tourism Industry” (TravelMole.com); The Responsible Tourism Partnership – “works to help businesses and communities around the world... maximise their potential for responsible tourism through a range of activities and initiatives” (responsibletourismpartnership.org) and VolunTourism™ – “for those interested in discovering what is happening in the world of VolunTourism™ and seeking emerging practices, general information, and case studies” (Voluntourism.org). In November 2012 I attended The World Responsible Tourism Day (during The World Travel Market) in London. The ‘tourism and child protection’ session added a particularly valuable ‘industry’ dimension to this part of the study.

Grey literature represents an important means of information dissemination for those seeking to attract volunteer tourists, as well as a major source of information for potential volunteers and as such was considered an area of vital importance. Significantly too, as it was determined that the Internet was where much of this material was mostly available, the use of the World Wide Web (WWW) as a place to be researched would be particularly valuable. Furthermore, using the Internet for research closely corresponded to the consumer experience of searching; planning; booking; paying for; recording and, often recounting the story of the consumption of these vacation experiences. I will return to the use of the internet below.

When thinking about marketing literature, however, it was important to consider the institutions or organisations which produced them (for example, not-for-profit NGOs; for profit volunteer vacation companies); the intended audiences (potential consumers; past volunteers, sponsors or fundraisers) and, the means and range of distribution (the WWW; subscribers only; localised distribution (flyers, for example) or random availability (leaflets in hotels or notices on information boards). By subscribing to newsletters, marketing mail-shots and industry publications it was also possible to record frequency of production; style of distribution; the use of images, for example.

One particular area of interest from all of these sources however, was that of the volunteer tourist testimony which of itself raised a number of interesting issues. For example, in the crowded marketplace of volunteer tourism, could all the testimonies (and indeed photographic images) be accepted as genuine (or the true photographic record of an occurrence). There was no way of telling whether declarations of a wonderful experience were in reality the result of creative writers in advertising offices. The question of veracity, however, in itself was an interesting notion to consider in examining the broadness of this trend. Whilst 'Joe from New Zealand', 'Pat from England' or 'Gillian, a primary school teacher' have no empirical authenticity, their very presence on marketing sites and travel blogs nonetheless offered a fascinating and valuable perspective to how volunteer tourism is represented and circulated. As such, considered to be so much a part of the phenomenon, I held that these were valuable data sources.

Diaries and fieldnotes

Additionally, my own experience as a volunteer tourist at an orphanage in the town in November/December 2008 was also considered significant in the design and implementation of this project as did recognition of my semi-insider status. Acknowledging the "influence of my personal history, gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion/spiritual beliefs to mak[ing] this work *personal, interactive and self-reflexive* (Goodall 2003 p:58 italics in original) were always important factors in the context of the research. As such, my reflective field and diary notes formed an important element of the research and the research process.

Here I drew upon detailed personal diaries, email communications and reflections (along with a large quantity of photographs). These reflections - some simple musings made in the back of a tuk-tuk or over a cold beer - were considered no less valuable than the careful end-of-day write-ups that I made as a bona fide PhD researcher. These were personal reflections; personal stories and the personal telling of these stories (Gordon 2005) but importantly, many of these contemplations were made at a time when I did not know that they would later be

used in a research project and as such were untainted by an agenda of investigation and interpretation.

As Silverman (2010) asserts, there is no one right way to maintain a research diary. The approach can be formalised and categorised or a record of, for example, the development of thinking, reflections, time management, notes to self, ideas for the future (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman 2010). I began my own research diary, very early on in this study, habitually recording thoughts; conversation details; observations; random connections and associations; prompts about places, people, activities or actions. Borrowing from Barthes' (2000) *Camera Lucida*, I allowed myself to regard these as my 'punctum' and 'studium'; sometimes recognising connections with my project, at other times simply being aware that something was 'piercing me like an arrow'. Regularly and consistently returning to these entries - extracting details to attach to other data; highlighting notes that could be attached to theory or other ideas; adding further thoughts and ideas - became a habit that I incorporated into my work routine.

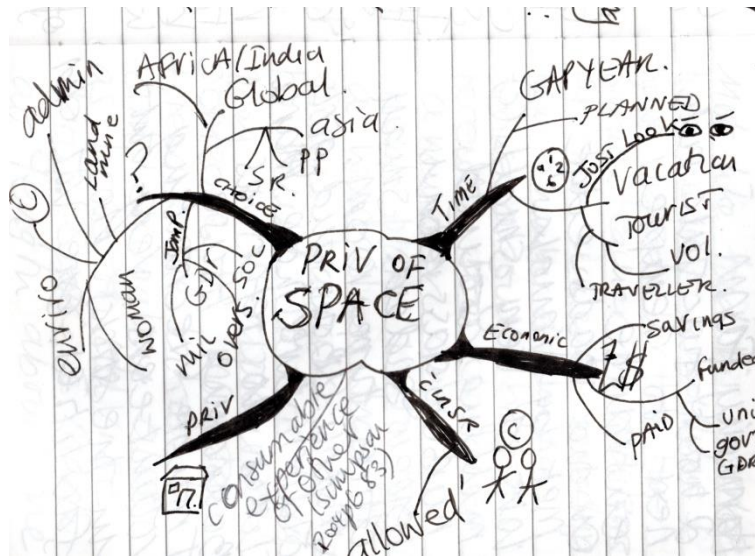


Figure 1: Research diary mind-mapping

Fieldwork – overview

Due to personal circumstances, I planned to make two separate visits to Siem Reap - in February 2010 and January 2011 - each of around three weeks duration, in order to conduct those areas of this research that were field based. However, due to my attendance at a conference in Bangkok in May 2011, I also took the opportunity to travel to and spend four days in Siem Reap, during which time I was able to conduct an interview with one volunteer tourist in situ in addition to reconnecting with NGO managers in the town. In January 2012, I had another opportunity to travel to Siem Reap. As all interviews had been undertaken by this time I decided to carry out some observations and again meet up with contacts involved in volunteer tourism.

The first of these visits, however, I identified as largely a fact-finding trip where contacts were made with NGOs, charity projects and volunteer vacation providers, establishing relationships with managers and key workers and identifying gatekeepers. Observation, familiarisation and groundwork were the principle objectives of this first visit in order to maximise the outcome of the subsequent (or principle) fieldwork period. I planned that it would be during the second trip that the majority of interview data would be gathered. Whilst arguably one extended period of say, six months in Siem Reap may be considered closer to ideal ethnographic fieldwork practise and as such allow a deeper immersion in the region and trend, circumstances prevented this from being a consideration. However, I envisaged that through careful and thorough advanced planning of meetings, interviews and visits - by making many appointments and arrangements prior to arrival, for example - the aims and objectives of the fieldwork could be maximised – which indeed was the case.

Between the first and second visits, regular contact was maintained with gatekeepers and key informants in Siem Reap via email or Skype. Establishing and sustaining these relationships demonstrated my level of commitment to the project; allowed me to continue to build-up knowledge of what was occurring 'on

the ground' in regards to the volunteer tourist scene in Siem Reap, as well as making for smooth and efficient practise once back in Cambodia.

I visited over twenty NGOs in Siem Reap, the majority of which focus primarily on childrens' needs. This was however, a clear reflection of what exists on the ground, rather than a conscience decision to choose these particular places to visit. At an early stage in the research I had not finally decided to focus attention on those establishment that involved children. Seventeen of these enterprises nonetheless, take volunteer tourists as part of their programmes. During the first fact-finding trip to Siem Reap, meetings and discussions were held with managers or workers and frequently a tour of the project was offered. It was often possible during this time to observe volunteer tourists; sometimes to chat with them; on a number of occasions to exchange details and arrange to make follow up contact.

On three of the five visits to Siem Reap I chose to stay in small Cambodian run hotels that were also frequented by budget holidaymakers including volunteer tourists (reduced rates for volunteers offered). This meant that I was able to observe closely many 'off-duty' aspects of volunteer tourist consumption, observing (sometimes covertly) volunteer vacationers, for example, in the bar and dining room areas. On the other two occasions I was offered accommodation at the home of the main gatekeeper. As a key figure in the NGO/tourism partnership in Siem Reap, this allowed excellent access to the world of volunteer tourism in the town – as well as the expatriate community.

As such from this one individual, many other important contacts in the project were made. On a number of occasions for example, I attended meetings with tour operator representatives looking for NGO projects that they could affiliate with and subsequently send volunteer tourists to. On other occasions I met authors, journalists and film makers also interested in the phenomena of volunteer tourism. One such meeting was with the director of a French NGO involved in investigating child sexual abuse and exploitation by western tourists. These meetings all provided invaluable background for this project.

Whilst most NGOs are currently within reach of the town centre, a number of projects are situated a distance out of Siem Reap. As these too take volunteer tourists as part of their programmes I considered it a necessary part of my research to make journeys out to some of these - especially as the marketing literature describes their location as close to the town of Siem Reap. On one occasion, although arrangements had previously been made to meet volunteers at one such orphanage, by the time I arrived all the volunteers had left complaining – as the NGO manager discussed with me - that the placement was situated too far out of town; that living conditions had been too difficult for them and that the local food was considered to be ‘too spicy’.

Fortunately it had been possible to share the tuk tuk ride with two Irish primary school teachers who had taken a sabbatical break and were travelling around South East Asia. Both in their mid-thirties they had decided to visit the project with a view to returning to Cambodia as volunteer tourists in the future. Whilst on this occasion it was not possible to use the digital recorder, (due to background noise) both women agreed to me making reflective notes of our conversation for use in my study.

1. Interviews

No formal scripts were prepared, rather the conversation-like interviews were guided around participants’ thoughts and (for those you had already been volunteers), responses to their vacation experiences; (for those contemplating a vacation), their expectations and motivations. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) describe the interview as an “image... more of a storyteller on a rather slack interpretive tether to the interview’s project, not a respondent tightly anchored to an interview schedule” (p:29). This is an appropriate description of the in-depth conversations I enjoyed with the interviewees. Endeavouring to unearth a “richness of accounts of experience” (Greig et al., 2007, p.136) the interviews were prepared “more like framing devices that the respondent[s] might follow in characterizing experience” (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 p.29). In this way, for those volunteer

tourists in situ and those who had experienced a volunteer vacation in Siem Reap, a rounded and colourful view of their time was revealed. Topic-introducing questions (Kvale, c1996) were used to initiate conversation and the interviews were allowed to proceed from an expansion of the replies received. I found Kvale's (c1996) concept of the 'inter view' particularly useful. Seen as "an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a common theme" (Kvale, c1996, p:44), this notion allowed aspects of both our experiences to feed back into the conversation in a supportive and encouraging way.

Where participants agreed, I recorded all face-to-face interviews using an unobtrusive digital recording device and made additional written notes to record non-verbal responses. All interviews were fully transcribed and anonymised. Reflexive notes, whenever practically possible, were made immediately after each interview, including accounts of my own feelings, memories and observations; biographical details of the participant and, time, date and location of interview.

2. Siem Reap as a field study site

Cambodia is bordered by Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. Roughly square in shape and with a total area of 69,900 sq miles (181,035 sq km) the kingdom is the third smallest country in South-East Asia larger only than Brunei and Singapore. The climate is dominated by the annual monsoon cycle, the most pleasant time for visitors - and as such the tourist high season - is the cool, dry period from November through to February (Ray, 2005). The capital Phnom Penh is the largest city in the country and is located on the banks of the Mekong River. There are three international airports in Cambodia; the busiest in the north-western area of the country, is at Siem Reap. Here tourists arrive from all over the world largely to visit Cambodia's main tourist attraction – The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage (WH) site of the Angkor Wat temple complex. Whilst tourist arrivals to Cambodia are expected to reach seven million by 2020 the average length of stay is rising much more slowly. Averaging only two and a half days in 2003, it has now risen to just less than six days in 2103 (Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia, 2003, 2012). The pop-in and pop-out nature of

tourist patterns has considerable repercussions on those positive impacts, that it is hoped, tourist monies will bring to Cambodia and Siem Reap in particular.

Until the recent tourist 'explosion', Siem Reap was a small market town that served as the provincial capital of one of the poorest regions in the country. There was little infrastructure and limited tourist facilities; those that existed catering mainly for backpackers. Since the mid 1990's the town has been transformed, largely through unregulated development, into the country's tourist capital. Now an abundance of hotels offer tourist accommodation and facilities that range from the five-star luxury of Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor to boutique hotels and budget guesthouses. Bars, shops, restaurants and nightclubs - largely run by foreign expatriates - especially around what is known as Pub or Bar Street, mean that the tourist areas of the town are described as vibrant, cosmopolitan and chic.

Despite Siem Reap's lively tourist culture, however, many local people in the town, and particularly within the protected zone of the Angkor Park, are still extremely poor. Within the Park people mainly work as farmers, construction workers involved in the tourist development or are self-employed traders making and selling trinket and souvenirs to tourists (Winter, 2006). In the town of Siem Reap the majority of people are self-employed working again in either construction or hospitality or for one of the (mostly) international NGOs. Siem Reap has also experienced a considerable influx of migrant workers from other parts of the country as Cambodians look to take their slice of the tourist market. Whilst this factor alone is considered to have increased many of the problems associated with poverty and need, tourism is in general regarded positively by the Khmer (Öjendal Lilja, 2009).

Often when confronted with aspects of the countries real economic situation, however, foreign visitors to the town feel the need to make monetary donations or to offer help in some way (Horton, 2009). In response, a large number of NGOs have been established in Siem Reap, with the stated aim of helping to alleviate poverty. Many of these NGOs and projects – a considerable number of which have

been set up by ex-tourists or travellers to the region – focus on childrens’ concerns in general and the teaching of English in particular. English language is promoted as the key to future opportunities particularly the chance to find employment either within the tourist sector or in the burgeoning NGO industry itself.

Poverty alleviation has an economy that surrounds it. A considerable number of the projects rely on the fees of volunteer tourists for their existence; a number of unscrupulous operators, it has been argued, having established orphanages or poor schools, for the prime reason of attracting these monies (UNICEF, 2011). Whilst almost all NGOs are within easy reach of the town centre a fleet of local tuk tuks are used daily to ferry volunteer tourists from hotels or hostels to their volunteering settings. Many others hire or buy bicycles for the duration of their vacation. A number of NGOs are affiliated to or have partner hotels where their volunteers are accommodated together. Some volunteer vacation providers operate home-stay schemes in the local community. Many hotels and hostels offer favourable volunteer tourist rates and a considerable number of NGOs are also affiliated to cafes, bars or restaurants. As such, volunteer tourism in Siem Reap, is considered to be of significant importance to the overall economy of the town.

3. Internet as a place to be researched

The literature suggests that the use of the Internet can be appraised from within three key areas: 1) as a resource for research – data sets and archives; journals and online resources; 2) as a place to be researched – as an emergent social sphere for documentary analysis; observation and ethnography; 3) as a medium for research – web surveys; online bulletin boards and interviewing. All three areas, methods or applications were employed at some time in this study. For example, online academic journals were constantly accessed ensuring that up-to-date literature was referenced as well as industry publications and vacation marketing, much of which is only available on-line. The use of the Internet by volunteer tourists, NGOs and vacation providers has resulted in the Internet itself having become a place to be researched. However, understanding where and what ‘the place’ is and how as researchers we negotiate the issue of “being there while also, in a non-trivial sense,

not being there" (Rutter and Smith, 2005,p:91), were significant notions to be considered. Thirdly, a widely scattered sample group made it necessary to consider creative methods of data generation and in this respect 'cyberspace' offered possibilities for accessing participants whose voices it would otherwise have been impossible to hear due to constraints of both time and finances. Here, the Internet proved to be a valuable medium for research. Whilst travelling to interview potential or past volunteer tourists as far afield as Australia, USA, mainland Europe and the Philippines for example, was not feasible in this single project, it was sometimes not convenient or practical either to interview participants in the UK. It is these uses and others - their problems and advantages - that will be examined in this section.

As both a place to be researched as well as a medium for research the social networking site Facebook (FB) was extensively used in this study. Having effected the creation of an on-line group of present and past Siem Reap volunteer tourists (sometimes even potential tourists looking for information), many of these remained connected (if not directly in touch) with each other for many years after their vacations. Interestingly too, many members of this group also maintain contact with Cambodian children from orphanages and NGO projects as well as Cambodian adults they met during their trips. In this sense it may be argued that the medium was the subject; an emergent social sphere itself inviting study. Caution is taken, however, to avoid the description of 'community' (Cohen, 1985; Sanders, 2005; Guimarães, 2005) as in many ways this *is* merely a thing in itself. Perhaps a better term is 'group' in that as Hamman (1997) describes, this is a company of people with some common interests sharing some social interaction, some of the time.

Nonetheless Facebook opened up possibilities in the research that the off-line limited. In this place, it was possible for me to connect with volunteer tourists who shared the experience of Siem Reap. New acquaintances could be made; reconnections could be made with past acquaintances and members connections to and with each other could be observed. Far from being a lazy method of data

generation, 'cyberspace' (whilst proving to be valuable in the context of this study) required a good deal of time to remain an active member of this online group.

A growing number of social researchers (Driscoll 2010; Hine 2005, Joinson, 2005; Orgad, 2005; Meunier, 2010) have recognised that innovative approaches to online research strategies can present a method for collecting interview data when other methods are difficult. In this research, for a number of participants, conducting interviews using Facebook messaging, allowed problems to be overcome that may have been insurmountable using other approaches. One participant, whilst agreeing to be interviewed, asked if it would be possible to answer questions about his experiences in Siem Reap via social networking as his own work commitments severely limited the times he would be available to meet. Without Internet technology it would not have been possible to include him in the study. In another example a young traveller, who I had met briefly messaged that he would be happy to communicate through Facebook but I sensed that he was less keen to take part in a face-to-face meeting. (Interestingly this 'sense' was detected despite the argument that a lack of non-verbal and linguistic cues - pitch, volume, intonation (Kivits, 2005) – can place limitations on the on-line interview). More obviously, contact was made with past volunteers in Australia, Germany, the Philippines; Israel and Canada.

Christine Hine (2005) contends that "the benefits of online research do not arise automatically from the technology, but require considerable sensitivity and reflection on the part of the researcher" (p:20). Facebook interviews proved to be extremely productive for a number of reasons. Responding via Facebook messaging in an interview context (for both myself as researcher and respondent) provided the time and space to reflect before offering replies. The advantage of being able to step back and contemplate both questions and answers was considered beneficial for both parties. One participant for example wrote, "That's a hard one; give me a few days to think about that".

As a researcher it was possible to reflect more deeply on responses before asking the next question. The frustration of discovering gems of data only when transcribing interviews and as such rarely having the chance to follow these through, or the cringe moments of 'wishing I hadn't phrased it quite like that', were all too familiar when conducting 'one-shot' interviews. In many ways this was avoided by using the Internet. Conducting interviews online also meant that it was easier to return to participants with further questions sometime later. There was also, what may be described as 'an open-endedness' to this method that at times felt more comfortable than the 'thank you for your time' closure of the face-to-face encounter. Nonetheless it was always important to recognise that despite the advantages, participants responses "stood in a different temporal relationship" (Rutter and Smith, 2005, p:85) to the questions posed and that as such, the notion of the research setting had been considerably disturbed.

Social network messaging also avoided an exchange of email addresses which arguably may represent a small step closer to the intimacy of the face-to-face interview. It may also have prevented the slightly more onerous task of replying to an email (although in essence the task remains the same, there is arguably something less formal when performed through social networking). Kivits (2005) highlights one limitation of on-line interviewing as the time required to establishing relationships. In my own study, pre-existing relationships, as well as a shared experience, appeared to counter this limitation in many instances. Where individuals were not personally known by me, introductions such as, 'I see you were in Siem Reap volunteering at Mom's place' or 'I was also a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap' appeared to bypass much of the time and effort required to establish online relationships. Sometimes no reply was received at all for which no explanation was available; at other times what appeared to start as a productive exchange fizzled to nothing. In many ways these are not issues that are peculiar to on-line researching but to qualitative research in general but, that the prerogative (the power) to withdraw at any time was easily effected by the respondent, must be viewed positively in terms of power relationships in research.

Once familiarity with the 'setting' and the method was achieved, interviews via social network messaging often felt altogether more comfortable and yielding than the frequently time-constrained, face-to-face set-ups. Using Skype was also an option considered and rejected. Whilst one reason was my personal preferences for communication methods (the Skype call being arguably even more pressured than the face-to-face interview), importantly the decision lay in the desire not to lose those benefits that the online messaging interview offered. Weaving together volunteer tourists accounts from face-to-face interviews and those received via social network messaging was, however, an ongoing challenge in the research and analysis.

Using the Internet as a place to be researched also presented a number of further challenges. Most NGOs, projects taking volunteer tourists and volunteer tourist providers use the Internet (including Facebook) as a tool in their marketing and promotional drive, the value of 'cyberspace' for business being recognised by even some of the smallest settings hoping to attract volunteers. The extensive use of the Internet for volunteer tourist to describe, share, broadcast – generally to communicate – their volunteer tourist experiences was also central in this study. However, it remains difficult to determine whether this should be described as online ethnography or document analysis. Rutter and Smith (2005) argue that "by definition online ethnography describes places that are not spaces [where] there is no obvious place to 'go' to carry out fieldwork" (p:84) and that what is normally undertaken in the field is carried out at the desk. In this sense much of the research on social networking, travel blogs and YouTube video postings could be described as ethnographic in nature ('in nature' in that as Androutsopoulos (2008) describes, both an ethnographic perspective and some ethnographic methods, were employed).

Notions of visibility must also be considered here too. When not directly taking part in conversations I was able to observe conversations between others. Unlike the off-line setting, it could be argued that there is a certain omnipresence about 'cyberspace' as I was able to, not only move quickly from one scenario to a next but

perhaps more pertinently, to be present in a number of different scenarios simultaneously.

The use of 'cyberspace' poised many interesting and important issues in the conduct of this research. Whilst it has been discussed that there has been a variety of efforts to define and describe the trend of using the Internet for research – including the use of terms such as 'virtual ethnography' (Hines, 2005); 'network ethnography' (Howard, 2002); 'webnography' (Puri, 2007); discourse-centred online ethnography (Androutsopoulos, 2008) - these often involve shifting rules and methods of ethnography onto Internet communication. Although a number of the challenges encountered have similar equivalents in other areas of qualitative research, the Internet resulted in new and emerging issues here as new trends and phenomenon have occurred because of 'cyberspace' (YouTube video postings and on-line travel blogs, for example) and other trends and phenomenon take on new or additional forms, as in the case of small orphanages having a significant on-line presence. Adapting to the use of the experiences of disembodied people (Rutter and Smith, 2005) and places was therefore a constant challenge in this research.

Analysis

As a qualitative research project the analysis of data was on going and iterative, indeed beginning long before I returned to Siem Reap as a researcher. Re-reading my personal diary entries and looking back at email correspondence from my own volunteer experience in 2008, helped to loosely identify some initial concerns and ideas of things that may be interesting to develop and explore. At this stage too, treating these raw reflections and records of communication between (what were in effect) a volunteer tourist (myself) and a 'provider', presented an opportunity to try-out some transcription options; some very early coding or theme identification and, methods of data organisation. Having the chance too, to identify at this point what were perhaps personal biases and underlying theoretical viewpoints made this, I believe, a valuable exercise.

Once in the field, whether in Siem Reap or conducting interviews elsewhere, I aimed to begin transcribing from my digital recorder as soon as was practically possible after the interview - even whilst in Cambodia as I always travelled with a small laptop. This helped me to best remember other than verbal responses which I was able to add straightaway to the transcript. I added a basic description of the participant – name, age, gender, nationality – along with basic details of the interview time and setting: noisy bar, Dublin 10/11/10 @1700hrs. These were individually stored in portable document format (PDF) or Microsoft Word documents on my laptop when in the field and then on my personal computer when back in the UK. Throughout the course of this research I have backed up weekly onto a external portable hard drive device as well uploading to a cloud file hosting service operated by Dropbox.

In the first instance, I transcribed verbatim including pauses and speech disfluencies, for example false starts and repetitions, as well as erroneous word use (extracts and quotes used in the written body of the thesis were, however, sometimes cleaned up in the interest of clarity). Also, I often transferred sound files onto a small MP3 player. This allowed me to re-listen to interviews particular during long flights to and from Cambodia, but also whilst out walking or travelling into university. These recordings were deleted after a short period of time and never stored for longer than necessary on the MP3 player. In this way I become very familiar with interviews over and beyond the re-reading of transcripts.

I produced two hardcopies of the transcript, the first in conversation format, the second line-by-line. The process of breaking down the interview was valuable to my analysis. Both copies were then printed in double spacing. Having re-listened to all interviews without the transcripts at least twice, I then reviewed the two together although initially without making notes. This meant that I was able to become fully absorbed in the data without interrupting the flow of the conversation and dialogue. It is interesting that in these subsequent 'listenings' I was often able to hear things that I had missed during the interview. Researcher anxiety during interviews, alongside the pressure not to miss asking or discussing particular things

(especially in one-off opportunities) often made it difficult to listen effectively to the conversation flow. It was therefore only on the second full review that my reading became more critical and I made notes, jottings and highlight markings directly onto the hardcopy. I noted connections to ideas; to other interviews or grey literature, as well as indicating what I needed to follow-up. I allowed the process to be free flowing and my responses to surface unimpeded.

Motivation	1	Charities/NGOs	33
Expectations	2	Emotional instances	34
Disappointments	3	Guilt	35
Rewards/benefits	4	Fear	36
Grand scheme	5	Concerns about returning home	37
Encounters with other travellers/volunteers	6	Difference	38
Encounters with Cambodians/the community	7	Doubts	39
Encounters with children/orphans	8	Inspired by others	40
Unplanned encounters	9	English language as an advantage for Cambodians	41
Planned encounters	10	Nostalgia: poverty social/childhood	42
Experience/skills	11	Learning about other cultures	43
Reference to general tourists	12	Changing perspectives on life	44
Description of Cambodia	13	Becoming independent	45
Siem Reap as a tourist destination	14	Confronting own fears/stress	46
Politics of Cambodia	15	Changing priorities	47
Value for money	16	Learning about self	48
Feelings of security/safe place	17	Enriching oneself	49
Personal background	18	Enjoy feeling part of a team	50
Past travels	19	Expression of individuality	51
Corruption/inadequacy/limitations/backwardness	20	Desire to travel	52
Beautiful Cambodian people	21	Inadequate other	53
Opinions of other volunteers	22	Casual racial stereotypes	54
Leisure time	23	Inquisitive	55
Reference to poverty	24	Enjoyment and fun	56
Teaching English/volunteer tasks	25	Eating and food	57
Tourist industry	26	Feeling appreciated	58
CV job opportunities	27	Company of other volunteers	59
Resentment	28	New experience	60
Cambodian culture	29	Future plans	61
Colonialism	30	Notions of doing something good	62
Philanthropy	31	Knowing what's right	63
Length of time in situ	32	Knowing	64

Table 1: Example of early emerging themes

After having conducted around six interviews, it was at this stage that certain themes were appearing and recurring. Initially, sixty-four intuitive themes emerged (see table 1). These themes also helped me to refine my ideas and/or the direction I needed subsequent interview questions to be guided towards.

As the research progressed many of these descriptions collapsed into each other, producing other more concise themes that helped provide chunks of data that would make analysis more effective. Whilst some themes or groupings were rejected as outside the bounds of this research some (such as food and eating, as I will discuss in the chapter that considers 'who' we are as volunteer tourists) were drawn in and revisited. By bringing theory to these groupings, testing, modifying and refining my thoughts, ideas that were pertinent to the research aims began to take shape. As the anchoring concept was that of consumption and the underlying concerns being 'what is being consumed; by who, how and why and what allows it' then these concepts provide the broader frame for analysis.

It had been my intention in the planning stage of this project to make use of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software package, if for no other reason than this was the direction my training was taking me in. However, early trials with the software package often left me feeling disconnected from the thoughts, ideas and links which I sensed were embedded in the transcriptions, the newsletters, my observational notes, for example. I was more personally inclined towards what González (2000) describes as a more "intuitive sense of knowing [and] a circular, holistic perspective" (González 2000 p:644) towards the research process and data. I therefore developed an organised system of cross-referencing; 'cuttings and pastings'; 'highlightings' and mind-mapped links and connections, as well as (an essential) systematic familiarity with the data. Far from disorganised and chaotic processes, the compiling, organising, analysing, revising, theorising and decision-makings remained I felt, more within my control whilst at the same time being allowed to develop more naturally and holistically into the things I wanted to find out about.

Ethics

In accordance with the requirements of the university ethics committee, particular attention was paid to the ethics associated with using human participants within the research process. Participants as I have described were interviewed both face-to-face as well as via internet communication – either email or Facebook messaging.

I ensured that all respondents were willing participants and were prepared to give informed consent of their participation. Information sheets provided adequate information enabling potential participants to make informed choices as to whether or not to take part. I also ensured that they understand the process in which they are taking part as well as the purpose of the research. I discussed with each participant how and to whom the research findings would be reported. Specific attention was drawn to participants' rights to withdraw at any time and for any reason. All of these considerations were reiterated throughout the research process. Opportunities to ask questions were always provided.

It was necessary to pay particular attention to the issues of ethics in respect of the on-line environment. I consulted the recommendations from the Association of Internet Researchers Ethics Committee 2002 summary document which offers guidelines and recommendations designed to both support and inform internet research. Interviews with participants carried out using the on-line environment, however, in the same way as face-to-face interviews, were made fully aware of the privacy and anonymity of data, particularly in regards to information which may link individuals to NGO or charity projects. By using messaging as opposed to an open discussion wall, the exchange was retained within the privacy of a one-to-one encounter. When on-line participants chose to withdraw from the research, they were in no way pursued or persuaded to continue.

In all instances, all interviews were anonymised, as were distinguishing names and features, and participants were made aware that any information they gave would be protected by the use of pseudonyms.

Negotiating my own privilege when researching privilege in volunteer tourism

During my fieldwork in Siem Reap I found myself in, what Ware (2002) describes as, 'two places at once'; tied "historically into a system of race privilege from which it is hard to escape, but by providing a critique of whiteness... begin[ing] to situate [my]self outside of that system" (p:29). I was conscious that my own whiteness was potentially smoothing the progress of my research and I felt at times, a deep unease that whilst being concerned academically with privilege, my field work was potentially being considerably underwritten by that same issue (White, 2002). For example, access was straightforward into all of the projects and NGO settings I chose to visit and especially so when they were run by white westerns, as most were. I was always warmly welcomed; often given personal guided-tours by directors or managers and frequently provided (generally without my requesting) with other valuable research contacts. As a consequence the 'so-and-so suggested I called by to see you, introduction' never failed to secure my access and welcome when I approached another NGO or interesting research individual. This was my first experience of field work overseas and it all felt just a little too easy. I was made to feel trusted, respected, valued and part of 'the team' often left wondering if my whiteness was a significant factor as to why this was happening.

Using personal disclosures as a 'springboard' for analysis and interpretation, especially of these concerns, gave rise, however, to its own challenges. As Linda Finlay (2002) cautions, it is too easy to allow these reflections to become interesting field work quotes or indulgent self-absorption. I was guided here by Allyson Lipp, (2007) who uses what she terms as 'micro reflexive prompts' to support the novice researcher through self-reflection. By continually considering questions such as, 'what impact did I have on this process'; 'what impact did the process have on me'; 'what were my personal responses'; 'what were my personal biases', it is hoped that these personal reflections now provide a deeper and broader dimension to my understanding and analysis of volunteer tourism.

Nonetheless, revisiting and revealing some of my diary and field work entries has not always been a particularly comfortable process. Committing to paper “and thus to the scrutiny of peers and others that which [I] might prefer to forget” (Falconer Al-Hindi and Kawabata 2002) although at times difficult was, I argue, a necessary starting point in my attempt to negotiate my own privilege and to challenge those privileges that I will argue are inherent in the world of volunteer tourism. I recognise in some of my writing, for example, a real pleasure that I found (and continue to find) in my work, especially the luxury of postgraduate research in a faraway ‘exotic’ location - even the environment of evident hardship – and it sometimes makes quite difficult reading. As Les Back (2002) suggests however, uncertainty and unease provide “an interpretative position from which the ethnography of whiteness should be conducted” (p:59).

Respecting Goodall’s (2003) second ‘interpretive commandment’ that “encourages us to make our work personal, interactive, and self-reflexive” (58) allows that I see myself as very much part of this study. Furthermore, going back to my own notes and diaries has offered me a distance between ‘the then’ as a volunteer and a researcher in Cambodia and the now as a PhD student trying to make sense of it all. Reflection did give me a chance to step back from that unique space of ‘out there’ and its complicated relationship with privilege. In this different space it has been easier to draw out the significance of some of my encounters and to consider the impact of my personal history on my interpretation of events and experiences. Revisiting and exploring my feelings has also allowed me, not only to name and clarify my responses, but importantly to consider how to integrate and combine ideas - ideas which were previously raw and undeveloped - into my thinking.

For example, the following diary entry provided the initial thoughts that later developed into my examination of understandings of privilege in volunteer tourism. It also illustrates how seemingly unrelated ideas and situations were continuously being brought into my thinking and analysis:

Today I was surprised to be berated by a fellow PhD student from overseas when discussing my awareness of a personal shame I

experience in my own privilege particularly when in Cambodia - and something that appears to be getting worse with every visit I make there. Is this what Judy Ryde means when she talks about a 'prevailing sense of guilt and shame' in the privilege of whiteness? My fellow researcher told me that this was a position that angered her as much as she was angered by her fellow citizens revealing a sense of awe when they come to the UK. At first I was a confused by what she was saying to me. Surely being ashamed of my privilege was the first step to some sort of enlightenment? No, she told me, my shame meant nothing more than a self-acknowledgement of that privilege, in the same way that awe and wonder showed a weakness in her fellow citizens arriving in the West. [Reference to Judy Ryde (2009)]

Chapter Four

After my visitors have deposited their gifts beneath the water colour of the anemones, on the little white table covered with oil cloth, after they have submitted the current projects for my salvation, and convinced me, whom they are working indefatigably to save, of the high quality of their charity, they recover their relish in their own existence, and leave me.

- *Günter Grass, The Tin Drum*

Volunteer tourists: exploring who are we and why we buy it?

Introduction and the problem of clear definitions

Gaining a better understanding of 'who volunteer tourists are' and 'why we buy it' are important considerations in this exploration of the trend in Siem Reap and, as such, will be the focus of this chapter. However, as Stephen Wearing (2001) argues, difficulties exist in differentiating between volunteer tourists and other alternative tourists especially as many alternative tourists do participate in some form of helping behaviour or activity during their vacation. Furthermore, any one tourist may fit into a number of different tourist typologies during the period of a single vacation. For instance, back-packers travelling around South East Asia often become volunteer tourists for a time when in Siem Reap, whilst alternative package tour operators frequently incorporate the option into their overall itinerary, of a day or so volunteering - regularly at orphanages or poor schools. Tourists from either of these groups may, nonetheless, also spend some time lying on a beach or touring the temples. These scenarios are not unusual and make it even more difficult to provide a clear definition of the commodity and its consumers. Whilst it has also been argued that the trend can be defined by "the use of discretionary time and income to go out of the regular sphere of activity to assist others in need" (McGehee and Santos, 2005, p:760), the assistance here generally occurs in an organised way (Wearing, 2001) and, involves the payment of a fee or 'compulsory donation' (feedingdreamscambodia, 2012) for the privilege of taking part in the helping experience – as such, an act of (tourist) consumerism. As Tomazos (2010) describes, volunteer tourism and the volunteer tourist are very much 'nomadic concepts'; concepts that as well as being debated by academics, are pondered and discussed, as I will show, by volunteer tourists themselves.

However, it is not even feasible to begin to explore *who* the volunteer tourist is without at the same time asking *why* we do it. Understanding why as individuals we decide to do something (here, our motivation to become a volunteer tourist) makes substantial connections to 'who' we are when we are being those tourists.

If, for example, like Lilly (who I spoke to a short time after she had returned from a volunteer vacation in an orphanage in Siem Reap), motivation is implicitly understood and expressed as, for personal gain, then who you are as a volunteer tourist is likely to be (it may be assumed) simple to define. When I asked Lilly if she would go back to Cambodia and the orphanage she answered emphatically:

Certainly not. [*What makes you say that, Lilly?*] Well... I come from a close family and a small town... I worked hard at school and never really did anything too out of the ordinary, you know. When it came to applying to university I thought, you know I think I look a bit too geeky, the most outrageous thing I'd ever done was put red streaks in my hair and I couldn't put that in my CV [laughs]. It was my mum that suggested that I think of doing some, like volunteering abroad with maybe poor kids. I thought of Africa and then just came across Cambodia and... It was all a bit impulsive really, I saw it, booked and was there all in less than a few months, talk about culture shock. I wasn't particularly happy... in fact I can say I didn't like it. I was lonely... I didn't enjoy the teaching... if you can call it that... the man who ran the place was awful... if I hadn't met Kate I think I would have been home in a week. No, I knew I was doing it so I could put it in my university application, you know my CV, and that's what I did. No, I won't be going back. The kids were lovely though...

Lilly was rare in her openness to say why she chose to be a volunteer tourist – it all appeared quite evident. However, looking more closely at her story raised many other questions - why did Lilly say this? In essence, who was this volunteer tourist in the light of why she did it? Far from being obvious, Lilly's seemingly straightforward understanding of her own motivation, actually presented me with many more questions; questions I will consider in this chapter.

That volunteer tourism is currently understood from three dominant and contrasting perspectives is, however, of some value here. Emerging from both a popular perception of the trend as well as from a jigsaw of critical scholarship, these perspectives can provide a useful starting point. Nevertheless, as helpful as they may be, it is not possible to use them exclusively as a guiding framework as these views are too wide ranging and as such, present considerable limitation of depth and degree. I argue, however, that it is necessary to incorporate these

distinctions into the exploration as my research suggests - and as will be shown - there are many common themes between these dominant views and how as volunteer tourists (we indicate that) we see ourselves. These perspectives will therefore be outlined in the first part of this chapter to provide a backdrop to the section of the discussion that considers who volunteer tourists are.

It is also necessary to consider motivation in order to explore and unpack why as individuals we might choose to buy into these vacations. Here I consider themes that emerged in my analysis and which I identified as having valuable things to say around this particular research objective. Many of these themes correspond closely to what Steven Reiss (2004) describes as the sixteen basic trait motives; motives which he contends, guide much of our human behaviour. Reiss (2004) discusses, for example, being motivated by the desire to be included (what he terms as 'acceptance'); by the desire to collect or own (what he terms as 'saving'); being motivated to improve society (idealism) and, by the desire to compete and win (vengeance). Many similar motivating factors were identified in this research (and in my interpretation of the data) as themes that point to why we choose to become volunteer tourists and will therefore be considered in depth in the second part of this chapter.

1. The unimpeachably good volunteer tourist

The first of the three dominant perspectives reflects and endorses the widely held, taken-for-granted, positive view of the volunteer tourist and volunteer tourism as "an unimpeachably good thing to do – isn't it" (Baddiel, 2013)? Here the volunteer tourist is seen as a noble individual of good intent, whose concern for "less fortunate others" (holiday-in-Angkor-wat, 2010) is an expression of their motivation for choosing a volunteer vacation in a 'Third World' destination. Held up to be compassionate and caring individuals, volunteer tourists not only have the support and respect of their own families, schools, workplaces and, communities, for example, but are admired for (what is often expressed as) their boldness and heroism; 'you're so brave', I was frequently told (at times with the adjunct, 'at your age'). Indeed, the volunteer tourist as hero is not an uncommon description.

However, whilst heroism is variously expressed and vaguely defined in volunteer tourism discourse, the imagery does appear to benefit from a media currently fixated with 'heroes' (Ducker and Cathcart, 1994; Summers and Johnson Morgan, 2008). As Ducker and Cathcart (1994) contend, "today it is the media and the myth makers who construct the hero" (p:8) and by association, in the context of who the volunteer tourist is, the heroic holiday choice. Volunteer tourists are often portrayed as heroes and their vacations as heroic: 'Journeys for Good™ - Volunteer Heroes' (journeys4good, 2012); 'Another Canadian Hero in Cambodia' (Bramham, 2012); 'What is a volunteer? Volunteers are heroes' (Adventistvolunteers, 2012).

Frequently the comings and goings of the hero's journey (their exciting vacation) are picked up by and run in the volunteer's local press. This example talks about the safe return from Siem Reap of a volunteer 'heroine' and her four-year-old daughter:

Local Heroes: She may have had to venture half way around the world and travel thousands of kilometres, but Nicola found her true purpose in Cambodia... volunteering to teach English [so that poor Cambodian] kids would be able to secure higher-paid jobs in the tourism sector later in life... Accompanying her on the trip was four-year-old daughter Tina, who quickly made friends with the other children... "I thought it was a wonderful experience for her to see how ... lucky she is having the toys, clothes and food she does", Mrs Millet said (Gillespie, Queensland Times, 2010).

In this one short extract (and its discourse of Western paternalism) are many references that link, not only to heroism but also, to expressions of, for example, colonial responsibilities and a sense of duty; to the obligation of tutelage; to universal salvation; to the civilising mission and the glorification of the missionary (Bhabha, 2010; hooks, 1992; Hutnyk, 2004; Loomba, 2008; Osterhammel, 1999; Pratt, 1992; Said, 2003). These expressions exist in the mention of the long, 'half way round the world' journey to a destination that is not, therefore of 'our' world. References also exist, I contend, in the mention of Nicola's 'true purpose' and her knowledge of what the Cambodia children 'need' for their futures; in the comparison of her (lucky) four-year-old child to the needs of the 'other' children

and, no less in the privilege of their experience. Here too is the notion of the intergenerational transfer of generosity and altruism (Wilhelm, Brown et al, 2006) and of the western, middle-class concern (desire) that our children know just how lucky they are. As Simpson (2004) describes “the experience of radically different standards and conditions of living... leads [volunteer tourists] to reflect on their own lives [and, I would add here the lives of their children], and hence to a recognition of their own fortunes” (p:689).

Numerous similar virtuous accolades also support an image of the volunteer tourist as self-sacrificing, altruistic and unimpeachably good; the volunteering vacation as unquestionably ‘in a good cause’. From here, volunteer tourism and the compassion and kindness to which it gives expression, is seen to be unproblematically ‘positive’. As such, this popular view also plays a significant role in both promoting the commodity and honouring the (heroic) consumer; a notion I explore further in this study.

Unimpeachable goodness is also given expression, I suggest, in the donations and gifts given to the tourists to take out to the ‘poor’ in the distant worlds they are visiting. These (at times inappropriate) offerings are arguably an indication of the value that ‘home’ places on the volunteer tourist and on their mission. In the manner of there being ‘No free gifts’ (Douglas in Mauss, 2010, p:ix) however, these offerings may represent the obligation of reciprocity (Mauss, 2010), establishing a contract that says, ‘here are gifts for you but in exchange you must keep our people safe and happy’. On my own first trip to Cambodia, for example, the local newspaper ran a full-page story about my impending vacation:

On the way to Siem Reap, in Cambodia, Mrs. Reas’s bulging suitcase contained a supply of donated pens and a Beaver Scout mascot called Brian (cravenherald, 2009).

There are also expressions of what Fassin (2012) describes as a collective gratification in that the moral actions expressed in the volunteer vacation are “rewarding not only for those who are acting but more broadly for those who were

simply witnessing it” (p:12); the witnesses here being onlookers at home watching the volunteer’s adventure in the pages of the local newspaper or, proud family and friends witnessing via the photographs on Facebook or in travel blogs.

It may also be argued that braveness and heroism also figures in the recognised view that volunteer tourists often do not know much about the countries, the cultures and, the problems therein, that they will be visiting – a contemporary voyage into the unknown – and the blind acceptance that ‘we’ll find out (discover) when we get there’. This is given expression in the promises of ‘learning about new cultures’; ‘in gaining an understanding of others’; not least ‘in finding out about yourself’ (Goabroad, 2012; travellersworldwide, 2012; realgap, 2012). Many of these notions are mentioned by Campbell (1968) in his writings on the hero’s journey into the unknown. In one on-line article, for example, entitled ‘Seven things to pack for a volunteering trip’ (wanderlust, 2013), the advice is given that:

When it comes to volunteering abroad, a lot will take you by surprise, in the best possible way. You can't have any expectations for the experiences you'll have, the people you'll meet, and the things you'll learn along the way. That's why it's best to pack an open mind, so that you will be able to embrace everything your volunteering adventure throws at you.

This unimpeachably positive view of the volunteer tourist remains largely unchallenged - in part due to the uneasiness of being critical of what are considered to be kind-hearted and compassionate individuals. Generally speaking, as Didier Fassin (2012) argues in regards to humanitarian gestures, the commendable virtuousness – here represented in volunteer tourism – of acts such as these, makes them “morally untouchable” (p:244); a rejection of their worth and intent often considered to be synonymous with heartlessness – if the tourist is well-intentioned, then the vacation must be good. Correspondingly therefore, there is (what may be described as) a certain blindness to the details of the good-deeds the volunteer tourist will be involved in, with mantras such as, ‘making a difference’; ‘doing a world of good’; ‘helping in their own way’; “bring[ing] hope to these impoverished children” (frontier, 2102), seeming to confirm what is

(considered to be) already known; trusting without question, the ethical and moral principles of volunteer tourism - and all despite a haziness associated with what the tourist will actually be doing. From within this perspective, volunteer tourists have all the qualities of compassionate and courageous global citizens; the vacations we choose, being taken-for-grantedly positive and worthwhile.

2. The reward-seeking volunteer tourist

The second viewpoint remains focused on the volunteer tourist but in particular on the positive outcomes the tourist will gain from their vacation. Emphasis is focused on opportunities to become “immersed in local culture” (openmindprojects, 2012); in the promise of career or educational betterment – “add sparkle to the old CV” (realgap, 2012) - and, in the “enormous fun” (Wod, 2013) to be had by being a volunteer tourist with, for example, orphaned children. From this perspective volunteer tourists are understood to be individuals who are motivated by what they stand to gain from these experiences – “not to mention the feel good factor” (realgap, 2012). Despite the uneasy juxtaposition (and a failure to recognise it), marketing continues to widely promote these benefits and society (the societies from where the volunteer tourists originate), to endorse the worth of the vacations on these grounds. This newspaper headline - and many similar others – illustrates this assertion:

Volunteering in Cambodia was a real education. How the experience of teaching English in Cambodia gave me the strength to pursue my dreams (Griffiths in the Guardian, 2012).

What this extract also shows is how effortlessly focus is directed on to the ‘education and dreams’ of the volunteer tourist – and as such, away from those who are considered to be in need. Here links can be made with celebrity campaigns and consumer charity drives (Davis, 2010) – a notion that will be developed in this study – where need is routinely removed from the suffering onto “the voices, bodies and faces” (p:98) of the charitable. In another example, the fund-raising efforts of ‘an amazing group’ of pre-departure volunteer tourists (as well as their good deeds in Siem Reap) are applauded on the organisation’s website. Ironically,

in many instances, pre-departure fundraising efforts are (openly) used to pay the volunteers' airfares and placement fees:

This amazing group of students proactively raised support and planned the trip, giving up their holiday to come and help families and children in Cambodia. Over a week, the team managed to paint two houses and a colourful classroom. They also cooked food for the family and spent some time at the orphanage teaching and playing games with the children (lovecambodia, 2013).

However, I found in this research that whilst volunteer tourists often implicitly expressed their motivation as being a combination of these first two positions – characterised here from the website of a volunteering charity as, “Why volunteer? Give a little, gain a lot” (timebank, 2013) - they were at the same time keen to defend the suggestion that their intentions were entirely (if at all) egocentric or self-fulfilling. This extract is taken from an interview with Sam, a nineteen year old graduate from the UK who had been a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap during his independent tour around the world. Sam describes how he saw himself as being different from other tourists - including some other volunteer tourists. (Sam's interview was conducted via social media hence the written-tone of his response):

I was there to make a difference, however slight, and it was very rewarding. You are right to detect disdain when considering the people giving one day (even half a day) to volunteer at the orphanage. I may be wrong in this but I felt these people turned up to take photos and leave, and not really having the children's best interest at heart. (I don't think I'm being unreasonable in this notion). I suppose I'm trying to say that some western tourists should be more considerate to native people and their circumstances when in countries such as Cambodia.

What is pertinent here is that Sam saw his contribution, not only as rewarding, but as different from the others who, as he describes, failed to have the children's best interests at heart. Whilst it would be unfair to suggest that this particular volunteer was entirely motivated by what the experience offered him, by taking other elements of his account into consideration, I concluded that volunteering gave Sam a reason to remain in Siem Reap after a period of being constantly on the move;

that it offered him friendship and companionship in the form of other volunteers; that it enabled him to take advantage of reduced rate accommodation (as a volunteer tourist) at his guest house and, that it helped him to feel more 'considerate to native people and their circumstances' (as he describes above). As well as helping to understand 'who' volunteer tourists are there are also many themes in Sam's narrative, which point towards the question of 'why'.

3. Critical concern

The final position emerges from demands for further scrutiny and critique of volunteer tourism to establish a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Birrell, 2010; Guttentag, 2009; Heath 2007, Salazar 2004, Simpson 2004, Sin 2009; Zavitz and Butz, 2011); in essence calling the popular trend to account by challenging many of the commonly held assumptions about volunteer tourists. Questions include (but are not restricted to), whether as vacationers, individuals can effectively respond altruistically to poverty and disadvantage; issues around religious doctrine and conversion (who you are, here particularly determining what you do and why); concerns about the impact volunteer tourists have on the lives of vulnerable children and, an unease about the identity-seeking motives of some volunteers. Noel Salazar (2004) amongst others, argues that alternative vacationers such as those indulging in short-term developmental or volunteer tourism, may be viewed as "Western 'ego-tourists' [working] on their self-realization and personal development" (p:104). In much research taking this final position, the argument is usually present that whilst often well-intentioned, volunteer tourists are individuals who are pursuing personal gain or, are ill-informed about the reasons for, and consequences of, their vacation choice.

To summarise these three dominant perspectives however, it would be too easy to suggest, to simply characterise volunteer tourists as either heroes or hedonists. Furthermore, whilst the positions above do provide a useful starting point, the outline is at best, rather thin. Those of us who have been consumers of these vacations (and others who may be considering the choice) are as complex and diverse as the (difficult to define) trend itself - as indeed are our motives.

Furthermore, after our vacations were over - as was both experienced by myself and, often expressed to me by others - feelings that were initially eager and energised around our forthcoming acts of altruism and compassion, often evaporated into an uneasy awareness of our own egotism and carelessness. Who was I really being as that volunteer tourist? Very little space, if any is given to these concerns within the current structure of volunteer vacationing – these are commodities after all. I will however address this towards the end of this chapter as tension between our expectations and reflections has things to say about who we are, not least in the observation that public face is rarely given to the real disappointments in ourselves and/or our vacations.

Having outlined the dominant perspectives it is clear that what is required is a more nuanced account of contingent factors in order to provide a broader context to understanding who volunteer tourists are and why we choose to take these vacations. Substantial links need to be made with other circumstances and social relations that impact on motivation and behaviour – what, for example, are the spheres of influence here? The volunteer tourist is essentially a tourist consumer and any understanding of who the volunteer is must also pay close regard to who the tourist is. Connections should also be recognized between volunteer tourists and contemporary western understandings of compassionate consumption; to the notion of colonial continuities – of the ‘First World’/‘Third World’, benefactor/beneficiary relationship; of constructions of ‘otherness’; to the compulsion (the White Man’s Burden) to educate and support (particularly in regards to volunteer tourists as ardent purveyors of the English language) – in essence to the framing of volunteer tourism as a fashionable vacation commodity. This is because despite the popular ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ around volunteer tourist consumption, as Gabriel and Lang (1995) argue, “in all its meanings, consumerism is neither ethically nor politically neutral” (p:9) - and nor, I would add, is it performed in a contemporary vacuum.

Why do we buy it?

Concepts of desire and motivation in the context of tourism consumption and, how these drives affect tourist behaviour, have been introduced in the review of literature. In this next section – drawing on these and other intrinsic motives (Reiss, 2004) - themes will be discussed that have been identified in this study as motivating factors in the desire to be a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap; as well as how these motives help define who we are in this context. Despite attempts to classify motivation (as in Reiss's model), I would argue that factors cannot be understood in isolation and that it is important to acknowledge the context of all the complexities of why as humans we make certain choices. Nonetheless, acknowledging that the aim is to look at the curiousness of social behaviour rather than the idiosyncrasies of individual actions, when considering my own motivation for being in Siem Reap as a volunteer tourist, I can see myself in each of Reiss's sixteen categories (2004).

I recognise for example, my desire to improve the world; my desire for status; my desire to pass on altruism to my son; for social contact; to explore and learn, as well as my desire to reclaim feelings of an independent being after years of parenting. Other individuals may be motivated by the desire for power and honour – hoping that being a volunteer tourist will set them apart from their peers (power) and make their family and friends proud (honour); still others may be motivated by the desire to escape and be free of anxiety (perhaps following divorce or redundancy). Many of these, however, make links with the perception of volunteer tourists as individuals largely motivated by personal gain. Far from offering distinct motive-demarcations then, it is clear that there are many complexities and variations to consider when thinking about 'who' volunteer tourists are and 'why' we choose to be consumers of these vacations.

For example, I found that in many exchanges with volunteer tourists in my research, mention was often made to previous travelling (or even volunteering) experiences - Africa, China, Belarus, India, South America and all the South East Asian countries were referred to in interviews. (What is also interesting is that this

information was offered to me unprompted as my original interview plan did not contain a direct question relating to other travel destinations.) This observation makes links with research from tourism studies and particularly the contention that the world is now viewed or 'framed' by many westerners as a series of places to be visited (Desforges, 2000; MacCannell, 1999). In this manner other countries and cultures (frequently distinguished by difference and determined by a 'First World'/'Third World' measure) are seen to become products to be consumed, collected and accumulated (Desforges, 2000). This concept is arguably reflected in the marketing technique used by mainstream travel and tour operators of zoning holiday destinations and pertinently, in how volunteer vacation providers use 'where do you want to go?' as an initial search filter in their marketing.

As Reiss (2004) describes, individuals may be motivated by the desire to collect and own (save) - here destinations and experiences - and in order to support this desire, the list of 'must go' tourist places is constantly revised as new ones are discovered and become de rigueur and older attractions become overdone or passé. In addition, the market offers an abundance of products that encourage and facilitate this drive, from a series of 'Places to See Before You Die' publications (Schultz, 2012) to 'Scratch Maps' where countries visited are revealed by scratching off the map's gold foil covering - "The thought of scratching off new destinations serves as a great incentive to pack your suitcase" (firebox, 2011).

'Must do' experiences are often added to the itinerary of 'must go' places with compiled lists available to guide these choices. Interestingly, item sixteen of one 'things to do before you die' website states that volunteering abroad for a month is one of the fifty things that helps to remind us that "the world remains a magical place" (Lew, 2010). Indeed, volunteer vacationing as a fantasy experience, particularly those choices that involve (as described) 'poor and needy' children, will be unpacked in the chapter that asks, 'what is being consumed in volunteer tourism?'

However, in drawing together the questions of 'who' we are as volunteer tourists and 'why' we decide to buy into these vacations, I firstly turn to the (what may initially appear to be the strangely ambiguous) notion of eating and food which is described by Reiss and Wiltz (2004) as a motivating factor that, if the basic desire is obtained, can bring people the intrinsically valued feeling of joy. I will then move on to focus on the desire for independence in its many expressions.

Using 'eating' to understand who the volunteer tourist is.

It would be difficult to argue that the desire for food (Reiss, 2004) could be a factor that motivates ordinary individuals to become volunteer tourists. However, returning to my data with eating in mind, I become aware of many instances where volunteer tourists referred, for example, to consuming local food; to experiences of eating where locals eat; to having been invited to eat in (authentic) Cambodian homes and, of (daring to) try different and unusual foods - indulging in local delicacies. Significantly, I began to see the importance that volunteer tourists attached to these aspects of their vacation and how they appeared to be constructing themselves through these experiences – 'this is the kind of volunteer tourist I am'.

Rose, for example, was a twenty year old Irish woman who had been a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap with another female friend from the same Development Studies course. I interviewed her a year after she had returned from this particular volunteering experience. Whilst discussing why she did not consider herself to be a tourist, Rose began talking about how she had been invited to eat in the home of her Cambodian friends. It would seem that she was drawing on these particular experiences to shape and express the kind of volunteer tourist she wanted/saw herself to be:

I wouldn't count us as tourists no... because... I found that we really immersed into the culture... we like became really good friends with P and T... and they like... we spent a lot of time with their family... we ate at their home and... we ended up being really good friends with them... really, really good friends ... so I

found that we really, really immersed into... the life outside the orphanage... And that was brilliant.

It is interesting how Rose uses the word 'immersed' (as in baptism; to cover; to plunge) to further qualify her rejection of being 'just' a tourist. For me (despite the risk of over-extrapolation) the word also invokes images of food being 'traditionally' prepared in deep Cambodian cooking vessels over an open fire – big 'melting pots' of local/tourist togetherness. For Rose however, part of her feelings of being a (immersed in the culture-type) volunteer tourist, came from her experiences with eating and food.

References to eating and food are also used in volunteer tourist marketing literature as indicators of a whole cultural experience, as well as of expressions of difference and otherness; "munching on their first hamburgers in weeks, Peace Corps Volunteers serving in Cambodia traded tales of mastering the Asian squat toilet and eating deep-fried tarantulas" (Munthit, 2007). In one widely available visitor guide in Siem Reap, for example, tourists are encouraged to 'Stay Another Day' (stayanotherdaycambodia, 2010) and, not only "turn their trip into a volunteer vacation!" (p:10, exclamation mark in the original) but also "learn the secrets of Khmer cooking" (letigredepapier, 2010) by joining a three hour cookery class that includes buying ingredients at the local market. (These courses are run by a French owned and operated restaurant in the heart of Siem Reap's tourist district). A number of volunteer tourists told me of their having taken part in these experiences as a way to improve their knowledge of Cambodian culture. As Heron (2007) describes, 'othering' reactions and responses to difference enter narratives as "undifferentiated foreignness" (p:59); as strange or bizarre ways of doing or, as here discovering the 'secrets' of Khmer cooking.

Like Rose, other volunteer tourists talked about how food and eating set them apart from (as Sam described to me), the 'blatant tourists'. Elliot for example, expressed how being a volunteer tourist gave him the opportunity to know about food which in turn helped him to know about 'real' Cambodia; an opportunity that being a 'normal' tourist would not have offered him he said:

What I'm saying is that as a volunteer I felt... well it took you more into the community I felt. You became part of the community I guess. Yeh, it was a way to understand the culture a little bit, a bit more really. For instance, I got to know about the food from the children, I don't know....some of the food they brought from the street stalls... I just know that... I don't know but discovering that helped me to know real Cambodian culture.

Here the notion of food and eating was used to communicate knowledge of Cambodia; at other times as a sign of worldliness and 'cosmopolitan credentials' (Nguyen, 2005). As Tim Edwards (200) contends in his exploration of consumer society, "at its simplest, consumption refers to the process of consuming or... using up, devouring" (p:10). The fervour with which many volunteer tourists talked about their food experiences often suggested devouring; consuming Cambodian culture with an enthusiasm and zeal that, at the same time helped to define them as volunteer tourists enjoying every little 'spiced-up' (hooks, 1992) morsel of their vacation. As Everett (2008) contends, "food represents more than purely an economic commodity, it is a multidimensional cultural artefact capable of linking issues regarding the relationship between place and identity, and the material and symbolic." (p:338/9).

Food and eating then do seem to have a role to play in who we are as (cultured, knowing, cosmopolitan, independent) volunteer tourists. Food and eating offer ways to set ourselves apart from other tourists; to demonstrate our immersion in, and knowledge of, Cambodian culture (just three hours and \$19's to know the 'secrets' of Khmer cuisine); "an extension of the sensuality and physicality of the place" (Game, 1991, p:180); a "phenomenon of the contact zone [where] subjects are constituted in and by their relationships to each other" (Pratt, 1992, p:6/7); a sign of communion when food is shared and (as here) offered as a social link; an experience of difference that claims authenticity; "another mode of consumption, and of appropriation" (Hutnyk, 1996, p:156) – ones that it is possible to (quickly and easily) 'gain'; 'take' home and, ultimately to 'make use of' through having been that kind of volunteer tourist.

What I found is that, despite the initial sense that the basic motive of eating appeared to offer nothing to the exploration of who volunteer tourists are and why we do it, an examination of this particular trait does offer insight here. Through references to food and descriptions of eating (where, what and with whom) expression is given to, for example, our non-tourist status (through eating at the local stalls rather than in westernised tourist hotels); to power (through becoming an 'expert' on local culture through a 'knowledge' of local cuisine); to the romanticism of the volunteer vacation (through the fantasy of sampling something truly Cambodian); to status (social capital gained from these virtual experiences); to acceptance and social contact (particularly when invited to eat with 'local' people); to learning (food as education) and to saving (through collecting memories, experiences, tastes, smells) (Reiss, 2004) – I eat, therefore I am.

Finally, however whilst I have argued that food and eating were seen to be employed to express difference between volunteer tourists and 'other' tourists, I also made an observation that food was sometimes used by expatriates or those staying longer in Siem Reap, to distinguish *them* from volunteers. For example, one NGO manager was keen to treat me to fish and chips from a restaurant recently opened by another expatriate from the UK. En route I asked if he ever went to the 'stalls' that were particularly popular with volunteer tourists eating cheaply and 'going native' (Redfoot, 1984). "You must be joking," he told me "that food's utter shite".

Independence as a significant motive

In my research, notions of independence were motives that emerged most frequently as a theme – whether alone or in combination with other desires. This was sometimes expressed by participants as wanting to become (to learn how to be) independent; at other times, because people already saw themselves as independent-types (and as such saw volunteering as an appropriate vacation choice for them). Independence was also expressed as a desire to have an independent vision – to be able to see (look) for ourselves - to witness what others may have talked about or as a consequence of having been inspired in some less

personal way through books, films, websites, for example. There were also many expression of the desire to regain independence.

The notion of independence has been explored in tourism theory, Caruana, Crane & Fitchett (2008) claiming for example, the centrality of the notion in the marketing agenda. They argue that in tourism discourse and tourist consumption (in the cited work relating especially to the backpacker), independence helps to create an imagery of adventure, excitement and exploration. In turn, they assert, this works to develop a “myth of independence [that is] shown to operate as a powerful marketing differentiator... allow[ing] consumers a viable space in which to construct a positive and valued sense of self” (Caruana, Crane & Fitchett, 2008, p:269). Being independent also helps people to feel that they have avoided the stereotypes of mainstream tourism (Lozanski, 2011). A number of volunteer tourists in my study talked about how they never saw themselves as a ‘beach holiday type person’ (Rose) or even, as Teresa and Patricia told me, “we're not great sightseers. We went [to the temples] for three hours and that was enough”.

Independence is also an ideal heavily promoted by volunteer vacation providers in advertising and marketing. For example:

Nothing screams independence more than jumping on a plane, travelling half way around the world, immersing yourself in a completely new and unknown culture and coming out on top! Employers love this stuff and after such an adventure, you can go into any interview without fear when they ask, “What is one of your greatest achievements?” Travelling to another part of the world ... is an outstanding achievement. You can also talk about making your way from the airport to your accommodation, creating lesson plans or activities and how you are able to adapt to your surroundings (BUNAC, 2013)

Despite the powerful rhetoric in advertisements such as this, it is of course possible to consider paradoxes in these notions of independence in volunteer tourism. As Lozanski (2011) insightfully contends, the highly organised infrastructure contained within the vacation industry - transportation systems; passport and visa control; (here) NGO networks; accommodation providers; large companies facilitating

volunteering placements; guidebook producers, for example - all play a part in regulating and standardising the supposed uniqueness of this vacation trend.

The idea that many volunteer tourists wish to separate themselves from “existing patterns of mass tourism” (Urry, 2001, p:57) has been explored in the literature with Mowforth and Munt (1998) suggesting that the current pursuit of independence and individualism is having a considerable impact on ‘new destinations’ in the ‘Third World’ in particular. As more people seek-out the unique and unexplored – important concerns in the desire for independence - more destinations (and experiences within those destinations) must be pulled into the tourism process. Cambodia’s position in this progression, and significantly the mushrooming volunteer tourist sector in Siem Reap, is here all too apparent. Motivated by the desire to see new places and take part in new experiences - crucially before ‘other’ tourists get there - is also mark of the wish to be seen as independent.

According to Rojek and Urry (1997), this desire is also driven by a yearning to penetrate “the closed-off spaces or ‘back regions’” (p:19) of the vacation destination and as such the appeal of orphanages, poor schools, lesser visited communities and homes, is apparent in this context. Relatedly, asserting their view of self as independent volunteer tourists, many talked about their excitement when – often on their first day volunteering - their tuk-tuk would turn off the main road (the well-beaten track) and into the (back region) countryside. Although usually only a few kilometres out of the town (and receiving ‘revolving door’ visits from volunteer tourist groups), both marketing literature and volunteer tourists refer to these places as the ‘real Cambodia’.

This sense is arguably intensified by the popular use of hire bicycles – an option offered by many volunteer vacation providers. The bicycle, as a symbol of both independence and ‘going native’ (Redfoot, 1984), also provides opportunities for extending the personal narrative of who I am as a volunteer tourist. For example, riding bicycles around town allows volunteers to further disassociate from the

mass-tourist project where holiday-makers are moved from tourist attraction to tourist attraction, often in air-conditioned coaches. The Lonely Planet guide for Cambodia describes cycling as “bring[ing] visitors much closer to the uberfriendly locals” (Ray, 2005, p:320) - whilst at the same time highlighting Silver’s (1993) assertion that many of the so-called independent guide books for the ‘First World’ “tend to portray predominantly what Westerners have historically imagined the Other to be like”(p:303).

1. Volunteer tourists as independent travellers

From the rite of passage rooted in The Grand Tour; through the trend of 19th century women adventurers (Pemble, 1987); to images of liberated travellers as popularized in movies such as *The Beach* (2000), *Into the Wild* (2007) and *Eat Pray Love* (2010), there runs the thread of independence that has been romanticised and glamorised by each new generation. From these films - and literature of a similar genre - comes the suggestion that by breaking away from the style of holiday-making consumed by our parents, today as independent travellers, we can be adventurous, intrepid and even heroic. Strengthened by an expressed rejection of the McDonaldized (Ritzer, 1998) package tour and its formalised, dependable holidays and commodified destinations, volunteer tourism is often presented as an exemplar of the vacation with a difference – “the new ‘poster-child’ for alternative tourism” (Lyons and Wearing, 2008, p:6). Furthermore, whilst being independent allegedly provides opportunities for discovering ‘for ourselves’, the trope of introspection also runs through many real and fictional traveller accounts, giving expression to the contemporary yearning to discover (or rediscover) who we are. Here being motivated by curiosity and “the desire to explore or learn” (Reiss, 2004) also includes the desire to learn about who I am – a theme represented in many volunteer tourist narratives.

However, whilst a notion of independence is promoted in much of the marketing, it is also staged and performed by the volunteer tourists themselves often in photographs (posted together with testimonies) that are subsequently used in further marketing or in travel blogs - as well as widely in the social media. Here

tourists, being volunteer tourists, often reveal themselves to be practically indistinguishable from the image of the independent backpacker or carefree traveller. For example, photographs often show volunteer tourists dressed in local market-bought clothing; wearing numerous friendship-type wristbands – “piling on more bracelets than a pirate” (Welch, 2011); and sporting hair braids or the ubiquitous 'Same-Same But Different'³ logo t-shirt. Indeed body ornamentations (further markings of the independent traveller) also make links with the desire to accumulate, save and collect (Reiss, 2004).

Along with these souvenirs – these mementoes of experiences; these representations of appropriation (Hutnyk, 1996) - some volunteer tourists are keen to collect bodily markers of their independence such as ethnic tattoos – as well as the ultimate bodily mark of vacationing, the suntan. As Bell et al. (2011) contend, “the holiday body of course exists in direct relation to the labouring body” (p:150) and through displaying these collected effects the experience becomes material and corporeal; proof of independent vacationing; of having been there and having been that. Interestingly too, these symbols of the non-labouring body contrast with the volunteer tourists expressions of ‘working’ in orphanages or poor schools. In a similar way, it may be argued, that references to payments or fees are frequently replaced with terms such as donation or contribution, the expression ‘working’ in orphanages detracts from the reality of vacationing or holidaying; as such maintaining the illusion of altruism and self-sacrifice.

What appears to be important to the volunteer tourist, however, is that by aligning themselves as closely as possible to the non-tourist they become distinct from the mainstream, ‘sun-hatted’, camera-toting, organized holidaymaker. As MacCannell (1999) argues, tourists in the main dislike other tourists. Indeed, it is also argued by Inderpal Grewal (1996) that it is not uncommon for tourists to reveal a desire “to merge with the “native” culture and not be seen as a visitor” (p:1). It is not

³ A popularised translated Cambodian phrase

surprising then that I encountered many expressions of independence and an eagerness by volunteer tourists to assert their non-tourist credentials. Here Sheila, a woman in her early sixties who had travelled alone to Siem Reap to find somewhere to be a volunteer, articulates how her independence (here, of thought) set her apart from other vacationers. When I asked Sheila directly if she considered herself to be a tourist, she responded by saying:

No, no because ... I think a tourist doesn't question, whereas you and I going somewhere like that the immediate thought is 'why'. We analysed what was going on.... You're not looking at it as a place; you're looking at the people. You're not looking at the superficiality of a Thomson holiday.

It was interesting that Sheila was also keen to ally herself with me – 'whereas you and I'; 'we analysed what was going on' - distancing herself even further from other tourists and their perceived motivations by linking her own motives close to the assumed independence of mine as researcher. Being independent and thinking independently were clearly important to Sheila. She also described how she had investigated the organised volunteer tourist provider route but said that:

...it's big business, very big business and without any thought about what's going to happen in the future.....

Her reference to the lack of thought by the big providers also makes connections to perceptions of thoughtfulness in volunteer tourism; the lack of thought defining mainstream; her vacation choice being thoughtful and 'unimpeachably good'.

I refer again to Sam, the young graduate travelling alone on his trip around the world. Like Sheila, independence was important to Sam as it was seen to be symbolic of a "more benign form of travel than mass tourism" (Lozanski, 2010, p:465) and, as such, a period as a volunteer tourist in Siem Reap allowed him to maintain this status. Initially having no plans to volunteer on his trip, Sam was motivated to spend a short time working (as he described) as a volunteer in an orphanage after he had met other independent travellers 'doing some volunteering'. Here Sam's desire for social contact, as well as the desire to be

included in their company and activities, appears to have influenced his decision to volunteer. The volunteering experience was expressed by both Sam and Sheila as elevating them above 'superficiality or blatant-ness' and as such again, a move away from the *McDonaldization* (Ritzer, 2000) of tourism and its 'predictable, quantifiable' but rather brash efficiency (Ritzer and Liska, 1997). Indeed the idea that sameness (as opposed to uniqueness and independence) is etched on the mass-tourist experience can be seen in Sam's response when asked to elaborate on his remark about, what he terms as, 'blatant tourists' (above). He replied by saying:

When I say 'blatant tourist' I mean people who are in Siem Reap to take advantage of it purely as a holiday destination, see the temples, visit the shops, drink in the bars and then move on to the next place. As my time at the orphanage went on I felt I became part of the community.

For Sam the independence expressed through being a volunteer tourist negates his identification as one of those individuals who see Siem Reap 'purely as a holiday destination' and as such, a place to be taken advantage of (before moving on). What is interesting about Sam's observation, however, is that he had initially described how *he* came to Siem Reap to 'see the temples and the town' as part of his (moving on) world tour. After a short time as a volunteer tourist, a role he saw as allowing him to 'becoming a regular at local restaurants, cafes and pubs', he began to feel, not a blatant tourist but, 'part of the community'. Although Sam did go and see the same temples, visit the same shops and drink in the same bars as other visitors to Siem Reap, as a volunteer tourist his (perceived) independence made him more principled than others. This contradiction - which Caruana, Crane and Fitchett (2008) argue "lies at the heart of many consumer encounters" (p:269) - shows how Sam, as well as Sheila above, through their perception of being independent volunteer tourists were able to mediate tensions in their touristic experiences without weakening their own choices and actions.

2. Volunteer tourists learning to be independent

At various life stages, the appeal for independence increases. Shrewd and targeted marketing by the volunteer tourist industry emphasises life-stage independence as

one of the rewards of this vacation choice. Here particularly are evidenced unambiguous expressions of the 'reward-seeking' view of this trend. As Salazar (2004) contends, "tourism can operate in powerful ways to shape identities, experience and the 'Self'" (p:101). Young people especially seek independence as a way of signalling their move into adulthood; taking the first steps to leaving home or looking for something between the more sheltered world of schooling and the more independently perceived world of university life or employment. Marketing often plays to the insecurities of this particular milestone by drawing attention to the worries and concerns that some young people and their families have about this time. Becoming a volunteer tourist (often as part of a gap year break) is presented as a valuable and exciting way to manage this transition - for those that can afford it. *Gap 360*, for example, is a UK based travel company that offers a range of volunteering options "in deprived destinations [where it is possible to spend time with] adorable kids in orphanages" (gap360, 2013). Associations between *Gap 360's* product range; the anxieties of this life stage; becoming 'truly' independent and, seeing the world, are explicitly made:

[A volunteer vacation] is great preparation for university life. If you're worried about leaving behind friends and family when you move to university, then this will be one of the best things you can do. For some, it's the first taster they get of living a truly independent life, and they have to learn from scratch how to look after themselves. Leaving your parents behind can be hard, for you and for them, but what better way to stand on your own two feet than by seeing the world on an ultimate volunteering adventure? (gap360, 2013)

Despite the claims of true independence, however, many providers adopt a familiar school-trip ethos by providing, for example, pre-departure-briefings; overseas support; vetted accommodation; meeting and greeting on arrival and, supervision during the vacation. One company even claims to 'go the extra mile' and provide paperwork and verifications for Duke of Edinburgh schemes or to liaise with universities for application concerns or dissertation support (projects-abroad, 2012). It is models such as these that attract both the view of volunteer tourists as

individuals keen to secure advantages over their peers, as well as the criticism that they are merely consumers of a popular and privileged vacation trend.

Nevertheless, by placing emphasis on skills that will be gained by becoming a volunteer tourist, especially those considered an asset on university application forms, parents come under pressure to ensure that their sons and daughters take advantage of these advantages. Sue Heath (2007) argues that in the struggle for middle-class families to 'maintain their class position', it is easy to see volunteer tourist type activities as an investment in their childrens' futures; and, as she furthermore contends, "the gap year has a strong historical association with privilege" (p:99). In this respect Simpson (2005) notes, "Prince William's arrival in Chile represented the pinnacle of institutional acceptability for the gap year" (p:449). This illustrative example is taken from a website which offers advice to the parents of would-be volunteer tourists wishing to take a break between school and university:

Universities value the maturity and focus of [volunteers] who are more ready for university than those who go straight there. Employers value the life skills such as initiative, communication and decision making skills, character, confidence, financial planning and achievement of goals that can be shown on their CVs. In short, they are proven to put your child ahead in life (Gallagher, 2011)

Notably however, the words 'independent' or 'independence' are not used in this extract although all of the traits highlighted are indicative of this quality. Could it be that for some parents, the notion of independence suggests too final a break away from family and childhood? Similarly, the image of the independent traveller could be disquieting for the parents of seventeen year old girls, for example, especially with the knowledge of a number of gap year tragedies. Here an acceptable balance must be struck between the notions of danger as character-building and, danger as reckless. As Kate Simpson (2005) argues, the volunteer tourist industry is now operating "in spaces that are simultaneously dangerous and safe" (p:449). However, whilst the volunteer tourist must be protected whilst in the process of discovering their independence, providing what appears to be just the right

amount of danger to make the vacations exciting, is also an important marketing device.

Indeed, various studies have explored the concept of risk-taking as a feature of adolescent behaviour, Rolison (2002), for example, arguing that “a need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical and social risks” (p:586) are characteristics of those seeking independence from parents and families. Being a volunteer tourist (particularly with established and professionalised companies), allows young people to independently experience (the perceived) dangers of ‘Third World’ environments with the reassurance of ‘First World’ support and modern technologies of communication and transportation (Lash and Urry, 1994) - should they be required. The well-being of these young consumers is likewise taken seriously by volunteer vacation providers - and wisely so as accidents are extremely bad for business. Reassuring families is, as such, an excellent marketing tool and much provision is made to act as, albeit somewhat disguised, *in loco parentis* for young people learning about independence for the first time.

During my own fieldwork I was able to observe a group of twelve 18-20 year olds taking part in a ten week ‘South East Asia Ethical Adventure Trail’ that incorporated four weeks of volunteering (mainly teaching English and playing with children) in a ‘poor’ Cambodian community school; “earn your Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate, and get your foot on the career ladder” (frontier, 2012). [A note in my fieldwork diary reads that ‘there doesn’t seem to be much difference between the guest-house lounge and a 6th form common room this morning. The first batch are getting ready to be taken out to the school, the others are going off to the market to do some shopping. Great excitement all-round’]. The marketing literature for this particular adventure claims that:

What is so fantastic about this journey is that whilst travelling you will benefit from the leadership of a young, friendly, fun but also sensible and well-travelled guide who will take care of all the stress and organisation on the trip, whether it be recovering lost luggage, arranging bus tickets, booking hostels or extra activities,

dealing with emergencies or even knowing the best places to go for a great night out in Bangkok! If you want to experience the beauty and adventure of Southeast Asia, travelling along with a young and friendly group of companions, without the hassle, then joining this Frontier Adventure Trail is the perfect solution! (frontier, 2012)

Whilst gaining independence is a reward offered from these 'adventures', the claim that someone is on hand to recover lost bags, buy tickets and even make sure travellers are up in the morning, somewhat challenges the notion, I would argue. I noted that each morning the British in-country guide would arrive at the guest house to deal with volunteers' problems and requirements which ranged from hangovers to sunburn; lost wallets to home sickness. Nonetheless, interviewing Laura, one of the younger (now volunteer vacationing) adventurers at the end of her first week in the school, she told me that:

My friend has a Cambodian girlfriend [I assumed this to be the young female companion of the in-country guide who arrived with him each morning] and she's thinking of setting up an orphanage and I'd like to come back and do that with her. It sounds silly but I really think I'm growing up here.

Whilst learning how to become independent is promoted as a significant reason why one should choose to be a volunteer tourist, it is also clear that these vacations offer a sanitised and often highly managed route to growing up.

3. Volunteer tourists looking to regain independence

The desire to be regarded as independent is in no way limited to the younger generation; as the volunteer vacation provider 'Gaps for Grumpies' puts it, "how come the students get all the fun" (gapsforgrumpies, 2012)? Many retirement-age individuals are now healthy enough and have funds available to plan and set out on their own exciting adventures. Many of the more mature volunteer tourists I spoke to in Siem Reap, talked about how the experience was a way of marking the end of their child rearing role or taking a break from the responsibilities of grand-parenting. Others said they were seeking independence from the pressures of a demanding career; from emotional problems at home (divorce, bereavement or redundancy, for example) or from unfulfilling jobs or life styles. Indeed, it may also

be argued that for this particular age group, here is the opportunity to take part in something that would not have been available to them as young people.

Graham Dann (2002) suggests links between feelings of declining status and age-related social discrimination and, the ego-enhancing properties of tourism and travel. By pursuing the promises of transformation made by many volunteer vacation providers, connections can be made with the desire to (re)discover the self as well as with the desire to (re)discover independence. During my trips to Siem Reap I met a significant number of individuals from this group. A note in my fieldwork diary reads:

I am interested in the number of older/mature VT's I'm encountering. I really need to think about their experiences. I hadn't anticipated meeting so many. What strikes me most is their enthusiasm and energy. Where do they get it from? This lot have certainly got their second winds and are really making the most of their experiences.

The more mature age group now represents a growing number of volunteer tourists in Siem Reap. Mary, as an example, was a widowed, retired school teacher from London who I interviewed during her vacation in the town. She told me how she had raised her family; had a full and rewarding career; coped with the illness and early death of her husband and now needed time, as she described to me, to 'find herself again'. She talked about how she hoped that being a volunteer tourist with 'poor' Cambodian children would give her, what she described as, an opportunity to regain her confidence and sense of purpose. When I asked her about travelling on her own to Cambodia she said:

Look, I could have stayed at home and done all the grand-mothering stuff or I could do my own thing here for a month and find out if I've still got it, you know. The [grand] kids will be there when I get back... I'm not going to miss out much – nor are they in the four weeks that I'm away (laughs)... and they'll get some great presents from here. Losing my husband felt like losing a limb, you know... I used to sit and cry at the simplest of problems... he'd always been there to pick me up and make things right. A while after he died I had a good old talk with myself and said, 'come on

you used to be a strong, independent woman – pull yer-blooming-self together’ (laughs). It was up to me, it’s all up to me and I either get on with it or I give up... and I just can’t keep calling the kids every time I need to change a light bulb and stuff.

Mary also talked about how she hoped her children (and her grandchildren as they grow up) would be proud of her for the choice she had made. She told me that she wanted:

...to show them that even when the worst of the worst happens you’ve got to pick yourself up and get on with life. Being independent again is so important to me now.

Mary, in common with a number of other mature volunteer tourists (and here I also include my own initial experience in Siem Reap) expressed pride in their efforts to discovery and prove their independence to family and friends. It held a value to them/us that justified the money spent and the difficulties that may be encountered. Far from being an ‘easy option’, it represented a challenge, albeit one with a fairly substantial safety net. As Mary told me, “of course I’m under strict instructions from my daughter to at least send a text every day to say I’m still alive (laughs). It’s a bit excessive to be honest but I don’t like to think they are worrying about me”.

4. Volunteer tourists as independent witnesses

Whilst (the ambiguity of) ‘seeing the world’ is presented as an opportunity to gain social capital and prepare young people for their futures, a nuance of this theme was the importance expressed by some volunteer tourists of ‘seeing things for themselves’ - gaining an independent vision; an official testimony of what others have already witnessed. Likewise, notions of authenticity and visions of the authentic are familiar in tourism literature, MacCannell (1999) arguing, for example, that “the rhetoric of tourism is full of manifestations of the importance of the authenticity of the relationship between tourists and what they see” (p:14). Pertinently too, within the context here of what is seen, Pearce and Moscardo (1986) theorise that ‘real things’ possess a “gift-like quality” for the tourist (p:122). In volunteer tourism discourse the ‘gift-like quality’ attached to ‘seeing first-hand’

is at times received in the form of a magical vision - “the moment I set eyes on those enchanting children, my heart just melted” (Rose on her first day as a volunteer at an orphanage in Siem Reap, 2011) - at other times by being ‘gifted’ with the knowledge of just how lucky I am – “after what I’ve seen I know I have so much I should be more grateful for” (Paul, 2012).

Even so, for other volunteers there appeared to be a vagueness (perhaps, a shallowness) about the experience of ‘seeing for yourself’ that provided little reflection beyond having seen. One travel blog entry, for example - posted alongside a photograph of a line of children extending empty food bowls towards the viewer - reads:

This is a chance to see it for yourself, as a volunteer in Cambodia you will see people who have had to struggle most of their life (Cicilje, 2011).

I argue that the use of the passive verb ‘to see’ would best be replaced with the active form ‘to look’ in that the premeditated intention of viewing ‘people who have had to struggle most of their life’ negates the accidental nature of what may be seen. Indeed this simple contention has much to say about volunteer tourists and our motivation to be an independent witness and (now read) ‘look’ for ourselves.

The notion of seeing/looking for ourselves - of being an independent eye-witness - raises questions, not just of what volunteer tourists are able to look at and of their desire to look but also, about *who* we are as volunteer tourists that choose to do this. That volunteer tourism provides abundant opportunities to look (to look at what, the poverty and hardship of others?), also provokes issues of ‘how’ we look; of the forms of power that allow us to look and how the same power and systems are supportive of these chances to look - what Blocker (2009) describes as the ethics of looking. These questions extend naturally, I would argue, to the photograph and, to the act of making photographic images – what may be described as the disembodied souvenirs of having seen. These issues will be

explored further in chapter seven of this thesis which considers the role of the photograph and the camera in how volunteer tourism is consumed. It is the promise of an independent vision, however - dependent entirely on the authority of 'being there' (Taussig, 2011) – that makes the official testimony (the, 'I saw it with my own eyes') such a powerful, motivating factor and one to which I will now turn my attention.

An entry on a virtual online message board - a space that claims to be "the world's largest and most exciting gap year social network... a home for travellers to meet online, to chat, and to share experiences" (gapyear, 2012) – provides an example of how the independent vision (however brief) is shared and exchanged; added-to, collected and saved. Recommendations of things that have already been looked at, are passed on to other tourists and travellers as 'must see-s', 'must go-s' and 'must do-s'. The initial posting states:

If anyone is visiting Siem Reap, please take time out of your day to visit the Acodo orphanage. It really is a must see (the leap, 2009)

Amongst a number of enthusiastic responses one comment reads:

Thanks for the info, I'm going to be there in December so will def go see it/them (the leap/Rox, 2009).

The use of words such as 'must see' and 'see it/them' suggest little other than an ocular experience and are even devoid of the familiar quasi-altruistic expressions such as 'making a difference' or 'doing a world of good'; the use of the word visit equally evokes something transitory and brief – certainly something touristy. The actions implied, I am arguing, are nothing more than an independent look at orphans in an orphanage. Significantly here too, in this particular orphanage – popular with volunteer tourists and listed in tripadvisor® under 'things to do in Siem Reap' (TripAdvisor, 2013) – 'orphans' also perform nightly traditional dance shows for holidaymakers. That further details inform potential visitors that the performances are "free but visitors are encouraged to make donations (in cash or in kind) to the orphanage" (TripAdvisor, 2013) reveals links with concerns (not only

about what is being looked at, but also) about just what is being consumed. At the same time as the term 'donation' serves to alleviate some of the awkwardness of any economic exchange in this context, for example, it also helps to construct/endorse a caring and compassionate image of self for those choosing to witness these shows – as 'encouraged' suggests a gentle appeal, without pressure or obligation.

I interviewed Jonny, a thirty-two year old tourist from America who had volunteered for one week at the same orphanage whilst travelling around South East Asia and 'did stuff like this when it took his fancy'. His enthusiasm at having seen the children dance was palpable and the brief discussion I later had with him about whether these performances were really in the childrens' best interest, returned often to his view that 'seeing stuff like this just broadens your world, broadens your world'. In this part of the interview he tried hard to convince me to go and see the show:

The place seems to be struggling to find volunteers and audience for the kids' dance performances at the moment the manager was telling me. I can't understand it to be honest with you... the shows are free and the orphanage is only a \$3 Tuk Tuk ride from Pub Street. It's at 6.30pm every night and it goes on for about an hour ...maybe an hour and a half. The dancing is really good and these amazing kidssixty-eight of them live in one small room with only two long wooden platforms for beds....well, they dance with so much enthusiasm and pride... yeah pride. You should go, you know... you'll love it... everybody does... you can make donations after the show... they're vital for the place.... You really must go and see them dance.... I've heard it's the best traditional dance performance in Siem Reap...

Other exchanges with participants also helped to expand my thinking around the desire for an independent vision and the associated question of *who* we are as volunteer tourists. Patricia, for example, told me she was keen to travel to Cambodia to (independently) look at (here) some 'poor' children in order to help her to decide, she claimed, if she wanted to go back and "do some voluntary work there". An enthusiastic, active woman in her late fifties, Patricia, originally from Wales, now lives full-time as an expatriate in southern Spain. She told me that she

had money at her disposal and time to follow her own interests and projects; in terms of seeking independence then, Patricia was saying that she already had that. She had, for example, previously taken a number of volunteer holidays in South Africa, South America and Vietnam all of which, she said “she absolutely loved”. Patricia agreed via e-mail to be interviewed but asked that I ‘bring along some of [my] photographs of the Cambodia children’. She told me that she was very excited about seeing these.

On another occasion, Patricia and her friend Teresa were interviewed in Cambodia when they had ‘popped down to Siem Reap to have a look around’ (and here their actions were as described, deliberate), whilst on another volunteer vacation in neighbouring Vietnam. An independent vision appeared to be important to both Patricia and Teresa. When I asked why they felt they wanted to look at (the problems in) Cambodia before deciding whether to be volunteers there, Patricia said that it was necessary for them to “see what’s going on”. Later, Teresa told me that “when Patricia said lets go down and look at [Siem Reap] I thought sure because I was sort of thinking if there was... if we saw... something here...”.

Sontag (2003) remarks that “being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience” (p:16); an independent vision that for Patricia and Teresa faded too quickly from view (Sontag, 2003) causing them to decide not to be volunteer tourists in Siem Reap as what they looked at “didn’t really grab [them]”, they later told me. Another volunteer tourist (Pete) however, who was also interviewed in Siem Reap, said that he “came over here [from Australia to Cambodia], for a ‘look-see’ hoping to connect with agencies to do some volunteering” (this Australian phrase perhaps more realistic reflecting the independent vision). When I interviewed Pete he was volunteering three evenings a week teaching English in a Pagoda and said he ‘[hadn’t] decided yet how long to hang around’; in contrast to Teresa and Patricia, Pete had seen something that (for the time-being at least) had grabbed him.

Many volunteers discussed how the need to see had been initially aroused either through personal contact with someone who had already visited the country and/or taken a volunteer vacation, or through promotional literature from a volunteer vacation provider. For these volunteers, viewing or being shown photographs was often a significant factor in their decision. Sheila again, told me that she:

...went to a seminar in Leeds. When you see the pictures of out-there... it's all very emotive. It sort of pulls on your heart strings... it's sort of, 'oh god, I think I could do something there'...

I also spoke to Jean about six months after she got back from her vacation and at the start of our conversation I asked her to tell me how she felt before she went to Siem Reap. Jean was single and in her early thirties. Having trained as a nurse, she told me she was 'exhausted with the NHS, completely exhausted'. Jean described how she regularly emailed the director of the orphanage in which she had booked to volunteer. She talked about how she would ask him to send her photographs of the orphanage and of the children:

Before I went I needed to see those children. When I received pictures I remember looking at them really closely, then I'd send another email asking more and more questions... about things like, you know, like ... what are the children [in the photographs] eating... where were the pictures taken... how old are they; were they all orphans... what were their names? Those pictures ... well, they really moved me and made me even more determined to get out there... to see it all for myself.

Jean's strong desire to see for herself the children she would look at in the photographs, brought to mind Michael Taussig's (2011) discussion on ways of seeing and, what he describes as, "the imaginative logic of discovery" (p:xi). Jean appeared to be saying much the same as Taussig (2011) when he writes that "this must be where witnessing separates itself from seeing, where witnessing becomes holy writ: mysterious, complicated, powerful. And necessary" (p:2).

Finally, in Fassin's exploration of *Humanitarian Reason* (2012), he argues that in many situations where caring actors offer aid or assistance to needy others, "the witness becomes spokesperson for the victim" (p:221). At times, as he goes on to describe, this may involve "falling back on conjecture [and] communicating impressions" (Fassin, 2012, p:212/3); weaving together stories related or overheard – essentially, drawing conclusions from a combination of the narratives of others; of some things witnessed and, significantly (in a western, 'First World' sense) of things we already (taken-for-grantedly) know. In the context of the volunteer tourist as independent witness, the point I draw from Fassin (2012) is that those of us motivated to see for ourselves (because we believe that to be the only way to see what is really there) often fail to see the larger issues regarding volunteer tourism and volunteer tourists and in particular those of global inequality and power imbalances. In seeking to gain the authority of having been there and seen it for ourselves, we become part of the same picture (problem), upholding and preserving the forms of power that allow and support 'us' being able to look at 'them'; of our right to watch dancing orphans or, look to see where we might choose to offer help during our next (compassionate) vacation, like Teresa and Patricia. As such, who we see ourselves to be as volunteer tourists, may be the direct antithesis of who we are – a contention that leads me to the final section of this chapter

The tension between expectations and reflections: who we were/who we are?

In many of the participants' narratives a tension was revealed between the expectations and anticipation of their volunteering vacation and the outcomes articulated in the reflection of our experiences. It is important to reiterate, however, that the current model of volunteer tourism is on the whole devoid of opportunities for reflection (even feed-back beyond 'how did we do?') and that when concerns are raised, these frequently refer to failures in services and poor experiences for the volunteer. A recent newspaper report on "the horrifyingly callous con" (Lambert, 2013) of some volunteer tourist placements, is an example of the form reflections of bad experiences often take, whilst at the same time, arguably, serving to support the 'reward-seeking' perspective of the trend. Despite

mention of the appalling conditions at some orphanages, concern was repeatedly focused (back) onto the volunteer's bad experience:

I couldn't stop crying,' says Caroline. 'I couldn't bear what was happening here - and the worst thing of all was that I and the other volunteers were funding it with our time and money (Lambert, 2013).

Participants in my study expressed a variety of emotions regarding their time as a volunteer tourist, and whilst some were disgruntled with material aspects of their vacation (poor accommodation, lack of support from the organisation), many others voiced regret and sometimes anger at the whole volunteer tourist enterprise. Significantly however, whilst at the same time expressing disappointment and disillusionment in interviews, most continued to maintain the public face of the volunteer tourist - failing to take the opportunity to challenge the taken-for-granted positive assumptions around the volunteer tourist endeavour. This was an interesting and surprising finding and whilst often deeply entangled in the narratives (and my own reflections) it is considered to be important here.

For example, after interviewing Pete (above), I made the following note in my fieldwork diary:

A really good interview but then at the end he invited me to the Pagoda tomorrow evening to maybe teach an English class to some of the orphaned children. It's just what I don't want to do or want to be involved in although he wasn't to know that. And then I thought, I guess he did give me a couple of hours of his time so have agreed to go and be that jolly volunteer tourist again. This is really difficult.

I return again to Rose who stated in her interview that she "won't do it again, that's for sure", and was also able to articulate many reason why she felt volunteer tourism was, as she described, "wrong". When I asked her why she seemed happy for a very positive testimony of her experience to remain on the NGO's web-site, she hesitated and then told me:

...well we can tell people horror stories if we want to but that's also putting NGOs at risk which is someone's livelihood at the end of the day. You don't want to be ruining someone's livelihood...I don't know...

Both these accounts reveal difficulties in openly challenging the trend and makes connections, I argue, with Sarah Moore's (2008) study of the wearing of symbols of compassion. Whilst Moore (2008) asserts that, "the discourse of compassion that accompanies the awareness ribbon, [is] a rhetoric that has become so compelling as to make refusal to accept its legitimacy tantamount to inhumanity" (p:9), there is much resonance with the equally persuasive discourse of kind-hearted tourism or the compassionate volunteer tourist, that so chronically pervades the trend in Siem Reap.

Not all participants, however, expressed overtly negative thoughts about their experience but often, when asked to think more deeply (through questioning designed to guide them to a more introspective and focused level of reflection), responded with answers such as, 'that's a tough one, never really thought....' (Robin, 2011) or 'I just don't know, to be honest now I don't know' (Sam, 2009).

After having read Rose's testimony on the Siem Reap NGO website, I contacted her via Facebook and although she said she was happy to be interviewed, in her first correspondence she also warned me that her opinions about volunteer tourism may be 'very different from other people's'. At short notice, however, she cancelled our interview appointment and I had to wonder whether she had changed her mind about speaking to me. I decided to try again as I was particularly keen to speak to her. At the second attempt we managed to meet and she agreed to talk to me for just an hour in a noisy bar in Dublin. I asked her what she thought she got out of being a volunteer tourist overseas:

Well, volunteering's all about self-satisfaction... that kind of thing... satisfying... You meet people who say, 'isn't it great what you've done'. When you come home people say 'oh you're so great doing what you do'... And it's like 'no actually'... It's an intrinsically selfish... People think it's going to do...that you're going to change a life...you're going to...you don't change

anything...in fact you probably...There's so many unsustainable projects that are now just for volunteer tourists...That's what it's turned into... It's turned into volunteer tourism...completely...and we saw that in Kenya as well. We were in some places in Kenya...there was specific projects set up cos it was beneficial for the volunteers to travel to...There was no need...absolutely no need...it wasn't what the community wanted at all...

I asked Rose at what point she had arrived at this opinion of volunteer tourism. She said that it all came with hindsight although she had some minor issues beforehand which meant that she was a little disgruntled with the NGO whilst in Cambodia. Nonetheless when asked if she enjoyed her time in Siem Reap she replied:

Rose: I really enjoyed it. I really, really did. It was a really amazing experience. It really was....

Me: But you also seem to be saying it was a bad experience, Rose?

Rose: It was a good experience...at the time...

These contradictions and inconsistencies were reflected in other accounts by other volunteer tourists. They were often able to point to examples of what was bad about volunteer tourism but then also revealed similar examples in their own behaviour or views. Rose again, for example, told me that "in Siem Reap everyone around is either drinking or drunk...." but when later asked to talk a little bit more about her 'other than orphanage' time in Cambodia she said, "well... there was a lot of drinking anyway, a hell of a lot and that was a great craic".

Elliot was also asked to reflect on his time as a volunteer tourist at the orphanage.

I think I expected...on the surface...I expected it to be like all...I just expected to feel good about the whole thing really but there were definitely parts of it that made me feel like incredibly angry, incredibly. I didn't really think the right thing was happening and that...probably surprised me really cos I think I just expected that if it was aid, you know, if I was helping out, then how could it not be good really?

As Elliot reveals the interpretation of his volunteer vacation as providing 'aid' (a term I rarely came across in the marketing literature), his disappointment may have been made worse by his initial high expectations. However, at twenty-two years old, Elliot could also be reflecting a life-time of Band Aid-type charity activity where events such as these have been effortlessly linked to 'aid' campaigns. His disappointment may also be indicative of the agenda of social responsibility that increasingly infuses tourism consumption; where "previous generations [were able] to travel unburdened by the pressure to do good" (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011, p:120).

Gwen was interviewed two weeks into her third volunteering vacation in Siem Reap. For the past two visits she had volunteered along with her retired husband Steven at an orphanage that had since been closed down when the British expatriate manager had been jailed on paedophile charges. Gwen and Steven had nonetheless returned to Cambodia to volunteer with another NGO that had recently been taken over by an Australian woman they had met and socialised with the previous year. I contacted Gwen before she left home, again via Facebook, and she agreed to being interviewed during the time we would both be in Cambodia. She told me that she was very excited about this year's volunteering vacation and was eager to get involved in the new project. I interviewed Gwen over coffee in an air-conditioned snack bar. With little preamble she told me that she was disappointed with the new project.

Originally this grassroots organisation had been teaching English in the evenings to four hundred villagers, she told me. Since the Australian woman had taken over the project, class sizes had dwindled to around a dozen. The woman had not only brought in young volunteer tourists five days a week as a way of 'acquiring funding' but, had also introduced a new curriculum (based on an Australian model) - and then "up and left for Australia to deal with her own family issues", Gwen said. I asked her about the drastic fall in class sizes. She replied that:

It's simple. The volunteers won't work in the evenings and the villagers are working during the day. I have some very hard

decisions to make here, you know. What's sad is that our friendship is at stake.

Nonetheless, as Gwen's story also illustrates, for many of us our concerns are often personal – here the friendship of two western women rather than the failure of the project; at other times the feeling of wasting our own time and money or of disappointing experiences. Our unease - even in deeper reflection - rarely delves too far below the surface into questions of our own motivation and the rights and privileges that these vacation choices embody. The point I wish to draw from these tensions, however, is that the room to learn from many of the concerns and issues raised by past volunteer tourists does not exist within the current structure of a large commercially driven industry (which must also include the not-for-profits where competition for funding from volunteers often represents the success or failure of the scheme). As Simpson (2004) argues, absent from almost all of these vacations is any pedagogical reflection that would allow and encourage a “critical engagement” (p:690) of our experiences. Participants in my research often appeared to welcome the opportunity to rethink their experiences; as if the desire to find this important space was just below the surface. Ivy, for example, messaged me to say that:

I don't mind you interviewing me at all. I have seen a lot of unsustainable and badly run projects set up just for volunteer tourism with no regard for what the community in the area need.... (FB message).

As I ultimately was unable to interview Ivy due to her earlier than planned departure to take up a paid role for an NGO in Germany, she never had the opportunity to talk about her concerns, or for me to hear them.

Finally, at this point it is significant to discuss the work of Anne-Meike Fechter (2012) whose research with international aid workers also in Cambodia, considered the unease that some individuals (and often family members too) feel about aspects of their privileged lifestyles whilst overseas on what are frequently identified as hardship postings; the dilemmas in, as Fechter (2012) describes, “living

well while doing good” (p:1478). Differing in a number of significant ways to volunteer tourism and the volunteer tourist – the length of stay in a country; levels of training and qualifications required and, not least the distinction between volunteering and being remunerated – it is however relevant to this thesis that Fechter (2012) proposes a gap in “development ethics” (p:1489). This gap, as she goes on to describe, has resulted in debates around the relationship between ‘altruism and professionalism’ generally being avoided; these thoughts - of how well one cares for oneself at the same time as caring for the other (Fletcher,2012) - having becoming moral uncertainties in the minds of many international aid workers. I would argue that in much the same way, the current model of volunteer tourism also fails to provide opportunities for reflection and as a consequence, many volunteer tourists are left adrift with their own contemplations about their vacationing experiences.

In summary

To conclude this discussion of ‘who we are as volunteer tourists and why we buy it’, I contend that whilst the dominant perspectives offer a shallow view of this question, both the unimpeachably good volunteer and the volunteer seeking to take personal gain are reflected in the volunteers’ own narratives of their experiences. These popular views also work to support and maintain the continued high regard the vacations are generally held in and as such stifle any impetus for critical interest beyond those that are concerned with the vacationers’ own (poor) experience. What is more, themes identified in this research as to the motivation of volunteers, largely reflect the dominant perspectives supporting the assertion that why we choose these vacations is closely tied to ‘who we are’.

Nonetheless, questions raised here also make direct links with other important questions in this study: what contingent factors (historical, political, social), for example, led us to ‘know’ that time spent with poor children in the ‘Third World’ will be good for our CVs (and also, what are the conditions that encourage and make this so?); what allows that a choice of ‘poor’ and needy people and places be offered as an essential (and appealing) element in this particular brand of tourism?;

and pertinently, why is the success of the vacation judged on a measure of the tourists' happiness and pleasure? In the next chapter therefore I examine these concerns when I consider how volunteer vacations are able to be consumed.

Chapter Five

The practical value of paradox is that it can be a doorway to a new perception...
Through paradox our coarse perception and understanding can be transformed
into something finer and more subtle

- *Henri Bortoft*

Volunteer tourism: how is it able/allowed to be consumed?

Introduction

Whilst other chapters consider 'the what', 'the who', 'the how' and 'the why', here I explore those factors that can be said to allow or enable the consumption of volunteer tourism; a vacation commodity where individuals who choose to spend time with those described as the 'poor and vulnerable', arguably gain disproportionately from the experience (CV enhancement, improved self-worth, respect and gratitude, to name but a few). As such, I will ask, what are those factors that allow or enable the moral ambiguities of volunteer tourism to remain obscure and unvoiced? The consumption of volunteer tourism (like all consumption) does not, however, stand in isolation from other social factors; as Michael R. Solomon (2010) asserts, "consumption choices simply cannot be understood without considering the cultural context in which they are made" (p:506). To this end, cultural and consumeristic themes have been identified which, I will argue, have impacted on the evolution of this vacation choice, as well as having significant bearing on its persistence and popularity in the tourism marketplace. Importantly, these issues link closely with the other questions considered in this thesis - and with each other - and are, as such, vital in offering a deeper analysis of volunteer tourism in Siem Reap.

It is important, nonetheless, when asking these particular questions and examining data, to consider the material as well as the discursive; the organisational as well as the personal; perhaps even the local as well as the global (where distinctions are possible) - exploring the matter from a number of approaches and methodologies. The material significance of financial and temporal privilege - factors that allow even consideration of volunteer tourism - should not be over-looked; nor should the (often) taken-for-granted access to other vital records such as birth certificates, passports and visas. Further material realities such as being free to travel overseas; to encountering others who also speak English; to the availability and affordability of travel/health insurance; of access to credit card technology; to ATM use abroad -

amongst many others - all have a role in allowing participation in the trend of volunteer vacationing. Equally, it is possible to suggest that the worth of the material consequences of having taken one of these vacations (enhanced educational or employment opportunities; the personal benefits of the 'feel-good' factor) allows a number of important questions to remain unasked - which in turn supports (allows/enables) continued consumption. These issues will be unpacked and explored in this chapter.

Outlining the themes of compassionate consumerism and 'taken-for-granted-ness'.

The two principle themes that I will consider here can broadly be described as 1) compassionate consumerism and 2) 'taken-for-granted-ness'. Both these ideas also make links with aspects of post-colonial research and critique that considers development theory and practise (Heron, 2007; Kothari, 2006; Osterhammel, 1999; White, 2002); issues such as the right to intervene; racialised assumptions and, moral narratives of self. Whilst these factors are responsible in part for allowing these vacations to be understood as noble intentions, the same factors, as a consequence also enable ties to colonial legacies or continuities (Heron, 2007) to remain disguised as 'what we do and how we do it'. Significantly too, these issues allow that questions of race, power and privilege also remain concealed or obscured.

By framing volunteer tourism within what Uma Kothari (2006) describes as a sanitised discourse - here of benevolence and compassion - a 'taken-for-granted-ness' allows that vacations can (safely) be consumed as apolitical and race-neutral; again adding to the rationalisation that these experiences are essentially in a good cause. To unpack this argument (and trouble these ideas) I will draw on the work of Charles W. Miles (1997) and particularly his notion of 'an epistemology of ignorance'. Here he suggests that something that is known can also (wilfully) not be known - as such, allowing the misinterpretation of knowledge to become other (more acceptable) knowledge. Whilst this is a difficult and perhaps somewhat oxymoronic concept (how can something that is known, also not be known?), it is

important to my own argument and will be examined in depth in the second part of this chapter.

Firstly however, I will discuss the concept of compassionate consumerism which I broadly define as the commercialisation of the charitable response. Compassionate consumerism - or as Nickel and Eikenberry (2009) describe “the marketization of philanthropy” (p:974) - has given rise to social practises such as awareness-ribbon wearing (Moore, 2008); to mass benevolent events such as Red Nose Day and Children in Need and, to an abundance of compassionate-cause merchandise and charity branded goods. Exploring how significant this blurring of consumerism and compassion/awareness/benevolence (and its saturation into western society) is to allowing volunteer tourism to be so enthusiastically and positively taken up, will form the underpinning of this discussion.

Closely linked with compassionate consumption, I will also discuss the notion of conspicuous concern - outward or obvious displays of compassion and care – and argue that today capital can be derived from being seen to be a concerned individual. I will consider how societal changes in (particularly western) expressions of concern, also impact on allowing, supporting and sustaining the volunteer tourist trend. I will consider how the marketing of volunteering vacations leans heavily on representations of concerned individuals, as well as on a curious mingling of compassion and consumerism. I will begin however, by exploring the notion that “compassion has become a commodity like any other” (Moore, 2008, p:71).

Compassionate consumerism: buying into a good cause

Some of the more easily recognised items of caring consumerism – what Moore (2008) describes as symbols of awareness and compassion - include charity ribbons (red, green, pink, yellow, purple, black...); awareness wrist bands, lapel pins from flag day collections, remembrance poppies and plastic red noses (for vehicles as well as humans). Few people will never have worn one of these symbols; fewer still, will never have been approached to buy one. Despite the individual histories and objectives of these emblems, however, a number have become so popular that

they are now recognised as having a status normally associated with some of the biggest product names (Moore, 2008). Indeed as Moore (2008) also asserts, a number have transcended the original notion of charitable support and awareness and taken on kudos of their own; awareness wrist bands, for example, now being statements of fashion in their own right. Others arguably begin with kudos which is then transferred onto a cause or charity - Vivienne Westwood T-shirts specifically marketed for the Red Nose appeal; celebrity designed underwear for prostate cancer awareness (Marks and Spencer plc). What I take from the interesting history and trajectory of these symbols of compassion however, is the argument that a number are now “seen more as a product than a protest” (Moore, 2008, p:62); less of a signal of concern for others and more as items of self-expression. In 2012, for example, The Royal British Legion marketed an ‘Adrian Buckley Poppy Brooch made with Swarovski Crystal Elements’ (poppyshop, 2012); at just under £35.00 a significantly different item from the original, simple paper icon sold with a steel pin. What, however, is the relationship between items such as these, compassion and, the volunteer vacation?

Cause-related merchandise

The relationship between compassion and items of consumerism has been described as ‘cause-related marketing’ and occurs when a, “perceived charitable aspect [is] associated with purchasing a service or product” (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009, p:975). Here a wide range of manufacturers or suppliers strike deals to have their products or services associated with certain charities or causes. This increasingly popular (though not particularly new) trend - which at its most basic involves the addition of a charity logo on packaging – is intended to persuade consumers to buy certain commodities because of the connection to a designated ‘good cause’. The commodities (as items for consumer consumption) often have limited or even no discernable link with the charitable cause customers are invited to support - washing-up liquid to help children with life-threatening conditions (Fairy® and the Make-A-Wish Foundation); Mega Spin Yo-Yos in aid of wounded service personnel (helpforheroes.org.uk), for example. It may be said that some even offer a bizarre juxtaposition between commodity and cause, as in the sale of

chocolate fountains (pink) for the benefit of a breast cancer awareness campaign (Ethos kitchen and home accessories).

What is pertinent, however, is the ease with which it is possible to become a compassionate consumer - via simple purchasing choice - often too of routinely bought items rather than luxury goods that may require more thought and effort. The assumption is promoted that, for every small (consuming) effort made here, big differences can be made elsewhere. The easy choice we are told, between buying one bar of chocolate or another could make a big difference to the life of a needy child in Haiti (chocolateReviews.co.uk). The message, reiterated time and again, of the powerful alliance between consumerism and (an understanding of) a charitable action, drives the view that by committing to more consumption, the promises on the packets and tins will inevitably be fulfilled (Moore, 2008; Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009) - and unlike the act of dropping money into a collection box, here the consumer also has something useful or desirable in return. Framed within a discourse of sympathy, benevolence and kindness (fundamentally positive actions), our own insatiable consumption (Campbell, 1993) is viewed as too vulgar a definition for these gestures and, as such, we are compelled to keep buying – to dutifully (and unquestioningly) keep supporting good causes. I now move beyond symbols of compassion however, to discuss experiences in compassionate causes.

Entertainment, pleasure and compassion

Discussing photographic images of war, famine and tragedy, Susan Sontag argued in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) that:

Being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience, the cumulative offering by more than a century and a half's worth of those professional, specialized tourists known as journalists. Wars are now also living room sights and sounds. Information about what is happening elsewhere, called 'news', features conflict and violence – 'if it bleeds, it leads' runs the venerable guideline of tabloids and twenty-four-hour headline news shows – to which the response is compassion, or indignation, or titillation, or approval, as each misery heaves into view (p:16).

The extent to which opportunities now exist to observe what Sontag describes as 'calamities taking place in another country', provides a valuable backdrop to exploring how the trend of volunteer vacationing has been able to evolve into a mass-niche tourist commodity, as well as to the persistence of its popularity. Images of real-life conflict, violence, disasters, poverty - the suffering of others - are the staple offerings of any average night's viewing, in addition to the relentless mirroring of tragic calamities as entertainment in films, television programming, video games and literature. As Geoffrey Gorer argued in his 1955 article *The Pornography of Death*, "violent death has played an ever-growing part in the fantasies offered to mass audiences – detective stories, thrillers, Westerns, war stories, spy stories, science fiction, and... horror comics" (p:51). Indeed, Shipley and Cavender (2001) found in their analysis of popular films that the depiction of death and violence is increasingly a part of the plots and narratives of this particular media. Bearing witness to 'the pain of others', whether as entertainment or engaging with current affairs, is an activity that is difficult to avoid.

Bearing witness to the genuine 'pain of others' has nonetheless always motivated some individuals to find ways to attempt to directly relieve suffering as can be witnessed in humanitarian responses to disasters by those who are compelled to get 'out there' and do something. Whilst it has been argued that the more culturally removed we are from the victims, the less interested we are in the suffering or, "the more personally threatening the story is ('it could have happened to me'), the more interest is shown" (Walter, Littlewood and Pickering, 1995, p:587), there is always a drive by some individuals to directly offer help to victims caught up in disasters such as the 2004 tsunami, the 2010 Haiti earthquake or the 2012 floods in Pakistan. It is likely, however, that being dislocated from these events – the result of gazing from afar via the technologies of television, cinema screens or newspapers – helps justify a disinclination to take any action other than continuing to observe; sometimes to express sympathy; perhaps to donate monies; often to look away.

Of interest to this exploration is Sontag's (2003) suggestion that responses to these 'calamities' - being varied and various - can range from 'compassion to titillation'. Whilst the suggestion that observing the suffering of others may be associated with titillation (to excite or stimulate pleasure) would be abhorrent to most who consider themselves to be considerate, compassionate citizens (as an example, people who choose to volunteer as a vacation activity), nonetheless an element of titillation could arguably be said to exist in the association of the (hedonistic) pleasure of holiday time and the poverty of others (here Cambodian children). What factors are at play to render this relationship palatable and relatedly, to allow volunteer tourism to be consumed? A significant precursor in the change of direction from justifications to do nothing to the possibilities of 'doing something', however, may be flagged in the events of 1984 and significantly (in this context) the emergence and growth of opportunities that made 'doing something', not only possible, but pertinently, enjoyable.

In October 1984 Michael Buerk brought Ethiopia's 'biblical famine' into the homes of millions of American and British television viewers. The (still) harrowing report - seven minutes long in the UK, cut to two minutes for NBC nightly news - was unprecedented in its graphic portrayal of the suffering of thousands of starving refugees and even the televised death of a three year old African child. This "tele-intimacy" (p:18) as Susan Sontag (2003) describes, provoked an unparalleled level of public response that ultimately resulted in the formation of Band Aid and the 1985 Live Aid event - the first (successful) consumer driven aid campaign (Davies, 2010). Whether the unique level of response to the event was due, as Davies (2010) suggests, to the "graphic nature and... reach" (p:92) of Michael Buerk's report or, to the celebrity initiative and endorsement of Bob Geldof and his like-minded musical contemporaries, is not what is in question here. What is relevant to the discussion of what allows volunteer tourism to be consumed lies in the contention that it was out of the fundamental nature of the Live Aid event - and from that time onwards - that a new understanding of aid, support, relief, compassion (but significantly new ways as 'consumers' of doing these things) was firmly established. It was now possible to combine consumption (of a £25 rock

concert ticket) with philanthropy; social responsibility with pleasure (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009) – along with the likelihood of feeling a little better about those disturbing images.

The Live Aid event provided, not only the means to do ‘something’ to help the suffering of the famine victims but, most significantly to this exploration, to have a great time while doing it. Over 70,000 individuals at the live London show and another 100,000 in America (plus an estimated 1.9 billion television viewers) enjoyed an extraordinary leisure/entertainment event in the cause of starving others in Africa. Overwhelming in terms of its financial return (although consideration of the use that these monies were put to is not part of this discussion) there was, it has been argued, little expression of the moral ambiguity of having a great time in the North for starving children in the South (Kenyon, 1985). As Kenyon (1985) further claims, also relatively unnoticed was the pressure to be involved - either as participating artist or audience/contributing member of the public. As Sarah E.H. Moore (2008) more recently observed when commenting on the discourse of compassion that goes with commercialised symbols of awareness like the pink ribbon, “rhetoric... has become so compelling as to make a refusal to accept its legitimacy tantamount to inhumanity” (p:9).

More than twenty-five years after Live Aid, the blurring of hardship or misfortune and, amusement and pleasure (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009) continues to be witnessed in for example, annual telethons; extravagant charity dinners and balls; entertaining documentaries about concerned celebrities in Africa, or simply the opportunity to wear fancy dress to the office ‘in aid of a good cause’. Indeed, as Keith Tester (2010) contends in his critique of ‘Humanitarianism and Culture’, today often the principal way for those from the ‘First World’ to express interest in the problems and struggles of those from the ‘Third’, is through involvement in such forms of popular culture. He goes on to argue that compassion and benevolence in modern society can be understood as being “inextricably entwined [with] the institutions and technologies of the media” (Tester, 2010, p:viii) and that effectively, this ‘common-sense humanitarianism’ - so established and so taken-for-

granted - has, as a consequence, become uncritically accepted as the way things are done.

For Tester, however, this form of moral concern is compromised - even devalued - by the intercession of neoliberalism (buying a ticket to a rock concert to save the life of a hungry child) as well as by, what he sees as the remnants of imperial thinking. At the same time, all of this is criss-crossed with the shaping role of celebrity; charity-drives, for example, often being endorsed, if not led, by well-known personalities. Whilst Keith Tester's (2010) compelling essay is focused on the African case - "the matter of "Asia" is an investigation for another day" (p:x) - for me this work has resonance with my thesis here, particularly in his notion of "the humanitarianism of the inexpert humanitarians" (p:6); as I will go on to show, the benevolence of the unskilled [volunteer tourist] who is intent on doing 'good'.

For Nickel and Eikenberry (2009), however, whilst charity fund-raising "increasingly narrates philanthropy as a source of amusement and amusement as a source of philanthropy" (p:980/1), it has also been argued that the practice additionally removes the suffering from the (often) impoverished 'Third World' to suffering-relief places in the affluent 'First World' - and frequently onto the faces, voices, and bodies of the 'generous benevolent' (Davies, 2010). Indeed the idea of shifting the focus from those in need around to the 'generous', is a notion that was often observed in volunteer tourism discourse where the activities of volunteers (and fundraisers) frequently upstage the circumstances and suffering of the beneficiaries in newsletters, reports and marketing. This shift in focus is a further example of how volunteers are positioned as heroes (as has been discussed elsewhere in this study) and how any actions deemed to be generous are understood to be unimpeachably good; further supporting the view that this is a positive commodity and as such a commodity we are allowed to consume.

I reflect, for example here (somewhat uncomfortably), on correspondence I received from an NGO in Siem Reap after a research visit and having subsequently sent a relatively small donation to them. Here the notion of the shift in focus from

those in need to the 'generous' donor, as well as the relationship between pleasure and compassion, can be clearly observed. The extract is taken from a piece the NGO asked to publish about my minor contribution, in a forthcoming newsletter celebrating what they described as their 'supporting heroes':

Jane is Inspiring Others! Her phenomenal support for the pedalling out of poverty program has seen a large number of bikes distributed thanks to her own donation and with the help from friends who threw a Pedal Party to raise funds. Our books flew off the shelves too thanks to Jane! Jane was also asked to talk to the residents in a care home in the UK about Cambodia. With her inspirational talk, Jane inspired all the staff and elderly residents. Residents well into their 80's and 90's decided to give what they could, some making cakes and selling them to family and friends, others donating a part of their pension (personal email correspondence, 2011).

Here again notions of benevolence and compassion become entangled with pleasure and fun (throwing a party; making cakes) and efforts to help or support become inflated and overblown (inspirational; phenomenal; books flying off the shelves). Pertinently however, gestures (dominated by commodities – books, bicycles and cakes) are made to look easy and inclined to perpetuate the understanding that helping others is, as Simpson (2004) asserts, "simplistic, consumable and ultimately 'do-able'" (p:690). (As a postscript, there was some incredulity that I rejected their request to publish the piece.)

In essence however, whilst collecting monies for charity is not a new phenomenon - Cub Scouts organising fund raising events; charities running flag day appeals - the possibilities of what and where individuals can do something for a good cause have become increasingly wide and varied. Charity fundraising efforts now include for example, climbing Machu Picchu (breast cancer care, 2011); walking the Great Wall of China (responsibletravel, 2012) or biking the Ho Chi Minh trail (Clarke, 2011), amongst many others. The world has become the arena in which individuals can (often pay to) perform positive actions in order to alleviate the negative circumstances of less fortunate 'others'. Involvement in these types of activity is relatively commonplace and, whilst sometimes challenging, ventures are mostly

pleasurable, or at least frequently satisfying, for those who choose to take part. Indeed research has shown that participants often have overlapping motivations for involvement – an established interest in long distance bike riding (Berger, Greenspan and Kohn, 2009; Mike and Buhl, 1992); a passionate desire to climb Machu Picchu, for example.

As many participants I interviewed alluded to, Cambodia (and Siem Reap in particular) was a place they had wanted to visit in spite of their intentions to become volunteer tourists. Sam, for example, told me, “I’d always wanted to visit Cambodia. It was on my list of must-go places and it’s brilliant to be here at last” (Sam, 2010); and Joan an eighteen year old from Australia travelling with a friend around South East Asia described how they had both “been excited about Cambodia for a while and [Siem Reap] appears to be one of the best potential venues for said excitement. As soon as we have time, we’re going to go and volunteer somewhere in the town” (Joan, 2012). As Berger, Greenspan and Kohn (2009) observed in their case study of a charity bike ride from Israel’s Golan Heights to Jerusalem, through these experiences “the ego-tourist is able to ... extend his or her identity to include the location of travel” (p:32).

Conspicuous concern

Closely linked with compassionate consumption is what may be referred to as ‘conspicuous concern’ - outward displays of compassion and care; a shift away from the stoic (particularly British) ‘stiff upper lip’. At one extreme, conspicuous concern can be observed in public expressions of grief such as the funeral of Princess Diana and the Royal Wootton Bassett repatriations, as well as in more privately made gestures (which nonetheless have public audience) such as social media cause and sympathy postings; road-side memorials at the sites of accidents; talk-shows and reality television (Miller, 2008). These less-constrained emotional responses to events or situations have become increasingly familiar and, it has been argued, “exist as a resource to be manipulated in the effort of self-presentation” (Miller, 2008, p:389).

Moore (2008), for example, again in her exploration of *Ribbon Culture* concludes that the wearing of these small coloured symbols may be more indicative of expressions of self as a caring and compassionate individual than of a knowledgeable, cause campaigner. She contends, like Füredi (2004), that displays of emotion and emotional engagement are both encouraged and valued by today's society; the 'new emotional culture' (Füredi, 2004), demanding that we recognise ourselves as, for example, compassionate, concerned and benevolent. These valued personal qualities – which are also influenced by concepts of good citizenship and concerned consumerism – are supported by the packaging of generosity as a lifestyle choice and, the transformation of compassion and awareness into advertising catch-phrases (Moore, 2008; Pink, 2006; West 2004).

Volunteer placement companies regularly employ both implicit and explicit signs of compassionate and benevolent characteristics to promote their particular (caring but fun) brand, as such, promoting the notion that these vacations will enable individuals to show how compassionate and caring they are. Whilst acknowledging the difference between throwing flowers in front of a passing funeral cortege and a volunteer vacation, the markers of conspicuous concern are nonetheless mapped onto these holiday choices through both marketing strategies (responsible, caring vacations for a good cause) and, the narratives of self that these experiences subsequently inform. Advertisements often carry the suggestion that 'you' are the type of person that would make 'this' consumer choice or, that you will be able to demonstrate 'your compassionate self' by choosing this activity or this destination.

One volunteer vacation provider, for example, asserts that "some travellers are content partying their way around the world. You, however, are looking for a more substantial experience" (GoAbroad, 2011). The distinction between what 'some' travellers choose to consume and what 'you' choose to consume being used to good effect here. As Herbert Marcuse (2002) contends, "people recognise themselves in their commodities" (p:11) and as such, in the importance and value of the consumer choices they make. What the volunteer vacation allows is that this recognition can be given outward expression.

Furthermore, that volunteer vacation providers and NGOs offering volunteering opportunities, often suggest that these vacations will produce a win-win situation for all those involved is also relevant to this discussion. Links can be made to questions of why we choose to volunteer as discussed in the previous chapter ('you' will be rewarded for your efforts to help 'them'), as well as to the notion of compassionate consumerism identified in, for example, Live Aid-type events or chocolate bars purchased to help the 'poor and suffering' children of Haiti. For example, I examined marketing literature that claims that choosing a volunteer vacation helping children in a Cambodian orphanage, will "add sparkle to [your] old CV" (realgap, 2013). Essentially what is being marketed is the opportunity to show you are a caring and concerned individual - and the chance to benefit from the experience. As Salazar (2004) argues in his exploration of, what he describes as, 'developmental tourists', many participants in his research case study "considered the journeys much more as a tool for their own personal development and self-actualisation" (Salazar, 2004, p:101) than the actual development agenda.

In many examples from volunteer tourist marketing, factors relating directly to an enhanced image of self, receive by far the greatest overall focus - "you come back a better person, you really do" (Glaser, 2012). As this "prized character trait" (Moore, 2008, p:26) - confirmed or gained from this straightforward consumer option - is presented in social media spaces or the local press (including in photographic images), there is often little reserve in recounting how good this will all make 'you' feel:

Teaching the children is hugely satisfying, a high feel-good factor!
(Volunteer Abroad, 2010).

In most cases the biggest personal benefit is simply feeling good
about yourself (i-to-i, 2010).

In the context of the (expressed) aims of the volunteer vacation, the irony appears to remain largely unnoticed. I found, however, a good deal in the implicit narratives of participants that conveyed the notion that even simple gestures can have considerable effect in this particular 'Third World' setting (in much the same

manner as the bar of chocolate for the salvation of the Haitian child). As Teresa, for example, told me when I asked her what she hoped she would be able to achieve as a volunteer vacationer in Cambodia, “if I can make one person smile... that's a lot” (Teresa).

Summarising compassionate consumption and conspicuous concern

I have argued that the pervasiveness of benevolent consumerism and the growth of conspicuous concern are both factors that impact on what allows volunteer tourism to be consumed. The familiarity of making compassionate gestures through market-exchange, framed within a discourse that is concerned with kindness and generosity avoids those questions that may contradict the taken-for-granted positive view of this manner of doing compassion. Whilst the story of benevolence is increasingly associated with consumerism (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009), there is much to suggest that the desire to, not only be seen to be a caring and compassionate individual, but also to find ways to express and reveal these characteristics to others, is a significant part of the ‘new emotional culture’ (Füredi, 2004). The volunteer vacation is an example of a commodity that can allow the expression and demonstration of these compassionate, caring traits at the same time as allowing a good deal of pleasure to be taken from the experience. Furthermore - and as I will now go on to explore - the commercialisation of compassion along with the desire to be seen to be a compassionate caring individual, also play a significant role in allowing this politically neutral, tourist commodity to remain silent on questions of inequality, race and privilege.

‘Taken-for-granted-ness’ including the ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ of white privilege

The notion of ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ is underpinned by arguments presented by Charles W. Mills (1997) in his seminal book *The Racial Contract*. In this thought provoking thesis Mills (1997) asserts that the supremacy of whiteness, as he describes, the unnamed political and philosophical system of domination by white people over nonwhite people - “the background against which other systems which we *are* to see as political, are highlighted” (p:2, italics in original) - *is* a system that white people (who enjoy its privileges), nonetheless, “just take for granted” (p:2).

Although the centrality of white privilege, as theorised by Mills, is extremely compelling and will be employed here, the notion of a broader 'taken-for-grantedness' of privilege, also provides significant direction in considering what allows volunteer tourism to be consumed.

Volunteer tourism it is fair to reiterate, is essentially a free-time pursuit based on the taken-for-granted (assumed) abilities and rights of one group to meet the (as marketed) needs of another (described as) 'disadvantaged' group; "a leisurely and discretionary choice for the economically privileged" (Halnon, 2002, p:510). As has been described, volunteer tourists are regarded as predominantly white, middle class, well-educated westerners (Conran, 2011; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Mowforth and Munt 2009; Wearing, 2001) who choose to take their volunteer vacations in, what are often described as, 'Third World' destinations (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008). Amongst a range of assurances promoted in the marketing literature is the taken-for-granted certainty that an activity as benign as a fourteen day tourist vacation can give "impoverished children... the gift of the language of commerce, allowing them to access stable and secure jobs" (frontier, 2013) - to change lives and indeed whole communities; another, that benevolence is (taken-for-grantedly) associated with the purchase and performance of a volunteer vacation in the 'Third World'. The taken-for-granted confidence in promises such as these plays an effective role in allowing these vacations to be consumed. I turn my attention firstly, however, to the taken-for-granted notion of the supremacy of white ways of doing and being and, how this speaks to the ability to consume volunteer tourism.

Mills is not alone in arguing that there exists a 'taken-for-grantedness' in the concept of the supremacy of whiteness. Many others have identified and referred to comparable concepts which both support and extend Mill's thesis (Dyer, 1988; Frankenberg, 1993; Heron, 2007; Kothari, 2006; Leonardo, 2004; Lipsitz, 1998; McIntosh, 1989; Slater, 2013; Smith, 1950; White, 2002). For example, Richard Dyer (1988) asserts that, "White power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (p:44) whilst Zeus Leonardo (2004) contends that white privilege is granted without '(re)cognition'; both indicating that the power and

privilege of whiteness is taken-for-granted. Lillian Smith (1950) in her book *Killer of the Dream* elaborates on how a “darkness of mind” (p:147) was passed on to her by loving (white) parents in American’s Southern States. Instilling an “intricate system of taboos, of renunciation and compensation, of manners, voice modulations, words, feelings, along with [lessons about] ... prayers ...toilet habits, and... games” (p:13), Smith (1950) claims that this parental guidance about life in general was essentially taught by ‘closing doors’ to the possibility of other thoughts or ways of seeing, resulting, she describes, in a “terrifying ignorance” (p:147) of the privilege - her own privilege - of whiteness.

Academics such as Sarah White (2002) claim that matters of race and white privilege are hidden in overseas development work, whilst Ruth Frankenberg (1993) offers her theory of unmarked whiteness which she argues, leaves others to be marked. Treating whiteness as the racial norm they are saying, allows that others be regarded as departures from that norm and as such results in difference being marked - depending on the context to white interpretation - as exotic, interesting, problematic or even deviant. In volunteer tourism in Siem Reap, the ‘other’ is objectified or marked predominantly as exotic and interesting; disadvantaged and needy. Whether personally or theoretically referenced, these valuable insights are repeated time and again.

Seminally, Peggy McIntosh (1989) develops the idea of an invisible backpack of unearned assets to expose the ‘obliviousness’ or weightlessness of white advantage. Listing what she describes as twenty-six daily effects of white privilege on her own life, McIntosh confesses that she had ‘forgotten’ each of these until she made the decision to produce her list. Examples from her inventory include:

Condition 7: I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

Condition 12: I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.

Condition 25: If my day, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones (McIntosh, 1989, p:3).

Acknowledging a bestowed dominance of white advantage, McIntosh concludes - like Sarah White (2002) in her assertion of colour-blindness in development work - that white privilege, whilst invisible, oblivious and forgotten, is also closely protected by the creation and maintenance of a 'taboo' around the issue. In this way she argues, unspoken the matter remains secure and undisturbed. For George Lipsitz (2006) this silence also serves to allow white people to continue to profit from their own white identities, the taboo ensuring that "whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (p:1) – in essence to be taken-for-granted. These powerful theories, closely reflecting Charles W. Mills (1997) contention that the supremacy of whiteness is just taken-for-granted, provide important indicators in this exploration of how volunteer tourism is allowed to be consumed.

Reflecting on my own privilege

Here I wish to make reference to an entry in my fieldwork diary where as a researcher in Siem Reap I was compelled to consider my own unearned assets. The three short 'conditions' are from a list I made during my second research visit to Cambodia and had Peggy McIntosh's invisible backpack clearly in mind. Later however, I reflected on these thoughts - an extract of which is also offered below:

Condition 7: I can arrive at most NGO or project settings in Siem Reap and know that the 'person in charge' - who is most likely to be white - will see me, talk to me and listen to me.

Condition 12: I can openly discuss (with sympathy or disparagement) Cambodian people, their plight, politics and personal predicaments - and a level of authority and expertise will be assumed.

Condition 18: When I find the poverty, legless landmine beggars and child vendors too much to bear, I know I can retreat to my hotel for a swim and a cold beer.

Looking again at this list, I now see that perhaps all the unearned assets in my invisible backpack should not be attributed exclusively to the privileges of my whiteness. Was it possible that those in charge of the NGO projects were happy to speak to me, because they could speak to me - that English was the language we had in common – or that my age set me apart (and closer to the people in charge) from many of the younger volunteers? Was the assumed expertise of the Cambodian predicament based on knowledge of my academic credentials and research agenda - as presented by me? And could it not be that the pool and cold beer were available to me because I could afford to pay for them?

Of course all of these interpretations are rational but I am also aware that my whiteness did carry privileges for me in Cambodia that made, for example, the progress of other aspects of my fieldwork relatively trouble-free as well as the benefits of my access to the expatriate community and the things I could make use of there. Despite my economic privilege in relation to most (although not all) Cambodians, my whiteness did enable me to enjoy certain privileges – both as a researcher and as a volunteer tourist. What is most interesting, however, is that the very process of considering just ‘what’ allows these privileges (was it my gender, my age, my economic advantage, my whiteness or a combination of these and other factors?) in many ways simply reaffirms the ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ of the existence of privilege itself.

Nonetheless, whiteness in Cambodia assumes a level of affluence - affluence to have afforded those things that allow us to be there - the cost of flights; the expense of travel; may be the cost of time; the price tag on the volunteer tourist placement. Whiteness often assumes a sense of adventure or an indication of style or taste – the sharing of a secret, as Winter (2006) contends, “Cambodia represents an opportunity to “explore” a place that has yet to be incorporated into the heavily populated tourist circuits of neighbouring Thailand and Malaysia” (p:44).

'Misinterpretation' and an epistemology of ignorance

Unpacking further the manner in which privilege can routinely be taken-for-granted, I return to Charles W. Mills. In *The Racial Contract* (1997), Mills describes the concept of 'misinterpretation' which, in the context of white privilege he argues, is a false impression grounded in an "an epistemology of ignorance" (p:18). In attempting to make sense of this difficult concept – because I do see it as a valuable tool in my own argument - I regard an 'epistemology of ignorance' as an active or wilful ignorance. For example, it could be recognised in the refusal to confront or acknowledge knowing something (an unfaithful partner or drug-using teenage child); burying ones head in the sand to avoid paying attention to what is known. As such an 'epistemology of ignorance' can be observed in the act of choosing to be blind to, or denying the existence of knowledge that may be difficult or painful to confront; in deciding not to know what is essentially already known. Mills also describes how knowing something pushes out knowing something else that could be known and in this respect it could be said that an 'ignorant knowledge' is constructed when other knowledge is left out. Importantly, an 'epistemology of ignorance' can also be seen in a wilful non-action; in avoiding certain questions, because reality (it has been decided) is already known.

Now I apply these ideas to volunteer tourism, firstly by considering short extracts taken from the marketing literature of two major providers. Both of these companies aim their sales promotion at the younger end of the volunteering spectrum especially school leavers and university undergraduates. Applying the notion of an 'epistemology of ignorance' (or what I also describe as an active ignorance) to this discourse helps to reveal a number of factors that (because they are also taken-for-granted) help to allow this leisure choice to be consumed. (Indeed it is argued that when applied to examples such as these - and to others in travel blogs; social media postings; volunteering testimonies; NGO newsletters and, photographic images - the difficult concept begins to unravel to reveal the taken-for-granted nature of the supremacy of white/western ways of seeing and doing in volunteer tourism.) During a two week volunteer vacation in Siem Reap, it is stated that:

Teaching underprivileged kids will develop skills for the future and get you noticed (statravel, 2012).

Make a positive and rewarding contribution to the lives of underprivileged and orphaned children, by equipping them with the tools to lift themselves out of the cycle of poverty, and opening up opportunities that we in the Western world take for granted (frontiergap, 2013).

In the first example above, I argue that what is known is evaded - and here, the known is both ambiguously expressed (developing skills for whose future – the ‘underprivileged kids’ or the volunteer tourist?), as well as openly expressed (getting *you* noticed). A (wilful) misinterpretation of the rewards from a two week volunteer vacation with ‘underprivileged kids’ (non-white, as the photograph in this example clearly illustrated), allows knowledge of the experience to be constructed as positive; again without asking the question, for whom? Denial or the wilful act of not asking what is known (what is really going on here, who actually gains?) allows the vacation to be understood as a positive choice – again supported by the volunteer’s white smiling face, central and most prominent in the marketing photograph.

In the second example, misinterpretation is also used to perpetuate the deeply embedded notion (constructed knowledge) that as little as a two week volunteering vacation is enough (for whiteness/westerners) to ‘open up opportunities’ for the poor and disadvantaged – if only it was that easy (once again the simplicity of benevolence and relief identified in the notion of purchasing a charity bar of chocolate). As in the first example however, the fuzziness of references to the ‘positive and rewarding’ demonstrates a wilful misinterpretation (and active ignorance) of the gains of this vacation choice.

I also argue that in the first example above, use of the words ‘teaching, develop, skills, future and noticed’ – common in volunteer tourism discourse – allows the manipulation of symbols (volunteer=develop=be noticed=good future) that further sustains misinterpretation. Drawing attention to and promoting the worth of a volunteer vacation to the volunteer – here, as in many examples, unambiguously stated - avoids the other question of why those (already) of privilege, are allowed

to gain still further from a tourist activity that utilises the ‘underprivileged-ness’ of others – and pertinently, for which an economic exchange has taken place; again, what Radin (1996) describes as a contested commodity. Significantly, this also permits that knowing something (a consumer commodity that allows spending time with ‘underprivileged kids’ to improve the chances for *my* future) pushes out something else that could be known (this experience will improve my future but is presented as improving the futures of the ‘underprivileged kids’). This ‘misinterpretation’, lying (invisibly) at the heart of the inequity in this vacation choice, is also a clear illustration of what McIntosh (1989) describes as the “colossal unseen dimension” (p:4) of the privilege of whiteness; here in terms both of the ‘colossal unseen dimension’ of privilege in a single volunteering vacation but equally in the ‘colossal unseen dimension’ of privilege pedalled by the industry that markets this commodity.

Misinterpreting binaries and places

It can be observed that in the second example the ‘Western world’ is explicitly positioned as taken-for-granted normalcy, whilst ‘underprivilege, poverty and orphanhood’ is implicitly positioned as the ‘other place’; this other place existing (unquestioned) outside of what is shown to be normal. Significantly however, this other place (the place that *is* ‘underprivilege, poverty and orphanhood’), is also a place that the disadvantaged other can ‘lift themselves out of’ when the ‘we’ from the Western world (or whiteness) are present. (‘Lifting out of’ implying coming from somewhere below or beneath; being lower or lesser). The knotty misrepresentation that ‘we’ from the western world can equip ‘them’ with the tools to lift themselves out of the cycle of poverty’ arguably relies again on the (wilful) act of not asking certain questions – why is it that we in the Western world are ‘equipped’ with these tools (even as unskilled holidaymakers); what are these tools and, is the answer really as simple as this? Promises and assertions made by vacation providers appear to be simply taken-for-granted by consumers.

Relatedly, Serge Latouche (1991) identifies such misinterpretations or distortions when he describes “the delusion that a bit of redistribution will solve all the

problems without there being any questioning of the basic rules of the game” (p:118) - which again can be pertinently linked to compassionate consumerism (in that, through purchasing a small piece of ribbon or a red nose for the car, world problems can be solved). And whilst here Latouche is critiquing the practises of development and aid, the premise is equally applicable, I am arguing, to the taken-for-granted ‘delusion’ in volunteer tourism; that a short vacation in Siem Reap will ‘open up opportunities’ to the children ‘that we in the Western world take for granted’. Furthermore, this delusion/distortion is supported by what Susan Sontag (2003) describes as the “double message” (p:64) found in photographs of “poor and backward parts of the world” (p:64), the photograph being of central importance in the marketing of these vacations. Sontag (2003) suggests that the photographic image requires interrogation to expose ways that knowledge about the world becomes constructed. In images of ‘poor and backward’ places she argues, suffering is shown as unfair and in need of repair, but, at the same time, the same images confirm that “this is the sort of thing that happens here” (p:64); an unquestioned ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ about the way some places are.

Like Sontag, Mills also contends that a kind of self-fulfilling, circular understanding is established and maintained about certain kinds of places – in this context the ‘poor and backward’ places that are available for ‘Third World’ volunteer vacationing. For Mills (1997) this provides an understanding that “you are what you are in part because you originate from a certain kind of [place], and that [place] has those properties in part because it is inhabited by creatures like yourself” (p:42). Whilst Mills uses this claim here to describe those ‘other’ places where poverty and disadvantage happen – Sontag’s ‘poor and backward parts of the world’ – I argue now (in the context of volunteer tourism being able to be consumed) that the concept can also be inverted and applied to those places that the volunteer tourist comes from too. As such, (mis)interpretations of those things volunteer tourists are capable of achieving are perpetuated and reinforced – ‘I am what I am in part because I come from the privileged Western world, and that place has those (privileged) properties in part because it is inhabited by creatures like me.’

'The other place', therefore – whether a Cambodian orphanage or some other 'poor and backward part of the world' (Sontag, 2003) – exists in the consciousness of the western world as a series of scenes of poverty and disadvantage; 'the sort of thing that happens there'. At the same time, however, a wilful ignorance allows that these other places paradoxically exist as somewhere that can be enjoyed (by those with privilege) as destinations for tourist pleasure – and in the case of volunteer tourism because of, not despite, the disadvantages of others. This again circles back to the 'taken-for-granted-ness' in the positive value of the gestures made by tourists during these holiday experiences. What also becomes clear is that by continually framing from a norm set to the privileged experience (the 'what' we in the Western world take-for-granted), concern remains focused on the disadvantage of 'other' groups rather than on the advantages of the dominant group – the problems remaining firmly with the other. By using Charles W. Mills (1997) lens of misinterpretation - an epistemology of ignorance; active or wilful ignorance – a reframing of poverty and disadvantage allows that the unfairness and ignorance of (white/western) advantage is revealed; the irony in Sontag's 'double message', exposed to scrutiny.

The taken-for-granted cycle of poverty

I turn to the symbolism of 'the cycle of poverty' (another much used phrase in volunteer tourism) to illustrate an example of the way in which an active ignorance exists; of the unnamed political and philosophical system of domination by white people over nonwhite people (Mills, 1997); the west over the rest (Hall, 2007). Within the context of volunteer tourism discourse, 'knowing' the existence of a 'cycle of poverty' requires a wilful ignorance of privilege and as such, a wilful ignorance of the complicity of the volunteer tourism industry (by way of global social injustice and inequality) in the perpetuation of this same cycle. Poverty alleviation (the misinterpreted outcome of volunteer tourism) to market forces (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011) allows white/western benevolence to be stabilized by the self-same system that is in part responsible for poverty and disadvantage in the first instance. As Nickel and Eikenberry (2009) argue in their discussion of 'marketized philanthropy', this process is particularly disturbing because it allows

us to feel that we are giving back by hiding the detail that we have already taken away – that the need to purchase these compassionate vacations fails to recognise “that capitalism created the need for philanthropy in the first place” (p:979).

Once again it can be argued - and as Mills (1997) asserts - knowing something pushes out knowing something else that could be known. What the symbolism of ‘a cycle of poverty’ in the volunteer vacation marketing literature inspires, is not action to prevent these injustices but, a misrepresented preoccupation with the taken-for-granted ability, tools and entitlement to make things better. This fundamentally renders the issues of poverty and disadvantage (again, much used in the discourse) as things that are both uncomplicated and politically neutral.

As Kate Simpson (2004) argues in her research of gap-year volunteering, these types of vacation generally lack any socio-political educational value and are moreover inclined to perpetuate an understanding that breaking the cycle of poverty is again “simplistic, consumable and ultimately ‘do-able’” (p:690). Positioned as a non-political activity, issues of inequity, injustice and racism in volunteer tourism are able to be disregarded, ignored or denied. As a consequence, volunteer tourists are able to place themselves outside of these problems and absolve themselves (and their privileges) of any complicity in their existence. As Zeus Leonardo (2009) claims, white racist thoughts, teachings and actions are “not solely the domain of white supremacist groups... rather the domain of average, tolerant people, lovers of diversity, and... believers in justice” (p:82).

Once again an ‘epistemology of ignorance’ allows the volunteer tourist to construct knowledge/ignorance out of a failure to ask what, why and how; taken-for-granted assumptions therefore being allowed to produce the simple (constructed) knowledge/ignorance that ‘poverty’ is the problem; ‘they’ lack the tools; ‘we’ have the answers’; they are the helpless; we are the ones that help. This representation (misrepresentation) in turn allows the production (reproduction) of privileged imaginaries of ‘the cycle of poverty’ (in testimonies, social media postings,

photographs and word-of-mouth recollections, for example) that confirm (and reaffirm) the claim that volunteer tourism can easily mend the problem.

It is argued therefore, that at the same time as this symbolic framing bounds the notion of poverty and disadvantage, it also acts to define what forms of knowledge need be extended to enable 'them to lift themselves out of it' and revealingly, who this knowledge belongs to. Through this 'taken-for-granted-ness' the abilities (the tools, opportunities and entitlement) of the Western world are (mis)represented in relation to the deficits (poverty, disadvantage and orphanhood) of the 'other place'. The symbolism of 'the cycle of poverty' is in part responsible, not only for attracting willing volunteer tourists (endowed with privileged 'tools', enthused by marketing claims and, inspired by the taken-for-granted 'right' to intervene) but also for helping to justify and validate the worth of this vacation choice – as such, allowing it to be consumed.

Making use of whiteness: how privileged groups negotiate their privilege

It is necessary to understand more, however, about how it is possible for volunteer tourists to rationalise and "normalise... complicity in white privilege" (Enders and Gould, 2009) and here the study by Enders and Gould (2009) referred to in the review of literature will be built upon to offer some direction. From their research of students engaged in service learning studies in America colleges - learners who significantly had also taken a module in critical theories of Whiteness - Enders and Gould (2009) suggest that despite clear and unambiguous instruction to the contrary, students invariably regarded work experience with disadvantaged families in their own communities as charity or benevolence. What Enders and Gould (2009) identified was that whilst many of the students were able to recognise their own white privilege (following exposure to critical theories of Whiteness) they often viewed it as something beneficial when working to help people of colour. As such, white students saw their own whiteness as a positive tool in their charitable toolkit. Many, for example, expressed the notion that being white allowed them to provide better help to 'underprivileged people' as they believed that in some matters whiteness carried more weight (and as such more

power) which they could use to the advantage of the disadvantaged; better helping the students to help others. In this way, clinging to their racial identities, the students “attempted to justify and normalise their complicity in white privilege instead of challenging it” (Enders and Gould, 2009, p:421). This telling reflection on the ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ of white privilege makes clear links to much of the marketing of volunteer tourism.

However, as Enders and Gould go on to argue, one danger in allowing whiteness to be regarded as a badge of benevolence, or seeing whiteness privilege as an essential item in the doing-good-things toolkit, is that these notions help to reinforce a deficit model in the ‘other’ which in turn can create or reinforce: 1) the supremacy of whiteness; 2) the (positive) power in the paternalistic white/other relationship and, 3) the normalcy of where these students come from. As a consequence, Enders and Gould (2009) conclude, the supremacy of whiteness or advantage continues to be justified and taken-for-granted. This is particularly interesting when seeking to understand what allows the consumption of volunteer tourism but significantly, it also highlights the difficulties in challenging these assumptions when the industry persistently works to emphasize the worth of privilege and the normalcy in the notion of ‘them needing our help’.

Misinterpretation and ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ in participant’s narratives

Following on from this discussion, I now turn to the participant’s narratives. Participants often gave voice to taken-for-granted assumptions, although I found that race and whiteness were rarely explicitly referred to - the taboo appearing to be well observed. Nonetheless, many volunteer tourists (as well as potential volunteers) demonstrated a knowledge/ignorance about the privileged tools in their charitable toolkits; about the claims and belief in the worth of their helpful gestures; about understandings of normalcy and, about a taken-for-granted right to intervene. These common themes were used in this interpretative exercise.

I begin with Sheila who I interviewed both before and after her four week volunteering vacation to Siem Reap. She initially expressed a firm confidence that

the skills and talents she was taking to Siem Reap were valuable and would be well received. These skills and talents included craft-type handiwork, upholstery and an enthusiasm to 'do something'. During the second interview, from where these extracts are taken, Sheila signalled an understanding of what she now saw as the difference between guidance and intervention in those efforts to help Cambodians made by (other) westerners. She talked at length about individuals (particularly younger volunteer tourists and those she described as 'foreigners') who she saw as imposing their knowledge on Cambodia. Sheila's narrative is particularly troubling in that her experience as a volunteer tourist appears to have reaffirmed her initial (mis)understanding of those things that will help the 'poor people of Cambodia' (as she described) and the right way those things should be done. As such her vacation has allowed her to come to terms with, and negotiate her own privilege.

I think we need to steer or guide. I don't think they're getting the support in Cambodia – like stabilisers on bikes – they're being told....informed how they're going to do it.....it just leads to complete and utter confusion. You see when I was at college I did hand loom and weaving and I went to the handloom and weaving shed [in Cambodia] – these girls are still sitting on the floor and weaving (*in an incredulous tone*)....now it's not natural. The simple task of lifting the looms off the floor and putting them on legs would make such a difference. Unfortunately they weren't receptive to that idea at all... you can't do anything.... with people that won't listen. [It's like] growing the crops all the year round which they can't do at the moment because of the rainy season... they do have a two season rice but the other vegetables pepper, tomatoes and things, they import so much from Malaysia and Vietnam as well and apparently it is possible for them to grow these crops all the year round if they raise the beds above the water level. That is worthwhile ... other skills, they're skills that they don't need in Cambodia, like speaking English or being told, European mathematics [which] are apparently different totally from Cambodia ones and they don't need art classes... because they've got their own culture so what the [volunteers] are doing, they're actually squashing the tendency for the Cambodian crafts and ways of life to survive. And what troubles me is that it's an invidious thing, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Vietnamese they're all in there... the Australians have got a big foothold... and the Cambodian government doesn't seem to understand what's happening... and [I know] this is only from being there for a month. And I could see that...

The use of the word 'support' at the beginning of this extract articulates a paternalism that was often expressed in interviews by volunteer tourists; Sheila's use of the term 'stabilisers on bikes' particularly exemplifies this notion through the image of a child being supported until a time when they are capable of cycling off by themselves. (And although not recognised by Sheila the phrases 'not natural', 'these girls' 'people that won't listen' and 'culture' must be considered racialised terms in this context). Connectedly, Sheila's reference to the girls in the weaving shed "still" sitting on the floor displays an understanding of development as a linear process positioning 'these girls' (and as such Cambodia) as a place that is behind; having not yet moved into what is understood as normal. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues, the western myth of progress "assumes that societies move forwards in stages of development much as an infant grows into a fully developed adult human being" (p:32). Furthermore, these expressions used by Sheila, along with 'it's not natural' and 'their own culture', engage a discourse that creates binary notions of developed/undeveloped, adult/child, modern/primitive, natural/unnatural, normal/not normal that, as Polanah (2007) argues, "is responsible for re-articulating racial evolutionist fatuities" (p:28) – and I would add, further support the argument of 'taken-for granted', superior ways of doing, knowing, seeing – and being.

Sheila earlier discussed what she believed the consequences of 'imposing' knowledge would be on Cambodia and its people, despite her acknowledging that this knowing (which she could see) came from '[her] only being there for a month'. However, at the same time she was able to deny her own position in this cycle of imposition as, a belief in the value of her own tools/knowledge (as well as her understanding of what is 'worthwhile' and 'needed'), provided her with the right to intervene; allowed her to be a volunteer tourist. In essence, Sheila was able to criticise other volunteer tourists, not because she had come to understand how different ways of doing were forced onto Cambodians but, because she saw her own knowledge as superior to other knowledge.

Elsewhere Sheila reasons that the teaching of English by volunteer tourists was also an unsuccessful enterprise. Failing to consider (being wilfully ignorant) that this may be so because a high turnover of individuals with limited skills offer a large share of the language training (volunteer tourists like herself), Sheila argues instead that:

They [Cambodian people] can only speak the phrases that have been given to them by rote and if you go off [that], then there's nothing there...they have no idea what you're talking about... anything further is... beyond their scope... because at the end of the day they're gonna be a tuk tuk driver or growing rice and they only want to know, need to know enough English to give change in dollars... to service the tourist industry..

Again the notion of backwardness ('there's nothing there') and lack of ability, ('beyond their scope') speaks of an understanding of development and progress (both contentious terms in this context) as a linear process – nothing there 'yet'; 'as yet' beyond their scope – but also of a taken-for-granted dominance of knowledge about 'what they need to know'. Sheila (mis)interprets the lack of success in English language learning as 'their' problem despite much rhetoric to the contrary elsewhere in her narrative; 'I stood in if the volunteers didn't turn up, mainly because they'd got a thick head [from the night before] because of course that's part of the thing of going there'; [they volunteer] to satisfy their own desires and needs – [mockingly] 'look what I've done and won't it look great on my CV'. For Sheila, something that is known (they became volunteer tourists to satisfy their own needs and desires) is also not known (perhaps I became a volunteer tourist to satisfy *my own* needs and desires). Sheila, for example, had spoken at our first meeting of her aging mother's increasing dependency on her; of the demands of her grown family and, of her own 'itchy feet'. Significantly she also discussed how 'for me the time is right, I don't know when I will get the chance to do this again' (Sheila, 2009).

Like Sheila, Teresa and Patricia were also women in their early fifties and also had time and money at their disposal. Having already taken a number of volunteering vacations, these two women were keen to see 'what Cambodia had to offer' them.

I interviewed them during their four day 'fact-finding look' at Siem Reap, a trip made during their time-off from another volunteering vacation in neighbouring Vietnam. Teresa and Patricia took a flight from Ho Chi Minh to Siem Reap and stayed in a five star hotel during their time in the town. (Ironically, whilst the pair demanded a room-change because they were disturbed by the sound of an ornamental water fountain outside their window, they also decided to make a considerable donation to a charity supplying drinking water fountains to 'poor' villagers). When I asked them what they hoped to do as volunteer tourists in Cambodia, Teresa replied that:

I could give my heart to them... that would be good. Whether its changing baby's nappies or, I don't care what it is... I even don't mind being with old people you know, I quite like old people.... I'm not any good at managing people, not any good at dealing with government officers or any of those people, I'm just hands on and I've got a few bob as well....to donate... that's me. They all want money and a little bit of money... in the right place - in the right place mind, otherwise you'll just be buying someone a Lexus, that's what we're trying to avoid. That's why we bought the cooker for the other place [we volunteered at] because everywhere out here is corrupt, everywhere. I like the idea of bicycles... we love bicycles. They're practical, very practical. You need a bicycle to get from A to B so it makes perfect sense [to buy and donate]. It's a bottle of wine really... you know, do we have another bottle of wine or do we buy a bike? Do we have another bottle of wine or do we change somebody's life? I think if you can make one person smile... that's a lot.

Teresa's comments exhibit a 'taken-for-granted-ness' in what it is considered worthwhile for volunteer tourists to do - 'give my heart to them; donate a few bob' – allowing the knowledge (something to be known) that whatever actions they choose to undertake are the actions that 'these people' (as Patricia earlier described) require. Teresa also gives a pertinent illustration of the (mis)represented notion of how easily things can be achieved and the worth of those actions in her assertion that the choice was, 'another bottle of wine or change somebody's life'. Finally, when on a subsequent meeting in Siem Reap the women brought along a plastic carrier bag of broken biscuits which they handed out to children on the street, I was again able to observe a misrepresentation of

privileged 'tools'; the assumed worth of helpful gestures and a taken-for-granted right to intervene.

Knowing corruption and lacking trust

Connections to the notion that the other place is a place of 'underprivilege, poverty and orphanhood' (frontier, 2012) can be observed in Teresa's (knowing) view that 'everywhere out here is corrupt, everywhere'. Indeed, corruption and lack of trust (especially in how 'our' monies will be utilised) were, I found, reoccurring themes in many narratives with volunteer tourists and potential volunteer tourists and were often expressed as a reason why individuals considered 'working' directly with those who needed help rather than entrusting donations to others who may misuse it - 'otherwise you'll just be buying someone a Lexus' (Teresa, 2010). This may also be considered a factor in what allows these vacations to be consumed as the need to ensure that, as another participant (Ruth) expressed, 'your money ends up in the right hands', is considered to be a benefit of volunteer tourism as direct philanthropy. Other potential volunteers, Charlie from the UK for example, expressed the concern that he needed to be able to distinguish 'a reputable company' from an 'unscrupulous one'; whilst Max said in an email that he wanted help in finding 'a good and genuine charity to volunteer for'. Max went on to say that he had "volunteered before in different countries and found some organisation [to be] not as honest as it would first appear. Therefore I would really like some assurance that I will go to a sound place" (personal correspondence, 2012).

For many volunteer tourists then, an understanding of the other place as 'underprivileged, poor and corrupt' reinforced the notion that as volunteer vacationers the chances would be reduced of their 'valued' efforts being wasted. As Patricia expresses, "whatever we gave, or whatever we raised we gave personally... we didn't hand over the money... we bought things like a computer, toilets, blankets, you name it but we just did not give the money because, you know.....the corruption" (Patricia, 2010). For Barbara Heron (2007) these, as she describes, 'blind spots... in the "panoptical altruistic gaze.... are crucial to our

interpretation of a continuum of need that calls us elsewhere” (p:54) and, it could be added, allows us to continue to consume volunteer tourism.

Whilst a lack of trust was expressed by many volunteers, in the grey literature too, these notions were, at times, explicitly made. One western children’s charity in Siem Reap, for example, states on-line that they “have set up our own orphanage and children’s centre [due to] the continuing problems [of] working with Khmer run orphanages in particular concerns about their child care standards and financial management [we have now] ceased working with all the other Khmer run organisations” (COF, 2010). The website, designed to attract and inform potential volunteers, has numerous close-up images of smiling Cambodian children.

Breaking the taboo of race

Finally however, not all participants observed the taboo of the silence around issues of race and whiteness. Rose, a 20 year old participant was interviewed almost a year after she and a friend had return from a volunteering vacation to Cambodia. In the second year of degree courses in Development Studies, the two women may well have been exposed to debates relating to issues of race in overseas development work – indeed there are indications of this in Rose’s narrative. Nonetheless, as Kothari (2005) asserts, development and development studies continue to be based on the recognition and acknowledgment of global difference and where raising issues of race are often considered to be too distracting, demanding and disruptive. When I asked Rose to talk about what she felt about volunteer tourism in general, she began by forcefully expressing the following concerns:

Why should a bunch of white people go over and teach them stuff when there’s a lot of people in Cambodia who have a lot of skills that they could teach and share... like silk... silk’s massive in Cambodia... why not teach them practical skills that they can cultivate a livelihood out of... rather than teaching them English... local organisations, grass roots are best. Local people working with local people... although that’s sometimes not sustainable, but it’s better than a load of white people getting off a plane and thinking they know everything about everything. I just don’t think

there's a place or a role for volunteers, I really don't know if there is or not.

Here Rose appears to position herself outside of the 'bunch of white people' who go over and 'teach them stuff' (despite this being what she and her friend had done). However, although she at first asks why people should be allowed to do this, she continues by relating what skills *should* be taught. It seems therefore that (despite knowing something) she still finds it difficult to dislocate from the notion that 'they' lack the ability; 'we' have the tools. Rose fails to see her own complicity in 'getting off the plane and knowing everything about everything' (as she describes volunteer tourism). Whilst ambivalent about white people as volunteers who just go over there, only a few moments earlier in the interview she had explained how they had chosen and booked their volunteering vacations to Cambodia:

It was really stupid in hindsight... we Googled it like ... and the reason we went for it was cos it was the cheapest one... and so in hindsight that could have ended so badly, that could have been such a scam.

Even having described the 'stupid' way in which they organised their trip to Siem Reap - selecting the cheapest volunteering option via a Google search - Rose concludes that, had the experience 'ended badly', it would have been due to a 'scam' and not the foolishness of their own actions – knowing something it seems, once again pushing out knowing something else. Equally, it could be argued that ignorance was constructed by choosing to leave out other knowledge – or as Mills (1997) describes "the ironic outcome that [they were] unable to understand the world they themselves ha[d] made" (p:18).

After having forcefully expressed her views on volunteer tourism and the white people who she describes as boorishly 'going over' to Cambodia, Rose next goes on to talk about what impact the trip had on her own world view and understanding of poverty. Here, I argue, her account characterises the taken-for-granted right to (go and) intervene even if the outcome was only that she and her friend were better prepared for the poverty they would encounter later in Africa.

But of course it's changed my world view. It's opened me up to a lot more cultures... it's opened me up to poverty on that scale. I knew I was going on a six month placement [after I got back from Cambodia]. I had to go away to a developing country, there was no ifs and buts about it, you go, cos our university sends you.... so it was good to get over the initial culture shock of working in a developing country.... so when I went to Kenya... Kenya, Cambodia, two different places but I was prepared for what I was going to see... and it didn't affect me...

Personal reflections

Finally, I draw on two reflective accounts in which I am now able to observe my own taken-for-granted-ness the manner in which notions of white/western privilege and (assumed) expertise are communicated. The first is an extract taken from a personal e-mail I sent to the director of the orphanage where my son and I were to spend our volunteer vacation in 2008. I was keen to know what the director wanted us to do to 'lift the children in his care out of poverty'. We knew little about Cambodia, its people or its problems but we were sure (as the tone and content of my email reflects) that we could help:

Do you have any ideas of things you would like us to do? Tom's pretty straight forward as he just loves working directly with the children but I'm happy to do anything you need as I know I will make time to be with the children whatever else I do. I am really happy to work one-to-one or in small groups - children, other adults, whatever? (Personal email correspondence, 2008)

Reflecting on this email now I am able to observe my willingness to accept (and take-for-granted) a faith in the privileged tools that we believed would 'make a difference' to the lives of Cambodian orphans. Whilst my enthusiasm and good intent are evident, also evident is the notion of our right to intervene in the lives of the 'children, other adults, whatever'. It is clear looking back on this email that our expectations and conceptualisation of the experience appears to have been framed for us before we arrived in Cambodia. And looking back, I am now able to recognise the significance of these understandings to the question of what allowed us to consume our volunteering experience.

This second example is an excerpt from my personal diary made before I was a PhD researcher and had therefore not begun this study. It was made during my first ever visit to Siem Reap in 2008. On this particular day I had been taken to a part of town by a British expatriate and NGO director, who was keen to show me examples of 'good work'. The area was known, he told me, to be very poor, having particularly high levels of deprivation. It is significant to repeat that I was a volunteer tourist teaching English in an orphanage. I had no TEFL qualifications and no experience or knowledge of overseas development. I had completed only the briefest on-line application form that had required no references, no CRB checks, and no passport number. This is what I wrote in my diary:

We drove through this extremely poor area in his large 4x4 vehicle and pulled up unannounced at the village headquarters – this was real Cambodia and I was loving it! Through an interpreter William asked to see the commune chief. He appeared quickly and William explained that he was from an NGO in town and was interested in discussing potential projects to help with the regeneration and improvement of the area. The chief offered us seats around a large table and quickly summoned his commune leaders who soon arrived from whatever and wherever they'd been employed, most clutching pens or ends of pencils and scraps of paper or battered note books. They were very serious. There were now about a dozen of us around the table – myself the lone female, William and me the only white faces. I suddenly felt pretty uncomfortable. I asked William if I should wait in the vehicle. I'd no knowledge of the area and no experience of development work (facts that William was certainly aware of). William's response was: 'Jane, you need to watch, listen and learn and just remember one thing – YOU ARE the expert here'. I sat back and politely watched....

It is uncomfortable to revisit and reveal this particular entry (Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002) but as Back (2002) asserts, unease does provide a valuable interpretative position. Many of the notions discussed in this chapter can be identified in this one particular scenario and as such add to the arguments I have been making. The extract furthermore describes how the experience of volunteer tourism is rarely confined to the bounds of the placement setting and that the

acquaintances we make when 'out there' with others engaged in development agendas, may also be significant to the understandings we return home with.

In summary

What I found in my research was that the notion of a 'taken-for granted-ness' in (essentially white, western) ways of seeing, doing, being and knowing, was often articulated by volunteer tourists, either implicitly or explicitly, when discussing their experiences in Siem Reap (or their desire to go there). These assertions are expressed no less in the marketing, travel blogs, NGO literature and social media postings and especially in those examples concerned with attracting potential volunteers - once again raising the question of the direction of travel of these modes of knowledge and discourse; representations and ideologies. Furthermore, as I have suggested, these assertions also have a role in both helping to organise and shape (mis)interpretations, as well as in influencing and manipulating symbols and binaries deep-rooted in volunteer tourism discourse. The reality of those binaries, where the 'neediness' of Cambodians is set against the capability and capacity of volunteer tourists, particularly impacts on allowing the consumption this touristic commodity.

An 'epistemology of ignorance' (Mills, 1997) – an active ignorance; or wilful misinterpretation - was identified in many of the volunteer's understandings of their roles, abilities and place in these experiences and acts to support the positive view of volunteer tourism by rehearsing and repeating the commonly held assumptions. What was also explored, however, was the manner in which the privileging mechanisms of volunteer tourism find their way into (expressions of) a sense of self as a 'good person' (and as such here, as a good tourist). These understandings make significant links with understandings of morality, compassion and decency and significantly, how easy it is to buy into it.

I have argued that there is as much in what is *not* said as in what is said (or understood) that impacts on understandings of the trend; and that these silences, omissions or even erasures significantly impact on the question of how volunteer

tourism is allowed to be consumed. Whether buying a ticket to a rock event like 100,000 other people; purchasing a fashionable poppy brooch or a chocolate bar from the Thornton's chocolate, Save the Children Born to Share partnership, the space to connect with compassion, is now found consistently in the marketplace where options are restricted only by consumer choice (Tester, 2010). What all of these items have in common however, and what is so pertinent to an understanding of what allows the consumptions of volunteer vacations, is that "the discourse of compassion that accompanies [these items and activities]... has transformed... emotion into a neat, marketable commodity" (Moore, 2008, p:9).

Chapter Six

Cambodia is like the teen starlet who has just been discovered by an adoring public; everyone wants something from her but not everyone wants what's in her best interest.

- *Lonely Planet, 2010*

Just what is being consumed in volunteering vacations in Siem Reap?

Introduction – abuse in the benign

In chapter four, having examined who is consuming volunteer tourism and exploring the reasons why we might buy into it, I then turned in chapter five to consider what factors allow or enable the trends consumption. In this chapter I now move on to explore just what is being consumed in the volunteer vacations by focusing particularly on ‘poor’ children and their centrality in the appeal of this tourist commodity. I begin by discussing the complex notion of child abuse.

Definitions of child abuse are manifestly problematic and inevitably relative. Nonetheless, I have chosen to make use here of the World Health Organisation (2013) definition as it provides in its broadness, not only recognition of negligent treatment and exploitation (carelessness, misuse and unfairness), but also an acknowledgement of abuse which – alongside harm to a child’s physical being – includes harm to a child’s development and dignity. As such, this definition is useful to the argument I present in this chapter that claims that troubling connections can be made between the trend of volunteer tourism and aspects of child abuse through, for example, unrecognised careless treatment; unnoticed emotional inattentiveness and, obscured thoughtlessness that results in exploitation and potential harm.

Child abuse and neglect, sometimes referred to as child maltreatment, includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, development or dignity. Within this broad definition, five subtypes can be distinguished – physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect and negligent treatment; emotional abuse; and exploitation (World Health Organisation, 2013).

I will argue that, through the production and staging of these vacations as harmless but helpful activities, tourist consumption of (the bodies of) Cambodian children appear as well-intentioned and benevolent gestures whilst at the same time

concealing the adult consumers insatiable search for pleasure (Campbell, 1993). This is made possible in part because, as Henry A. Giroux (2000) contends, “[childhood] innocence is a highly charged term that points to paedophiles and sexual perverts as *the most visible threats* to children in our society” (p:61, my emphasis). Claiming that “child abuse connects to and works its way through the most seemingly benign of cultural spheres” (Giroux, 2000, p:61) – spheres which often fail to attract serious social analysis or are dismissed as simple subcultures – Giroux (2000), citing the examples of “child beauty pageants and the world of advertising and fashion modelling” (p:61), asserts that these spaces - in becoming a “vehicle for commercial profit” - reveal troubling ways in which the ‘mystifying’ notion of innocence is ‘appropriated’ in the drive to satisfy “adults desires and needs” (p:61/2). These complex assertions, as I will show, are a particularly useful tool with which to examine the trend of volunteer tourism and in particular the question of just what is being consumed.

Acknowledging however that Giroux’s commercialisation-come-abuse notion is controversial, I also draw on two further concepts to support important elements of my argument. The first of these is in what Bourdieu (2007) describes as ‘symbolic violence’; “gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling” (p:1/2). I argue that the idea that wrongness can be concealed in gentleness or kindness – sometimes resulting in victims being unaware of abuse - is especially relevant in the context of volunteer tourism activities that are represented and consumed as noble intentions. As Morgan and Björkert (2006) also assert, the invisibility of symbolic violence “often does not enable us to recognise it as a mode of domination” (p:450) and one that is embedded in routines, language, interpersonal relations and everyday conduct. As a result, (and adding further value to the discussion here) as Bourdieu (2007) also contends, these “relations of domination... rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices” (p:1) can then be tolerated, remain unchallenged and even be perceived as natural.

The second concept is from philosopher Jean Harvey (1999) and is described as *civilised oppression*. Marion Young (1990) unpacks the notion as being:

...embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutions and rules... It refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions which are supported by the media and cultural stereotypes as well as by the structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms (Young, 1990, p:41)

Again, as with Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence (2007), Harvey's (1999) concept of civilised oppression is also I believe, relevant to this popular tourist trend and its association with Cambodian children. That 'unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people' can result in suffering and injustice (Young, 1990) is again a notion particularly useful to the discussion here. Harvey (1999) argues that the principal element of civilised oppression is manifest "when vulnerable people... undergo 'moral subordination'... as a result of being trapped in networks of inappropriate relationship" (p:2). As I will show, in revealing volunteer tourism as an enabler of networks of inappropriate relationships (between pleasure seeking tourists and poor children), the notion of abuse in the benign (Giroux, 2000) becomes more visible and, as such, adds support to the claim I will make here, that connections can be made between the consumption of volunteering vacations and the abuse of Cambodian children.

To develop this argument, however, it is necessary to explore just *what* is being consumed in these vacations and to this end two further interlocking ideas are also employed. In the first of these I propose that in volunteer vacationing, the bodies of Cambodian children in orphanages and poor schools are seen to signify morsels of exotic other-ness available (through market mechanisms) to be consumed and acted upon by tourists. Employing the metaphors of eating, devouring or consuming the other (Edwards, 2000; hooks, 1992; Johansson, 1999), I will argue that it is to sate the desire for 'just a taste' of the exotic; 'just a taste' of difference; of poverty; of adventure; of development for example, that these children are

made so appealing to the volunteer tourist – a little bit of something (different) that is good enough to eat.

Secondly, I will argue that the bodies of these same children are consumed as symbols of nostalgia for childhood innocence; a desire to be reunited with that something that (for the adult tourist) has personally past or, is considered to have been lost from the modern societies (Postman, 1994) from which tourists arrive. Underpinning these ideas and central to the argument however, is the assertion that volunteer vacations with Cambodian children represent the consumption – the *what* is being consumed - of a complex, “seemingly benign” (Giroux, 2000, p:61) tourist-fantasy. As a significant element of conventional touristic discourse, the notion of fantasy also makes substantial theoretical links here (Dann, 1976; Paradis, 2004; Urry, 1995). It is the fantasies cultivated in and enabled by volunteer vacationing that I will go on to develop in this chapter. I begin this discussion however, with an examination of the commodification and objectification of ‘things’ for tourist consumption as an introduction to the notion that it is the Cambodian child that represents the object of consumption in these popular vacations.

People as objects of tourist consumption

The holiday business today presents tourists with an endless array of acts of consumption to appeal to all tastes and styles – stays in luxury hotels; treks through unspoilt landscapes; visits to ancient monuments; experiencing ‘magic’ in The Walt Disney World Resort. Never before has so much choice and variety enticed the tourist dollar. As Mica Nava (1992) contends however, “[c]onsumerism is far more than just economic activity” (p:67) because things that are offered for (here tourist) consumption must also satisfy the fantasies, dreams, longings and desires of the consuming vacationer. To this effect, ‘things’ must be tailored to meet these needs. The commodification hypothesis proposes for example, that the past can be commodified specifically for tourist consumption (Dann, 2000; Urry, 1995; Goulding, 2000; MacCannell, 1999) and in this respect history becomes ‘an experience’ offered to the tourist by the tourist industry. Likewise, the

commodification of the countryside and landscape has been explored (Urry, 1995). Here it has been argued, the tourist gaze is deliberately directed towards those 'things' that should be looked at or must be visited (Urry, 1995). David Harvey (2002) has written of the irrefutability of "culture ha[ving] become a commodity of sort" (p:93) and of the "special marks of distinction" (p:103) that attach to places, artefacts and cultural environments, once again often for tourist consumption; Rosaleen Duffy and Lorraine Moore (2010) have considered the commodification of nature in tourism industries where the 'things' consumed are animals - for example, elephant-riding experiences in Thailand and Botswana.

These commodified 'things' can however, also be people; a phenomenon that is far from new in tourism practice. For example, in the late 1880's in the Wisconsin Dells region of America, tourists would go to view 'Indians' in their natural landscape. The role of (often contrived) postcard photographs of the local Ho-Chunk Native American tribe – made for and sold to tourists - is now considered to have been pivotal to the increase in visitor numbers and development of the area as a tourist mecca (Hoelscher, 2008). More recently, Jacqueline Sánchez Taylor (2001) has explored the practice of 'First World' women vacationers travelling to poorer countries for brief, 'no strings attached', sexual relations with local men. In contrasting understandings of 'sex tourism' between male and female holidaymakers, Sánchez Taylor (2001) argues that the tourist fantasies of Western women need be questioned alongside say, the exotic sexual objectification and commodification of 'oriental' women by western male sex tourists. Whether the remunerated services of a prostitute in a Thai brothel or a local man in the Caribbean paid to be the 'holiday romance' of a rich, white American female tourist, these examples represent the commodification of bodies to meet the desires and needs of vacationers.

A further example of people as commodified 'things' for tourist consumption is found in the work of Jane Desmond (1999). Desmond is interested in live dance performances staged specifically for tourist audiences where she argues, dancers are presented as culturally ideal 'specimens' of difference. The commodification of

people and culture are, Desmond concludes, implicitly linked in these popular tourist performances - but most pertinently I would add, in the notion of 'presentation' and availability.

Against this understanding (that people can become the (available) objects of tourist consumption), the question I ask here is just *what* is being consumed in the volunteer vacation? I argue that it is through the processes of commodification and its close associate objectification that the bodies of Cambodian children have become the objects (things) of consumption in this particular vacation trend. To unpack this further I engage two important concepts. Firstly, feminist scholars in line with the Kantian position have described objectification as the reduction of human beings, in all their complexities, to a single component or utility (Bartky 1990; Dworkin 1989) - the prostitute; the 'Indians' in their 'natural setting'; the Hula dance-show girl, for example. Secondly, that Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant (2002) are particularly clear when they assert that all 'economic exchanges' that involve human bodies are to be understood as commodification – the sale of body organs; soliciting for sexual services or, I would suggest, paying to spend two weeks vacationing with Cambodian orphans.

Essentially an objectified person is seen as an object and often an object (or indeed parts of that object) that holds a market value. Although the concept is most familiar in connection to the sexual objectification and commodification of women it is also possible, as has been suggested above, to consider these processes in tourism. One of the features of this concept which is most significant to the discussion here however, is that when as a consequence of being objectified and commodified people who are seen as 'bodies', effectively become "bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others" (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p:175). Whether (described as) poor orphans or (presented as) disadvantaged, it is the bodies of Cambodian children that in the volunteer tourism experience, are available for 'the use and pleasure of others'. Furthermore, and central to this argument, is that as objects, the bodies of these children can be acted upon by the consumer (improved, educated, made happier...) - the real stuff of volunteering

vacations - because it is through the promise of being able to 'make a difference' to (to act upon) poor Cambodian children, that this specific tourist act of consumption is so desirable.

What is more, it is these 'acts' – this gentle, civilised oppression (Bourdieu, 2007; Harvey, 1999) - articulated as for example, 'educating'; 'supporting'; 'helping'; 'relieving' 'improving'; 'restoring'; 'assessing'; 'making a real difference to' that, as the staple discourse of volunteer tourism, work to legitimise the objectification and commodification of children by the industry (and perhaps by the consumer too). Descriptions and often photographs of children being weighed and measured; of teeth being cleaned; of head-lice treatments applied; of English lessons delivered; of new clothes, new toys, new classrooms, new books and pencils being donated (no less, gratefully received), are endlessly produced and reproduced in marketing; in travel blogs; on NGO websites. These images not only provide enticement to potential volunteer tourists, showing how they too can act upon and consume these children – how that is, in the rules of the game, volunteer tourism is performed - but also (and pertinently) how "seemingly benign" (Giroux, 2000) an activity this is. Here is the evidence, they seem to be saying, of our caring, compassionate, 'no harm done' vacation activity.

In the marketing literature, volunteer tourism is promoted and sold on the promise of doing something for, or with (acts upon) the children; by individuals excited by the idea of a volunteering vacation I found that it was (acts upon) the children that they expressed most interest in; (actions with) Cambodian children were articulated as being central to the experiences of the volunteer tourists (in situ) who participated in this research; and, by those of us who have already consumed our vacations and returned to our homes and everyday lives, it is what we did for, or with (acts upon) the children, that we most reflect upon: "it was the kids at the orphanage that held us there... like when I was teaching my English, doing whatever, just being mummy, it was the children, I just gave my heart to those children....." (Maria). The Cambodian child, in the "relentless commodification" (Holt and Schor, 2000, p:viii) of modern life, has become, it is argued, one of the

'new species of [tourist] commodity' (MacCannell, 1999, p:11) to be consumed by those of us searching for (unique) pleasure and happiness in our vacation choices.

The tourist fantasy

Colin Campbell (1993) makes an association between consumer desires and the romantic ethic of fantasising which he describes as a unique characteristic of the modern individual. In tourism and travel, these associations are in no way restricted to advertising and marketing where they are indeed abundant; fantasy is a fundamental of contemporary travel and vacationing discourse (Dann, 1976; Paradis, 2004; Urry, 1995). Just for example, in a plethora of movies an array of tourist-fantasy themes are explored and depicted; *'Eat, Pray, Love'* (Murray, 2010); *'Westworld'* (Crichton, 1973); *'Darjeeling Limited'* (Anderson, 2007); *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg, 1993); *'Shirley Valentine'* (Gilbert, 1989); *'The Way'* (Estevez, 2010) - to name but a recent few. Here fantasies of escape; self-discovery; reconnection; adventure; the past, as well as many more, are examined and portrayed. In the movie *'Westworld'* (Crichton, 1973) for instance, the fantasy desire to live in times past inspires tourists to choose a vacation in the resort of Delos. Transported to the futuristic vacation park in shuttle-like spacecraft, here the holiday company provides almost flawlessly humanised robots to meet all the desires of the tourists. The film focuses on holidaymakers in the cowboy themed zone of *WestWorld* who - having chosen and paid for their vacation of a lifetime - indulge their cowboy fantasies. The holiday company's jaunty advertising slogan reads, *'Boy, have we got a vacation for you'*.

In conventional tourist theory, notions of romanticism (Campbell, 1993; Urry, 1990), fantasy and longing in the tourist imagination have been examined (Dann 1976; Schellhorn and Perkins 2004; Rojek, 1997; Urry, 1990); as have similar ideas in theories of consumerism (Campbell, 1993; Edwards, 2000). In combining these understandings however – fantasy and longing in tourism consumption - they become particularly relevant to this study. Whilst Campbell (1993) has drawn attention to the link between 'romanticism and consumption', both John Urry and Keith Hollinshead (1990; 1998) have also made important assertions that have

significance when considering the tourist fantasy in the consumption of volunteering vacations in orphanages and poor schools in Siem Reap. Hollinshead (1998) argues that international tourism discourse constructs populations as “objects of desire... and immutable objects of longing” (p:133); Urry (1990) contends that “there is... a ‘romantic’ form of the tourist gaze, in which the emphasis is upon a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze” (p:45).

Together these notions provide important direction to this argument as many of these themes were identified in the volunteer tourism discourse examined as part of this research – desire and longing; following and fulfilling dreams; a sentimentality around the meaningfulness of this particular vacation choice and around encounters with ‘others’ and, references to the semi-spiritual in expectations and recollections of volunteering experiences. Siem Reap today (arguably similar in a number of ways to the fictional destination of Delos in the movie *WestWorld*) provides a unique and exotic setting in which a growing number of holidaymakers (are transported in, to) act out and indulge their contemporary tourist fantasies – although of course, not here of gun slinging and barroom brawls. It is these contemporary tourist fantasies in volunteer vacationing - and questions of abuse arguably connected to this “seemingly benign” (Giroux, 2000) activity – to which I will now turn my focus.

Feeding tourist dreams

Much marketing literature examined for this research has a basic narrative of the enchanting and the magical. Even the names of many of the volunteer vacation providers and receiving NGOs suggest magical wonderment – ‘*Feeding Dreams Cambodia*’ (feedingdreamscambodia, 2012); ‘*PURE! Dream Centre*’ (pureforkids, 2013); ‘*Cambodian Tooth Angels*’ (cambodiantoothangelproject, 2013); ‘*Love Volunteers*’ (lovevolunteers, 2010); ‘*Shelter of Love*’ (shelteroflove, 2013); ‘*Sunrise Children’s Villages*’ (scv, 2013); ‘*Smiling Hearts Association for Children*’ (shac-smilinghearts, 2013); ‘*Cosmic Volunteers*’ (cosmicvolunteers, 2013). These names work to construct volunteer tourism as a fantastical vacation experience, whilst

arguably creating yearnings to go there and be a part of ‘the dreams’, ‘the love’, ‘the sunshine’ and ‘the angels’ – all of which is preceded on the availability (to the consumer) of children.

Volunteer at the PURE! Dream Centre - It will be an unforgettable experience! (pureforkids, 2012).

There’s a magic about Cambodia that casts a spell over you (travellersworldwide, 2012).

Visitors from the world over have fallen in love with Cambodia... with its complex and mystical ambience (frontier, 2009).

You will be collected from your Hotel early morning and transported to Feeding Dreams (feedingdreamscambodia, 2012).

Taking a closer look at the website of ‘Feeding Dreams Cambodia’ (the fourth extract above), a number of features are evident that are valuable to this discussion. Located in a particularly poor part of Siem Reap this community school, headed by a team of (mainly Australian) “principled individuals... committed to empowering the impoverished”, offers volunteering experiences to ‘all ages and backgrounds’:

If you are enthusiastic, have a flexible attitude and are humanitarian by nature, we would love to have you volunteer with us. Feeding Dreams educates approximately 400 students of all ages daily. If you speak fluent English, like the idea of helping our local Khmer teachers teach a classroom of highly active and happy kids, then this is the place for you (feedingdreamscambodia, 2012).

There are a number of indicators, even in these two brief examples, of how volunteer tourism at ‘Feeding Dreams Cambodia’ is presented as a ‘seemingly benign’ activity and one where the desires and dreams of the ‘enthusiastic’ tourist will be met (indeed often prioritised). The reference, for example, to being ‘transported’ (in the first extract from this organisation above) straightway indicates that the tourist/consumer’s needs are of great concern to the vacation providers. However, whilst the word ‘transported’ suggests movement from one world to another (an ingredient of tourist fantasies), it also recalls images of a colonial past; of hand-pulled rickshaws say, or sedan chairs.

This notion, which Heron (2007) describes as colonial continuity, reinforces a view of entitlement - entitlement to go there as well as entitlement to intervene - but also a confidence in the services that will be provided when the tourists arrive. Links can also be made to tourism research that has identified that the desire to unwind on vacation is often coupled with an imagined “entitlement to privileged service from locals” (Azarya, 2004, p:955) embedded in a perceived status of self. As Caren Kaplan (2000) has observed, “imperialism has left edifices and markers of itself the world over” (p:63) and these markers, it is argued here, exist no less in the way tourists expect to be attended to as they do in the colonial buildings and bread baguettes that are clear remnants of European rule in Cambodia. For bell hooks (1992) too, this nostalgia “takes the form of re-enacting and re-ritualizing in different ways the imperialist, colonizing journey as narrative fantasy of power and desire” (p:346). That the volunteer tourist will be ‘transported’ - rather than instructed for example, to ‘make their way to’ - works with these fantasies of specialness, attention and re-enactment – ‘your carriage (drawn by ‘the primitive other’) awaits you’.⁴

In addition, the reference to ‘early morning’ evokes an image of a new awakening - something bright, fresh and arousing – the ‘once-upon-a-time’ of this particular tourist dream. And so, in these two brief extracts are allusions to fantasies of privilege and position (collected and transported); to us and them (the flexible, enthusiastic, humanitarian ‘you’ and the ‘needing help’ Khmer); to adventure and discovery (early mornings; locals/natives; Feeding Dreams). Together these help to construct a vision of a fantastical and exciting vacation; of a ‘seemingly benign’ activity that is the antithesis to child abuse. Nonetheless, here too can be recognised “unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people” (Young, 1990) as presented in Harvey’s (1990) notion of civilised oppression.

Further down the webpage, potential volunteer tourists are told that they are required to pay (what is describe as) ‘a one off compulsory donation’ for the

⁴ Transport here is provided by tuk tuk, a modern adaptation of a rickshaw-styled vehicle.

volunteering element of their stay. The use of the term 'donation' (combined with 'compulsory', forming rather a clumsy oxymoron) helps both to alleviate, I suggest, some of the awkwardness of the economic exchange in this context, as well as constructing/endorsing a 'humanitarian', 'principled' (fantasy) image of self. As Campbell (1993) argues in his thesis on the relationship between romance and consumption, "in order to bolster and protect the idealized self-image the individual must...engage in some-character-confirming conduct; it becomes necessary to 'do good' in order to retain the conviction that one is good' (p:214). Making a donation, rather paying a price, becomes a significant part of the 'doing good' fantasy - at the same time working to conceal the commodification of the child in the activity. (Indeed, language is similarly used in other contexts where discussing money may be considered inappropriate, church 'retiring collections', for example).

For their money however (whether donation or payment), the tourist will receive an attractive range of services – "*Boy, have [they] got a vacation for you*" (Crichton, 1973). As Appadurai (2003) asserts, "services are a dominant, even definitive feature of the world of commodity exchange" (p:55). With 'Feeding Dreams' these services include:

Online support prior to your arrival; securing your accommodation; transfer from the airport; staff to look after you during your stay; orientation tour of Siem Reap town, and handy tips on services and restaurants; and, upon completion of your volunteer experience, you shall be presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for your kind donation and participation in our volunteering program for impoverished children (feedingdreamscambodia, 2012).

Once again the potential tourist can receive (here even prior) confirmation of entitlement; confidence in the provision of services of care and security and, affirmation that 'one is good' - here a certificate being tangible evidence of that goodness.

From the same homepage there is also a link to a four minute video of smiling 'impoverished children' eating bowls of watery soup; 'no child should attend school

hungry' (feedingdreamscambodia, 2012). There is no narration to accompany (or inform) the video, just the throbbing, upbeat soundtrack 'Superstar' - "If you are who you say you are, a superstar, then have no fear, the camera's here" (Fiasco, 2007). Here I argue the allusion to (volunteer tourist) superstardom closely resembles notions of heroism identified in studies of the experiences of volunteer overseas development workers (Heron, 2007; Hudson and Inkson, 2006; Osland, 1995). As Heron (2007) insists, "the former colonies remain implicitly presented as places for Northern "heroes" (p:36), whilst Osland (1995), found in her own study of volunteers in development work, that whilst no direct mention of the word 'hero' was made, narratives consistently contained what she describes as 'hero talk'. What is more, in Joseph Campbell's (1968) theorising of the heroic adventure, he identifies the common theme of going and returning - leaving from a familiar world; adventuring in another world and returning to the old familiar. These ideas, subtly (and sometimes not too subtly) intimated in much of this discourse, further develop the notion of a (heroic/superstar) touristic fantasy.

Yet another link from the 'Feeding Dreams Cambodia' home page (with its rolling header of tightly cropped images of 'poor' children) takes the potential volunteer tourist to the website of the projects 'partner' hotel - 'Side Walk Never Die' - where it is stated, volunteers are normally accommodated. The hotel claims to be:

Enchanting, peaceful, elegant, luxurious... Bound by the belief that every memorable journey is a symphony of intelligent designed, breathtaking discoveries, impeccable service and all, sincere connection between people, [Side Walk Never Die Hotel] embodies each little experience that define just that we open our arms in warm embrace to people that matter most to us...you. It's all intended to transport you away to the culture and lifestyle of the Khmer people (sidewalkneverdie, 2013).

Here again the intimate tone - 'we open our arms... to you'; 'we look after and support you during your stay' - establishes warmth and welcome creating the impression that 'your' personal holiday fantasy is what really matters. At the same time however, it may be argued that the language also contains a number of 'reassuring markers' (Mocini, 2005) which offset what may be viewed as the negative aspects of adventure and journeys of discovery in less explored places

(risk, insecurity, discomfort), with messages of care, protection and standards that benefit 'you'. As Azarya (2004) describes, although the search for difference and a wider experience are characteristic of much international tourism, many vacationers are reluctant to "relinquish the comforts and security of the familiar" (p:950) – familiar food (to a degree), hot showers, the ability to contact home, for example. This often results in amenities being 'transported' to or re-created in destinations (the KFC, internet cafes and pizzerias on Siem Reap's Pub Street; the air conditioning in hotels and guest houses). It is also argued that the fragmented, slightly faulty syntax adds an endearing quality that works to construct the land-faraway fantasy element of this vacation choice; a volunteering vacation at 'Feeding Dreams Cambodia' and a stay at the 'Side Walk Never Die' hotel.

Finally, from all of the 'Feeding Dreams Cambodia' extracts above, it is only with the word 'impoverished' that the allusion of magic and enchantment is at all disturbed (and even here the same children are also described as 'highly active and happy'). But as (just the right amount of) impoverish-ness is also part of the volunteer tourist fantasy, this morsel (together with the smiling faces of the 'impoverished children') serves only to whet the appetites of potential vacationers. I will return to the contention that it is 'just the right amount of poverty' that must be presented to the tourist consumer later.

'Feeding Dreams Cambodia' is however, in no way an exceptional example of the entangled illusions in volunteer tourism discourse, nor of the difficult associations between hunger and elegance; need and luxurious living. Neither is this volunteer vacation provider unique in its assumptions and unquestioned norms (Young, 1990); of the 'benign' concealing unequal/harmful/wrong/cruel relationships between those in need and the cheerful benevolent. Indeed, similar referents were found to be no less common in the volunteer tourist's own descriptions of their hopes for, and reflective accounts of, their vacations. Themes of desire, longing and semi-spiritual relationships, for example, were frequently observed in these narratives. In many of the discussions and interviews with participants, notions of fulfilling a fantasy or a long held desire were often expressed. It is the expressions in these narratives that will now be considered.

Truly amazing, magical feelings

The discussion now turns to the participants and their expressions of the desire to fulfilling dreams in narratives of their volunteer vacations in Siem Reap. Many recounted a deep and emotional longing - sometimes described as a dream – when talking about how they chose this particular vacation path. Others described an almost magical serendipity to their presence in Siem Reap; most, however, offered at least one fantastical reference about their vacation.

I begin with Lynette from Australia. A woman in her late fifties, Lynette is a retired market gardener who had travelled alone to Siem Reap although she had regular Skype contact with her two sons who she related, “think I’m mad for coming here by myself but actually they couldn’t do a thing about it [laughs]”. Lynette talked about how she came from a small town in Australia where children generally had ‘good backgrounds’ and, as she described, “mostly more than they need of just about everything”. She also told me about a (new) dream she was having since she arrived in Siem Reap of “getting a group of the kids together from [her home town] who think they are hard-done-by and bringing them out here to see what hard-done-by really is. Kids back home need to take a look at the kids out here and appreciate what they’ve got”. Whilst the theme of ‘knowing how lucky you are’ is reoccurring volunteer tourism discourse in general, here Lynette takes this one step further in considering how the circumstances of the disadvantaged can be put to use to help the advantaged appreciate how good *their* lives are. This view was often repeated in conversation with tourists in Cambodia.

I asked Lynette what made her want to come to Siem Reap. She told me that some years ago she had read the biography of a ‘backpacking granny’ which, she said, inspired her to volunteer in an orphanage. Lynette recalled how:

...when I finished the book I had this urge that just wouldn’t go away... unless I did something about it...I had to do something... So I knew when I got the opportunity I had to come and do it... I just had to follow my dream. And while I wanted to visit Cambodia to experience a new culture... along with some

travelling ... I also had a deep desire to help young disadvantaged Cambodians...

Campbell (1993) makes the link between “a longing to experience in reality those pleasures created and enjoyed in [the] imagination” (p:205) and modern consumerism’s role in attending to these fantasies. Lynette had imagined herself as another ‘backpacking granny’ and longed to imitate or even emulate a woman she had come to admire. By deciding to take a volunteer vacation in an orphanage in Siem Reap she hoped to satisfy her fantasy and make her dream come true. As Dann (1996) contends, tourists are often motivated to travel in order to engage in (fantasy) activities that it would not be possible to participate in, in their home environments. Whilst Lynette could have found young disadvantaged people in Australia to help, this would not, however, have fulfilled the travelling-to-help fantasy born in the pages of the book that initially inspired her.

Whilst Lynette was fixed on Cambodia as her destination of choice, other volunteers were, however, less precise about the location for their dreams (although most were focused on helping poor or disadvantaged children) and would have considered ‘anywhere’ in the ‘Third World’. Nor did these volunteer tourists claim (as Lynette did) that they had any idea where the feelings had come from - although invariably they said that the feelings were very strong. Their inspiration, as they often described it, seemed to have come from somewhere outside and beyond the normal ‘benign’ act of choosing a holiday; again suggestive of something mystical, perhaps even semi-spiritual in the way they had come to select their vacation activity.

Kate, for example, told of her volunteering experience coming about in an extraordinary way. A twenty-five year old woman with a degree in law, she described how she had always wanted to ‘do’ some volunteering with children. Having considerable traveller experience, Kate said that on ‘her other travels’ she had often looked for opportunities to volunteer but had been unsuccessful until she went to Siem Reap. On the last few days of her trip around South East Asia, and due back at work in the U.K. very shortly, she ‘discovered’ a chance to volunteer at

an orphanage in the town. Kate, however, describes a serendipitous series of events that made her feel as if (as she told me) “this was meant to happen” – a broken down minibus; spotting a small, torn notice on the wall at her guest house; more than two chance encounters with people already involved with the orphanage; another volunteer tourist leaving that very day and there being no replacement (“absolutely no-one else”). As a result of these chance happenings and encounters, Kate cancelled flights; made calls home and to her employers; extended her trip; paid her money to the orphanage manager and started the long desired volunteering element of her vacation.

Kate’s feeling of her volunteering experience being something that was ‘meant to happen’ adds a magical dimension to her understanding of her time at the orphanage. The mechanisms of consumerism that led to the fulfilment of her fantasy were not acknowledged. However, earlier in the interview Kate had described how:

When I first planned about travelling [in South East Asia] I always wanted to do some volunteering but I didn’t want to do what a girl I know called Linda did which was pay upfront £2000, everything sorted out, because when I finished university I [had paid] a company and then I was teaching in China for like a term and it cost a couple of thousand pounds but for me I needed that support [then]. I needed to know what school I was going to be at and that sort of thing, yeah. But... I thought I’m not doing this for volunteering [in Cambodia] because that money... goes for admin [to] whichever western company is sorting it out here [in the UK]. I would rather just do it on my own, if possible.

Kate fails to see (or perhaps denies) the significance of economic conduct in the realization of her longing to volunteer with children, preferring to understand her experience as something that happened almost magically; inevitably destined to be. Ultimately too, when recounting the story of how she came to volunteer with orphans in Cambodia, the fantasy narrative is far more appealing (and cheaper) than a version that tells of another payment of £2000 to another volunteer vacation provider (as in her previous experience in China).

I found the sense of the vacation fantasy to be common in volunteer tourism discourse; at times volunteer tourist testimonies, for example, being almost semi-spiritual in nature (these particular types of testimonies being used extensively by volunteer vacation companies on their websites and in publicity). The sometimes fantastical accounts, further fuel both the illusion and the desire to be part of the fantasy; orphanages in The 'Exotic Kingdom of Wonder' becoming the sensuous place "in which fantasy [can] be enacted and the illusion of freedom... be pursued" (Dann, 2000, p:369). The following testimonies from the website of WLS International, Gap year in Asia – "a not-for-profit volunteer abroad organization for affordable volunteer work programs" (gapyearinasia, 2012) - are typical examples of this evocative imagery in volunteer tourism discourse (here vacation 'programs' are available from as little as one week):

My travels in Southeast Asia would have been incomplete without volunteering in Cambodia; it was a life changing experience. I felt like a real part of the effort to revitalize a country and its people (Shelley).

It was a magical feeling... that has changed my life (Cia).

The orphanage in Siem Reap where I volunteered ... is set among rice fields in an open and breezy picturesque surrounding. The serenity that surrounds it is calming and takes you far away from this chaotic world. I spent two lovely weeks teaching the children and everyday as I walked down the open road along rice paddies towards the classroom ... the children ride their bikes alongside me full of smiles and waving frantically in the air eager to get to class, I realize that what I am doing and what I am able to give them is truly amazing and such a priceless experience (Tom).

Teaching English to the students in Siem Reap, Cambodia ... was by far one of the greatest things I have done in my life.... a truly life-enriching experience (Jade)

Colin Campbell (2008) talks about a "romantic world-view [that] provides the highest possible motive with which to justify day-dreaming, longing and the rejection of reality" and out of which "dynamic consumerism" (p:201) can flourish. In Tom's account of his volunteering experience above, for example, he refers to 'the serenity' in his daily walk to the orphanage; of discovering calmness in the 'priceless experience' that helped take him 'far away from this chaotic world'. This

emotional imagery – as identified in Campbell’s ‘romantic world-view’ (1992) – was again a recurring theme in many reflections and accounts of vacationing experiences. Removed geographically from our normal lives, volunteer tourists gain access to another (fantasy) reality. As Dann (1977) has also argued, “the fantasy world of travel seeks to overcome the humdrum, [Tom’s ‘chaotic world’] the normlessness and meaningless of life, with more satisfying experiences” (p:188) [Tom’s ‘truly amazing.. priceless experience’ at the orphanage in the rice fields].

As it is presented (and represented) that the simple consumption of a tourist product is capable of producing such ‘amazing’ outcomes for the consumer, it is not surprising that expressions of ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ or of ‘life changing experiences’ are also commonplace in the discourse; the ‘happy-ending’ trope enhancing the notion of a fantasy fairy-tale. Jade above even goes as far as stating that her ‘life-enriching’ experience was ‘by far one of the greatest things [she had] done in [her] life’. When I interviewed Robyn, a retired nurse from Eire, she talked with equal passion about how she had dreamt of doing something ‘like this’ for years. I met and spoke to her within a few days of her arriving in Siem Reap and beginning her volunteer vacation. Robyn told me with much enthusiasm that her short time at the orphanage “just feels like a dream come true... I’ve been nipping myself since I arrived”. (I noted in my fieldwork diary that “she almost seems to be physically bouncing with excitement. I felt like I wanted to hold her down in case she floated away”.)

Marketing material for volunteer vacations in poor schools or orphanages in Siem Reap is infused with allusions of the fantastical; of dreams fulfilled; of desire and longing; of sentimentality and semi-spiritual experiences. In the tourists’ accounts of their hopes for, and reflections of their vacation experiences, almost mirror-image claims were also made. (This does raise questions as to the direction of travel of these dominant expressions.) Echtner and Prasad (2003) argue that “the vast majority of Third World destination marketing is created and distributed by First World promoters who are economically motivated to sell a particular brand of fantasy to a First World market” (p:661). This fantasy branding is in no way less

evident in the volunteer tourist trend. Indeed, as I will go on to argue in the next section of this chapter, the added ingredient here of the innocent but impoverished child, appears to intensify rather than dilute the anticipation and delight of this fantasy.

'Cute enough to eat': Children consumed as morsels of exotic otherness

An examination of the mainstream tourist literature for Cambodia produces an array of examples that indicate that exotic-ness is highly placed in the country's fantasy appeal. This is perhaps not too surprising as the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism itself markets the country as an exotic Kingdom of Wonder – 'vibrant culture, authentic cuisine and rural charm'(CMT,2103). Significantly however, in this discussion of commodifying people for tourist consumption, alongside its scenery, culture, fauna and flora, the vision of the exotic extends here to its population (Said, 2003); and through the marketing of volunteer tourism, to Cambodia's 'poor and orphaned' children. For example, this four week volunteer vacation in a poor school in Siem Reap (cost around £1000, not including flights, visas, insurance, food and spending money), is recommended on the following premise:

Visit the alluring and exotic country of Cambodia and discover its incredible combination of dramatic landscapes, captivating cultural and historical heritage, and friendly people... [F]all in love... with its fascinating and intoxicating eastern culture... [and] bring hope to [its] impoverished children, giving them the love and affection that they have been denied for much of their lives. (frontier, 2009)

Not only are the impoverished children available for volunteer tourist consumption, but also the 'love and affection' that the western tourists will 'give', is presented as the only love and affection the children may ever have received. This can be juxtaposed with findings from the 2011 UNICEF report, *With the Best Intentions: A Study of Attitudes Towards Residential Care in Cambodia* where it was claimed that children in orphanages, for example, complained about "the inequality of affection" (p:9) as well as missing their families. The assumptions made by vacation providers can be linked to what Macedo (1999) has described in colonial theory as an 'ideological yardstick' against which others can be measured

and (by distinction) found wanting (Viruru, 2005). I suggest here that this compelling marketing model of a contemporary tourist fantasy subtly reproduces notions of Western or 'First World' capability to set against the deficiencies of impoverished (but friendly) others who have (as represented) denied their children love.

Furthermore, whilst here the image of 'eastern culture' is presented as a thing that is capable of 'intoxicating' the volunteer tourist, for bell hooks (1992) the consumption of the 'exotic other', can also be considered around images of edibility. She argues that, "within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture" (hooks, 1992, p:341). (It is interestingly how hooks reclaims the food metaphor - argued to be "among the most vexing clichés of post-colonial[ism]" (Wagner, 2007, p:31) - to reveal the pervasiveness of exotification as played out in modern consumption.) Volunteer tourism marketing and NGO literature reveals an array of exotifying references for Cambodia and its people, a number of which echo hook's notion of the edible appeal of exotic otherness; some also employing culinary imagery.

Promoting volunteering vacations in Cambodia – mostly to orphanages and poor schools - these include well-used metaphors such as "the world's your oyster" (statravel, 2012; realgap, 2012); "take in... the flavours of Cambodia" (Habitat for Humanity®, 2012); "get a real taste of the country" (projects-abroad, 2012); "do you have the thirst for adventure/an appetite for volunteering?" (studyabroad, 2012; Johnson, 2011) and "there are so many ways to volunteer... [it can make you] feel like a child in a sweet shop" (i-to-i, 2012). ('Feeding Dreams Cambodia' as discussed above, also fits well here). Such language is intended to attract and appeal to the potential volunteer tourist and boost interest in the country, its people and, significantly its children. Perhaps the most uncomfortable metaphor I have as yet come across was on a French NGO web-site. In its December 2011 newsletter, this organisation (which recruits summer camp volunteer tourists to work with 'poor' children in Cambodia), claims that the children in their care are

“cute enough to eat... each one more adorable than the other” (Pour un Sourire d'Enfant, 2011, p:1).

From within this general discourse are indicators of the ‘seemingly benign’ in the act of volunteering (there are so many ways to do it...); of a lack of dignity afforded to the children in their representations as cute enough to eat; of the civilised oppression in the cultural stereotyping (alluring, exotic, intoxicating...) and, of the notion of poverty (even of love being denied) as an enticement to a ‘delicious’ fantasy vacation. But what these examples also indicate, is that objectification and commodification allows that these children (and no less others in other ‘Third World’ volunteer tourist destinations) are seen to signify (and as such able to be consumed as) morsels of exotic other-ness.

As morsels - an expression that indicates both size and appeal - the children are symbolic of things that are small enough to be held, as well as (consumable) things that can be enjoyed and savoured.⁵ Despite the uneasiness of this description, these are nonetheless characteristics that I found to be endlessly (re)produced in volunteer tourism discourse both by the industry and by consumers in accounts and reflections of their experiences. In marketing literature, NGO newsletters and websites, travel blogs, guidebooks and on orphanage or project flyers left in hotel information stands, words that evoke size and appeal (and often edibility) are frequently used to describe children; ‘cute’, ‘adorable’, ‘charming’, ‘delightful’, ‘enchanted’ and, ‘such sweet little things’⁶, to name but a few.

Although children are of course by nature small, it is charm as an idealised feature of the diminutive in combination with the notion of exotic other-ness, that here raises questions of dignity and respect; of the ontological ambiguity of the child

⁵ Morsel is also an Irish informal term of endearment for a child.

⁶ Size and appeal are even evoked in the name of an area of Phnom Penh known for child prostitution - ‘The Street of Little Flowers’ (Flamm, 1997),

(child as commodity; child as person; child as poor; child as available?); of the manner in which children can be viewed as objects that are easily accessed through straightforward economic exchange - a volunteering vacation at a Cambodian orphanage chosen, booked and paid for in no time at all – and of the notion of the consumption of children as an exotic tourist pleasure. What is at work here I am suggesting, is more than (benign) holidaymaking or “trivial entertainment” (Giroux, 2000, p:58). The children of Siem Reap, much like Giroux’s example of the manufactured nymphets on the American beauty pageant circuit, are being presented as objects of appeal, the ‘harmlessness’ of which conceals negligence, exploitation and potential damage to their development and/or dignity (WHO, 2013).

Reinforcing the language of “consumer cannibalism” (hooks, 2000, p:351), in most examples an abundance of accompanying photographic images - predominantly of young(er), large-eyed children, mostly looking directly into the lens – also work to convince the potential volunteer tourist of the appeal of these ‘good enough to eat’ exotic little things. As Dann (1996) argues however, “where photographs are featured, almost without exception they appear in tandem with a verbal message” (p:188) and so it is by combining the verbal and the iconographic that vacation providers are able to both create and offer these morsels of exotic otherness for volunteer tourist consumption. (Comments posted against photographs of children with volunteers on social networking sites also offer disturbing juxtaposes in this respect but for ethical reasons fall outside the data source of this study.) Whilst the role of the photograph in the volunteering vacation will be dealt with in the next chapter of this thesis, there are a number of points that are particularly relevant to the discussion here and now.

As described, I found in my investigations that these images often show volunteer tourists together with the children; children being held, cuddled, played with, carried, indulged. Arguably, this makes use of an oriental/occidental dualism (Said, 2003) to emphasize the appeal of the exotic. Perhaps most significantly however, these photographs indicate, once again the ease of access to the children for the

consumer (try one for size; one size fits all). Central to this marketing communication are the subtle linguistic and visual codes concealed in the advertisements – the tightly cropped shots suggesting intimacy and closeness; the contrast between large (adults) and small (children) reinforcing the notion of the morsel or just a taste of the exotic and, the distinctions made between the dullness of whiteness (including the routines of home and work life) and the spiciness of ethnicity (hooks, 1992) in the exotic novelty of a Cambodian orphanage or school and its small inhabitants. Interesting, babies are not as common a theme in volunteer tourism marketing (although by no means absent). Perhaps in babies the morsel becomes something too delicate and too fragile, adding an intimation of responsibility and liability that is not quite as appealing in the notion of the ideal vacation?

Finally, when considering the consumption of (here little bits of) exotic otherness, it has been interesting to observe the emotional language used to describe encounters with the children. Referring to things being consumed, Tim Edwards (2000) argues that “there are strong associations with food and drink and with love and passion” (p:10) and this association, identified as a theme in the analysis, also makes connections with the consumption of children as morsels. Love, for example is an emotion I found to be regularly referred to when describing experiences with children. In interviews, in conversation and in testimonies, expressions such as ‘loving the children to bits’ (again small pieces of) or ‘absolutely adoring them’, were frequently made or heard. Kelly a young Irish volunteer tourist, like many others I spoke to, talked about ‘falling in love with the place – the country, Siem Reap, the orphanage, the children’. Many of these ‘gushing’ sentiments also appear in the marketing literature where arguably they may also provide an emotional template that potential volunteers can draw on, make comparisons with and, perhaps later, go on to emulate.

Many of the volunteers who I spoke to or interviewed in Siem Reap were also keen to share the depth of emotion they felt towards the children they encountered in the orphanages or schools. Kate, for example, described how, “literally in the space

of one day I fell in love with the kids”; Heather specifically focused on one child that she felt she became very close to during her volunteering vacation at the same orphanage - “I adored that child, I adored him. We were attached, completely... from day one, attached”. Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant (2002) argue that economic exchanges involving commodified people are often “masked as love, altruism, pleasure, and kindness” (p:2) and this argument appears to be reflected in many of the sentiments expressed by volunteer tourists like Kate and Heather and no less in the taken-for-granted positive view of volunteer tourism. (In conversations about my own experience as a volunteer, many people commented that this was something they would really ‘love’ to do themselves). Finally, as these emotions were often described as appearing almost instantaneously, a love-at-first-sight trope further adds to the notion of the (romantic) fantasy vacation.

The bodies of children as consumable products of childhood innocence

Henry Giroux (2000) warns of the dangers of taking the notion of innocence too lightly (and it is worth a little repetition at this stage):

[I]nnocence is a highly charged term that points to paedophiles and sexual perverts as the most visible threats to children... [However,] [s]uch a restricted notion of innocence fails to understand how child abuse connects to and works its way through the most seemingly benign of cultural spheres... [A] politics of innocence need[s] to address why, how, and under what conditions the marketing of children’s bodies increasingly permeates diverse elements of society (p:61/2)

In this section I will develop the argument that the bodies of Cambodian children can be consumed as symbols of childhood innocence, based on the contention that both innocence and ‘nostalgia for childhood innocence’ have significant appeal in this vacation option. Volunteer tourism in destinations like Siem Reap I argue, provides a (re)connection to childhood innocence that may be in part a reaction to a fear and sadness at the passing of childhood - both personal and societal - as well as in part a symptom of a nostalgia for childhood innocence itself. As Fiona Kearney asserts, “we are all linked to representations of childhood – we simultaneously see real children, fictional characters and mirrors of past selves” (Kearney, 2005, p:13).

Contemporary western society can be said to have inherited two clear representations of children and childhood, chiefly defined in terms of innocence and temporality. Innocence, on the one hand is also capable of emphasizing vulnerability and helplessness and, as such, an assumed need for adult intervention (Edstrom et al. 2008; Richter & Norman 2010); temporality on the other, highlights that special place and time that eventually comes to an end (but significantly a place and a time that as adults, we have all already passed through). Referring to Dann's (1977) push-pull model for understanding tourist motivation, innocence and temporality provide powerful push factors for indulging in this complex tourist-fantasy. The desire, for example, to (re)connect with the nostalgia of childhood innocence (easily, temporarily and rewardingly) responds to the 'anomie' (Dann, 1977) inherent in a sadness and fear of *'The Disappearance of Childhood'* (Postman, 1994) from contemporary western culture.

Volunteering vacation companies, many veiled, I would argue, as the facilitators of 'benign' vacations for the concerned tourist, must woo potential consumers into purchasing *their* specific commodity from a very busy marketplace. To this end, many providers – as I have tried to show - take advantage of both the appeal and the nostalgia of childhood innocence. I argue, however, that as a consequence of this strategy, both vacationers and providers often fail "to understand how child abuse connects to and works its way through [this] seemingly benign" (Giroux, 2000, p:61/2) of vacation choices. During a two week volunteering vacation (where pre-departure orientation includes 'What to expect in Siem Reap with regards to the people, town layout including restaurants/bars/clubs/banks') this particular company claims that volunteer tourists:

...can feed, house, protect and educate the innocent, underprivileged, disabled, distraught, and displaced child. They can give hope, help, and direction through education, training, assistance, and love... No specific skills or qualifications are required except the volunteers must be friendly, loving, caring (travellersquest, 2012).

This extract, I now argue, illustrates Giroux's (2000) concern that "marked as innately pure and passive, children are ascribed the right of protection but are, at

the same time, denied a sense of agency and autonomy” (p:2). Furthermore, that the innocent child is presented here virtually as ‘play-thing’ (the ‘friendly’ volunteer is able to ‘feed, house and protect... through love’) lacks reflection of the potential consequences of this type of no–skills-required, ‘revolving door’ (high and constant turn-over of adult contact) involvement in the lives of these children. And that the children are represented as ‘innocent’, I also argue, highlights the spectacle of their helplessness and justifies the imposition of the volunteer tourists into their lives.

Again as Giroux (2000) argues, adults are protected from the reality of their actions but, I would also add, from the irony of the inequitable chasm between the society from which the volunteer tourist hails and that of the ‘innocent’ child that their vacation choice allows them to ‘feed, house, protect and educate’. Here too connections can once again be made to both Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence (2007) and Harvey’s (1999) concept of *civilised oppression*; to the “unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people” (Young, 1990) and, those unchallenged injustices perceived as natural (Bourdieu, 2007).

Natural childhoods

Henry A. Giroux (2000) describes, “childhood innocence,” [as being] constructed around the notion that both childhood and innocence reflect aspects of a natural state, one that is beyond the dictates of history, society and politics” (p:2). The volunteer tourist (fantasy) experience it is argued, (expressed as it is, as a non-political action) allows (re)entry, indulgence and participation in a (perceived) ‘natural state’ of childhood innocence that modernity - it has been claimed - has already eroded (Postman, 1994). What I discovered, when thinking about the consumption of childhood innocence in this study, was that allusions to this ‘natural state’ were often made visible in volunteer tourist behaviour and volunteer tourism discourse. A recurring theme in participants’ narratives, for example, expressed notions of childhood in terms of something natural and, significantly often of something lost. I will return to the notion of childhoods lost in the next section.

Volunteers often talked to me about games they played as children or songs they enjoyed singing when they were young. Observing English lessons in poor schools and orphanage classrooms (and even on occasions where adults were being taught) 'old favourites' were almost without exception being used (indeed I would generally begin my own classes in Siem Reap in this way). So popular were some, that these songs have become a ubiquitous part of the children's English language repertoire; indeed, a number of entries in my fieldwork diary identifies occasions where the terms 'head-shoulders-knees-and-toes brigade' or the 'if-you're-happy-and-you-know-it crowd' were used by NGO managers or expatriates to describe volunteer tourists to me. This is also consistent with the marketed and generally held contention that no special skills are required to become a volunteer tourist – as well as with a concern that volunteer teaching often lacks structure or curriculum planning.

In interviews as well as observations, childhood expressed as a nostalgic natural state, was identified and documented as a theme that extended well beyond isolated volunteer tourist accounts of their experiences. The following extracts however, provide examples of where these patterns were observed and how they were communicated. The first discussion with Elliot exemplifies how (nostalgic) feelings for how childhood 'should be', were evoked for some tourists during their volunteering vacations. Elliot, a twenty year old male volunteer from the U.K., told me that he had previously worked as a councillor on a Camp America scheme. During our discussions he frequently compared the children he worked with in America with the children at the orphanage in Siem Reap. On one occasion Elliot commented that at camp (in the USA), in stark contrast to Cambodia, children were excessively privileged but for him this privilege did not represent his own model of an ideal childhood:

They [the Cambodian orphans] seemed very happy, very like kids.... What took me by surprise was... I felt more sorry for the affluent children in a way than I did for the Cambodians. You know they've [children at Camp America] been brought up by nannies and they get shipped off to camp and away from their families for six weeks in the summer... I don't know, I ended up feeling like the Cambodian situation was much more natural, it's

much more like.... real childhood. That was my image of childhood. Much more about climbing trees and hanging out and you know, running with friends in the street and stuff rather than... well, being very closely watched by a group of teenagers [camp councillors]... you know the whole camp councillor situation doesn't seem to be incredibly... natural...yeah, the Cambodian thing felt sort of natural to me.

I would argue that, in distinguishing between the 'closely watched' children at summer camp and what he describes as the more natural state of childhood enjoyed by the Cambodian orphans, challenged Elliot's thinking about privilege as well as what constitutes (for him) 'real childhood'. That the freedom to run and climb and hang-out with friends was articulated as a state preferable to being 'closely watched' (seen by American parents as security and protection) although privileged in every other (perceived) sense, provides an insight into how nostalgic images of childhood can be related to independence and a detachment from adult supervision and over-protection – a *Famous Five* (Blyton, 2009) imagery, we may say, of growing up.

But Elliot's feelings also raise important questions of context and geographical focus. The western notion of children considered as pure and innocent and as such in need of protection, highlights the argument that growing up in Cambodia for example, cannot be neatly compared with growing up in America or Australia or the U.K.; "that the conditions and shape of childhood ... are sensitive to population-specific contexts and are not comprehensible without detailed knowledge of the socially and culturally organized contexts that give them meaning" (LeVine, 2007, P:247). The nature of volunteer tourism however, demands an essentialised notion of childhood in order I suggest, to justify the no-skills-required condition of participation. By avoiding, or leaving unsaid, the complexities of cultural and geographical contexts - the difficulties and problems related to the multifaceted and intricate needs of Cambodian children – vacation providers can continue to highlight the capabilities of the tourists (as well as their right to intervene) and, not least, to allow the essence of these vacations as sites of pleasure and enjoyment to remain undisturbed and untroubled. At the same time too, this condition also reinforces the dualistic concept of us and them; the needy and the benevolent. In

this way, Elliot's feeling about, as he expressed, American children 'being shipped off' to camp for example, avoided application to Cambodian children who, in reality may also have been 'shipped' away from their families and communities to populate the tourist orphanages (UNICEF, 2011). Nonetheless, these views did not appear (for Elliot or other participants) to extend beyond personal connections to childhood and as such, once again serve to allow that any questioning of his/our own role in the wider lives of the children, be avoided.

Helen provides another example. Only seventeen years old when she had the chance to spend two weeks as a volunteer tourist as part of her school's religious education programme, this thoughtful young woman compared the lives of the young children she spent time with whilst volunteering and her contemporaries on the trip from U.K. with her. Like Elliot, Helen talked about these feelings without being prompted by interview questioning; indeed this area had not previously been considered in the interview planning. She spoke thoughtfully and reflectively about her own privileged life and the privileged lives of her public school companions in comparisons to the lives of the children at the orphanage:

I think in some ways they [the children at the orphanage] are almost the more developed because they live the way that people should live, they eat, they drink, they sleep... The world that we've created is so false and it's so manufactured and we shouldn't really live like this... in a way we 'delusionise' ourselves in the way we think about society... They live more like human beings should live..... The people in developed countries have different expectations that in a way aren't real because... I remember on the coach on the way back to the airport. It was like a two hour or three hour coach trip and I was the only person that didn't fall asleep... and I remember sitting there, and just thinking... I remember thinking how amazing life is and how those children [at the orphanage] live so differently, the way that children should live. And my friends were all asleep, I couldn't understand that...

Longings for the nostalgic imaginings of childhood seem to have made a connection here with both Elliot and Helen, although both appeared somewhat troubled by their reflections. Elliot's references to what he considers 'real childhood to be' and Helen's to 'people living the way that people should live', in this context can be

related to Giroux's (2000) description of 'a natural state' of childhood and innocence. That the consumption of a volunteering vacation can (re)connect with this sense of 'how things were and should be' is significant to the push factor of these vacations. And yet despite Elliot, Helen and many others I interviewed having made these potentially valuable observations, as Simpson (2005) argues in her studies of gap year programmes, the lack of any distinct learning strategy results in these vacations (*because* they are vacations) remaining largely "myopic" (p:467) and unreflexive.

Simpson (2005) concludes that neoliberal values and market place practices leave volunteers "unengaged with... the colonised and colonising geographies that [are] reproduce[d] in the process" (p:466). The very nature of these experiences as (unchallenged) consumable periods of pleasure, conceal the histories and conditions, I now argue, that create certain people as other. As such, volunteer tourism lacks pedagogical value – often expressed as learning about other people and cultures - that the marketing would have us believe (Simpson, 2005) is a reward of these vacations.

Innocence lost, innocence found – a background

When thinking about childhood innocence we often speak mournfully of innocence 'lost' or innocence 'stolen', implying that innocence is a thing that can be taken away, and by association, (and in the context of the volunteer tourist fantasy) a thing that can be given or taken back. Over the last half century, changes in 'First World' society have eroded notions of innocence and freedom that were once commonly associated with childhood. The power that corporate culture now exerts in reinterpreting "the terms through which children's experiences and identities are named, understood, and negotiated" (Giroux, 2000, p:16) is suggested as one contributing factor; high profile child murders such as that of James Bulger in 1993 for example, perhaps another. The extent to which innocence was formerly so firmly attached to childhood could be witnessed in the moral panic that occurred in the wake of this particular two year old boy's tragic killing; a murder in which significantly, the 'killers' were themselves children. Here the myth of childhood

innocence was not just eroded but entirely shattered. These two young murderers, it was argued “had killed not just a child but [also] the idea of childhood” (Morrison, 1998, p:21).

Retreat was made to the comfort of the nanny state and its (arguably) over-protected, over-observed, over-cosseted position regarding childhood and childhood innocence. The omnipresence of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) - formerly CRB - checks; increased CCTV monitoring in schools and play parks; a tightening of parental control; restrictions on how and where photographs of children can be taken and by whom, have all had a significant impact on adults’ relationships with children – mainly with other people’s children but also to a degree, relationships with our own children too. During the twenty five year career span of a school teacher or nursery nurse for example, there has been a considerable change in the basic interactions they can now have with the children in their care. Other factors have also affected shifts in relationships we have with children, even those who are close family members. These include for example, increased mobility; increased divorce rates; reduced numbers of child births; longer, more demanding careers; the changing role of women. The often resultant scattering or dissolving of family networks has made contact and relationships often more difficult here too.

Reconnecting with childhood innocence

What is pertinent to this thesis is the contention that now volunteer tourism offers (commercialised) opportunities to indulge in a (fantasy) notion of childhood innocence (in the ‘Third World’), the notion of which is considered to have been significantly eroded in the ‘First’. Volunteering experiences I found, allow tourists to reconnect with and consume childhood in a way that is largely unavailable ‘at home’ - and where opportunities do exist, exist in a way that is far less prohibitive than the contact levels that volunteer tourists can enjoy when abroad. Actions that are for the most part now considered inappropriate in ‘First World’ society - holding, cuddling, indulging, play fighting, photographing other people’s (strangers’) children - are all actions regularly engaged in (and encouraged) by

vacationers with children in orphanages and poor schools in 'Third World' volunteer tourist destinations. Erik Cohen (1988) argues that "for many tourists, tourism is a form of play (Cohen, 1985), which like all play, has profound roots in reality, but for the success of which a great deal of make-believe... is necessary" (p:383). Indeed, many vacation providers emphasise 'playing with the children' as one of the most appealing features of these holidays:

[your] role includes ... playing with children, basic teaching and giving general help (projects-abroad.co.uk, 2012)

You will also play with the children and be there for them and you may also assist with other tasks inside the school (volunteerhq.org, 2012).

During my fieldwork in Siem Reap this indulgence in childhood innocence was frequently observed in, for example (at times) excessive playfulness by volunteer tourists with Cambodian children. It was often young male volunteers (although not exclusively so) who were seen to engage in 'rough and tumble' type play - children turned and held upside down; carried around 'piggy-back'; play-fights and teasing or - as an entry in my fieldwork diary described - 'whipped into frenzies of excitement'. Websites and travel blogs, as well as marketing literature, carry numerous images of volunteer tourists involved in these types of activities. Posted on the Facebook page of one volunteer vacation provider that welcomes 'all ages, abilities and backgrounds' of volunteer tourist for example, is a photograph of a group of Cambodian boys and two young volunteers completely caked in mud after what appears to have been a particularly energetic game in a pile of wet dirt. I showed this image to a Cambodian woman at my guesthouse and noted in my fieldwork diary, her marked disapproval - "this is not good... [these children] have only two sets of clothes and no wash machine, just the river and hard work of women to make these clean," she said to me.

Whilst it may seem trivial to be critical of what could be described as 'children having fun', how far the ability to indulge in these rough and tumble play sessions - as a significant part of the commodity that is volunteer tourism - makes use of the

bodies of Cambodian children as an element of the vacation fantasy of 'childhood innocence rediscovered', is what most interests me here. As Giroux (2000) contends, a "politics of innocence" (p:61) needs to understand how these 'seemingly benign' actions make connection with an abuse of the (innocent) child. Here the children's vulnerability and personhood is arguably neglected in much of this enthusiastic consumption and their development exposed to considerable risk from the "indiscriminate affection" (UNICEF, 2011) offered to them by (constantly appearing and disappearing) volunteer tourists.

Referring to the (abusive) "potential harm to the child's development" (WHO, 2013) for example, Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) is a behaviour disorder often identified in children lacking a consistency of affection frequently associated with revolving-door care provision (Bowlby, 1951; Rutter and O'Connor, 1999; Tizard and Hodges, 1989; Tizard and Rees, 1975). RAD has been identified in vulnerable children with high turnover volunteer tourist contact in Siem Reap (UNICEF, 2011). The representation and consumption of children as play-things is the embodiment of exploitation; of "gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims" (Bourdieu, 2007, p:1); of "deep injustices suffer[ed] as a consequence of [the] assumptions of well-meaning people" (Young, 1990, p:41). The temporal character of the vacation allows the volunteer tourist to exploit what Lash and Urry (1994) describe as the 'liminal zone', "where some of the rules and restrictions of routine life are relaxed and replaced by different norms of behaviour" (p:235). Only within this zone – in part because of the (known) temporality of the vacation to the consumer - can volunteers engage in this fantasy of childhood innocence; here again the children's "bodies existing for the use and pleasure of others" (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p:175).

For the children, however, their reality - but for the 'toing and froing' of demonstrative adults - remains largely unchanged; varied only by the arrival of the next group of enthusiastic volunteers and a now increased desire for attention and (at times culturally dubious) fun. What I argue is that when this 'play-time' is linked to the question of 'just *what* is being consumed', connections can be made

between the eager indulgence in childhood innocence - accessed by the tourist consumer via the availability of the bodies of children in a (temporal and unchecked) exotic holiday zone - and the notion of abuse. And secondly, when a recognition of this link is made, the helpful, heroic mantras ('making a world of difference', 'lifting children out of poverty') can be troubled and the very process and implementation of volunteer vacationing (for the vacationer and for the child) can be revealed – we arrive/they appear; we have our fantasy/they indulge us; we leave/they disappear; we return home better people/little changes.

An appendix: 'Next slide please' and child protection.

Before I draw this chapter to a conclusion it is important to append here that many projects offering volunteering vacations do address child protection and child abuse issues. As has been discussed above however, many regard child abuse as being primarily a matter of the potential threats to children by 'paedophiles and sexual perverts' (Giroux, 2000) - as such, the abuse in the 'seemingly benign' activity of volunteer tourism (which I have drawn attention to here) remains unnoticed. This again makes links with the notion of discursive silences and those things that are left unsaid but nonetheless "function alongside the things said" (Foucault, 1990, p:27). However, during my fieldwork and having taken the opportunity to examine a number of child protection policies (and more importantly, the enactment of these policies) I conclude that at times these procedures are established as much through an understanding of market requirements - and the pressure to be seen to have these procedures in place - as through the conduct of good practice. For example, one of the questions it is now recommended potential volunteer tourists ask in order to identify a 'good' organisation to volunteer with is, "Do you have a child protection policy?" (travel-peopleandplaces, 2013). However, unless the complexities and broadness of child protection issues (and as such abuse) are understood (the intricacies of which have been introduced here) then promoting a rhetoric of ethical credibility is, I would argue, simply another "advantage that adds up to a profitable business case for responsible tourism" (WTM, 2012, p:5).

To illustrate this I wish to refer to one occasion during my fieldwork when I was able to observe a briefing which detailed a project's child protection policy. It took place at an NGO that relies almost entirely for financial support on the fees from volunteer tourists and is considered to be a 'good' project by those advocating 'responsible' volunteering practise in the area. The briefing was led by Dave - a British expatriate - who described himself as 'the second boss here' and the child protection element of his presentation is transcribed in entirety and verbatim:

So child protection, I will make a point of it now. The safety of our children is paramount. Everything we do here is about never having anybody, any of us alone with a child in a room where they cannot be seen. It's for your safety as well as our safety and we always make sure we have two people in a room, if it's in a closed room where they can't be seen with a child. It's very difficult to do here, there are only about four places you can do it, be alone in a room with a child where you can't be seen [because] you will see all our classrooms are open and airy. The only place you can do it is the toilets, the library and the medical room really so you're not likely to be there with a child. That's the way we work it here, so... we're quite happy for you to take any pictures you like here of the children and everything. We prefer not individual close up pictures and we will be very angry if you put them on the 'net' with any names because it makes them a target so we're quite serious about that. Don't worry though about taking pictures, every parent of our children has signed to say it's ok for us to take their picture for advertising and everything else but the safety of our children is paramount. Next slide please....

A number of points from this extract allow me to reinforce a number of the points made in this chapter, not least the very thinness of the briefing which arguably demonstrates thinness in the understanding of the complexities of child protection and by association child abuse. The dominant theme of this presentation, I would suggest, is reassurance for the tourist that their own protection is prioritised highly here. This is given expression in terms and inferences such as: 'your safety'; 'you're not likely to be there'; 'don't worry about taking pictures' and, 'every parent has signed'. Reassurance is even offered in the curious suggestion that the project site physically limits opportunities for you 'to do it here'. Comfort then can be taken in the awareness of the projects interest in protecting 'you' (leading us to ask, just who these policies are designed to most protect?)

However, it is the implication that (at this project) child protection is almost entirely concerned with avoiding intimate contact (or the accusation of) between the tourist and the child that again highlights Giroux's (2000) concern. This is further emphasised in the references to photography and 'preferring no individual close-ups' and 'no names on the net' which would make the children 'targets' (it takes little imagination to deduce what is being referred to here). That parents - it was reassuringly offered - had signed to allow ('our') children to be photographed for advertising makes an explicit connection between commodity and consumption but also between western ways of knowing and doing. (This is common practice in U.K. schools and children's clubs, for example.) Interestingly, in direct contrast it claimed on this project's website that high levels of illiteracy in the community mean that many parents are so "poorly educated [they] do not realise the importance of clean drinking water" (gracehousecambodia, 2012). Against this assertion, that the same parents are required 'to sign' to allow the child to be photographed 'for advertising' purposes, appears to me both feeble surety and an uneasy paradox.

In summary

Anne Higonnet (1998) argues in her study of childhood innocence and the concept's place in modern Western culture that, "the ideal of the child as object of adoration has turned all too easily into the concept of child as object, and then into the marketing of the child as commodity" (p:194). At its broadest this chapter has explored just *what* is being consumed in volunteering vacations in Siem Reap by considering how far the processes of commodification and objectification have resulted in Cambodian children becoming the objects of consumption in these tourist experiences. Through references to the commodification hypothesis I have argued that children are presented as objects of consumption in the promotion of Cambodia as a volunteer tourist. Exploring beneath the surface of this assertion, I considered the claim of abuse in the volunteer tourist trend and articulated these connections.

Recognising that Giroux's (2000) argument makes a considerable leap from commercialisation to abuse, I have also drawn on Bourdieu's (2007) notion of 'symbolic violence' and Harvey's (1999) of civilised oppression to add support to my claim. That both these concepts consider gentle and invisible possibilities of abuse - as well as (abusive) actions that are embedded in norms and accepted as well-meaning - is of value here. By using these ideas to move away from thinking that sees only perverts and paedophiles; slavery and sodomisation (whilst in no way making light of these abhorrences) as exemplars of mistreatment, attention is drawn back onto issues of exploitation, harm to dignity and careless treatment – signs that is, of a “gentle violence” (Bourdieu, 2007, p:1) and of the “deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people” (Young, 1990, p:41).

Transforming Cambodia's children into objects that are both desirable and available to the volunteer tourist requires strategies, I have shown, that recognise fantasy as an important element of tourist motivation. And whilst elements of fantasy were explored in volunteer tourism discourse, consideration was also given to the material consequences of the vacation fantasy such as the expectation and provision of suitable standards of service and required levels of security and care. These benefits make connections to notions of colonial continuities and the reinforcement and replication of “conditions of contemporary international inequality” (Hutnyk, 1996, p:214).

I have also shown how the sentimentality and romanticism of volunteer tourism discourse works to detract the potential consumer from considering the real processes that are in operation in this popular vacation trend. As Yi-Fu Tuan (1990) argues “as imagination reaches toward the excesses and incoherence of fantasy, it can delude, enchain and isolate” (p:443). As such, it is possible to recognise representations of the fantastical not merely as ways to attract potential vacationers but also as vehicles through which discourse and ideology travel. Here the notion of fantasy attached to stories of the volunteer vacation are shaped by re-creations and re-enactment of the colonial mission (hooks, 1992; Osterhammel,

1999) – which in turn connects to the argument that “the charitable tendency [here in the volunteer tourist fantasy] has to be more closely understood within the global framework of contemporary capitalist social hegemony” (Hutnyk, 1996, p:221).

Chapter Seven

Will the present movement of the nations of Europe towards the East result in good by introducing into these lands the blessings of our civilization? Or shall we, as blind instruments of boundless ambition, come hither as a scourge, to add to their present miseries?

- *Henri Mouhot* , 1868

How is volunteer tourism consumed: taking a 'good' photograph?

Introduction

In the 1988 film *Cannibal Tours*, documentary filmmaker Dennis O'Rourke followed a group of western tourists through village communities of Papua New Guinea. In one scene an old villager muses to camera, "all we know is that they are from another country. We sit here confused while they take pictures of everything".

The link between photography and tourism has been explored for many years in (amongst others) tourism studies; cultural studies; sociology; geography; philosophy; art and literature, as well as more obviously in documentary photography studies (Bourdieu, 1990; Hoelscher, 2008; Hutnyk, 1996; Larsen, 2006; Parr, 2010; Sontag, 2002; Urry, 1990). As Jonas Larsen (2006) contends, "tourism and photography are modern twins" (p:241) and as such the relationship between holiday images (both still and moving) and the uses these images are put to - as well as the reasons the images are made - continues to be of interest to thinkers and academics from an array of skills and disciplines. However, it did become clear quite early in this research that a special relationship appears to exist between the consumption of the volunteer vacation and photography in that, whilst photographs made around this tourist trend *are* used in the well-defined "socially constructed way of seeing and recording" (Urry, 2001, p:138), there also seems to be something else of significance going on here. This is notable, for example, when thinking about, what may be described as, the idealised representations of 'poor' children taken in orphanages and poor schools.

At the same time as images from volunteer vacations "offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that the fun was had" (Sontag, 2002, p:9), so much about this picture-making - and pertinently about the uses to which many of these pictures are put - also appears to be, for example, "intricately bound [up] with self-presentation" (Larsen, 2006, p:250) or, as part of the tourists toolkit for, what Desforges (2000) describes as, "defining themselves

according to their individual experiences of the world” (Desforges 2000 p:935). Whilst this has resonance with more mainstream holiday photography and the social capital associated with (visual evidence that can show) certain destinations having been visited or leisure activities taken part in, images from volunteer vacations appear to be used to say more than ‘this is where I went on my holidays and this is what I did’. Pertinently, in the context of this study, photographs have much to add, as I will show, to expressions of ‘how’ the volunteer vacation is consumed.

What is more, as volunteer tourists regularly and enthusiastically place themselves in the photograph - in what may seem on closer examination an uncomfortable yet, at the time the picture was made, unselfconscious juxtaposition – Roland Barthes (1983) ‘photographic paradox’ is brought to mind; “what is the content of the photographic message? What does the photograph transmit?” (p:196). This chapter does not, however, provide a detailed analysis or deconstruction of a collection of photographs, nor is it an attempt to reveal the ‘photographic message’ they may ‘transmit’. Nonetheless, some images will be used to develop or illustrate the interpretative process in much the same way as interview extracts or fieldwork notes are used elsewhere in this work. What follows is a discussion and description of how the photograph and photography have evolved as integral parts of this research project and particularly when thinking about how volunteer tourism in Siem Reap is consumed.

Questions and concerns

I acknowledge issues regarding the place of photography and the photograph within sociological research; as Douglas Harper (1998) contends, “it is a tricky position” (p:130). To name but a few concerns there is the ambiguous nature of visual communication in relation to ‘truth’; issues around the subjectivity of the viewer; questions of identity, of ethics, ownership and re-presentation of research products (although it has to be said that these concerns are not entirely unique to the visual). For example, whilst the majority of the images used here are my own, the others have been taken from openly available websites used for marketing and

advertising (as such are deemed to be available for use in this thesis only). I do see, however, the photograph; the act of taking photographs and, the photographer (as well as the camera itself) as having importance in this attempt to better understand the consumption of volunteer tourism and, of the tourist consumers. By exploring the uses that many of the tourists' images are put to (the abundance of images made by consumers and then used in advertising and marketing, for example), I consider just what these photographs are being asked to do and why. I argue that, in the relationship between vacationer and Cambodian child, the act of making photographic images imbues the camera with a certain power that can be likened to other technologies of domination (Sontag, 2002; Harper, 1998; Hoelscher, 2008; Pratt, 1992, Vokes, 2012), but I also explore what influence the photographed have in this relationship. To this end I have drawn upon Roland Barthes's notions of '*punctum*' and '*studium*' in an endeavour to help open up my senses (Collier, 1979) to photographic images as a part of the holistic interpretative exercise. Finally, I will show how photographs - both those I have termed as 'found images' and images from my own photographic journey - help to tell this story and as such are considered to have a value in the broadness of this project, significantly by making "logical connections that start with [the] studies initial research questions and extend through to its conclusions" (Prosser and Schwartz 1998, p:117).

A note about the *studium* and the *punctum*

Over the last four years I have collected, compared and scrutinised numerous holiday images taken in the orphanages and poor schools in Siem Reap - images that have been posted in social media environments; on NGO websites; in travel blogs; in marketing literature and flyers; as well as the hundreds of images I have made myself during my visits to Cambodia. Often, however, when viewing photographs I have experienced what Barthes (2000) describes as the *studium* in that "I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the setting, the actions" (p:26). I 'participate' because there is a general interest I have for these images, not only as a compelling part of my research project (here are volunteer tourists in Siem Reap 'doing' volunteer tourism) but also, on a personal level, as a place I have

visited; sometimes people I have met; of a holiday I have taken; of an experience I have experienced; of a phenomenon that intrigues and fascinates me. As Barthes (2000) also suggests, I now (as *spectator*) experience these images “in reverse” (p:28) in that I understand what is being photographed (the *spectrum*, or *target*) and often even the inspiration (of the *operator*) at the moment of depressing the shutter.

At times some images even “provoke tiny jubilations” (Barthes, 2000, p:16) as, for instance when I recognise their significance and value to this exploration and their connection to my project. This occurs, for example, when I view photographs of children being weighed and measured; of head lice treatments being applied to rows of ‘orphans’ by volunteer tourists; of new clothes, new toys, new books and pencils being demonstrably donated and (sometimes awkwardly) received; of tourists having ‘a fun time’ with children; of children ‘enjoying’ tourists too; of moments of intimacy in these brief (holiday) relationships; of close-ups of ‘poor’ children that appear devoid of voice and context; of the performance of volunteer tourism - in short, of these ‘exotic morsels of otherness’ being consumed. And it becomes clear when looking at these images that they represent a part (indeed a significant part) of the story of the consumption of this vacation trend.

I have, however, also at times sensed a discernible ‘*punctum*’ – “which pricks me... rises from the scene, shoots like an arrow and pierces me” (Barthes, 2000; p:27/26). Quite unlike the general interest of the *studium*, this is a response that comes from a small, perhaps insignificant detail in an image; from the vacant gaze on one child’s face amongst a crowd of smiling others, for example. Barthes (2000) asserts that for him this *punctum* has “a power of expansion... that is often metonymic” (p:45) demanding that he is drawn into the image with, what he later describes as, his “thinking eye” (p:45). It is because of my response (both *studium* and *punctum*) to some of these photographs and my efforts to develop my own ‘thinking eye’ that I am arguing here of the relevance of photography and the photographic image in my study, beyond that is, the straight forward verification of what has been gazed upon and where (Urry, 2001).

My framework

Prosser and Schwartz (1998) contend that “interpretation of any photographic data requires a theoretical framework” (p:12) and as such, I have employed a framework here that intertwines aspects of colonialism and post-colonial critique with my research and understandings of the consumption of volunteer tourism alongside some emotive readings of the images. This approach is at the same time useful and contentious. It is useful because it has opened up important questions (questions that also connected to the other important issues in this study) around encounters between the tourist-consumer and (those described as) the needy in Cambodia. As Sontag (2008) asserts, “the final reason for the need to photograph everything lies in the very logic of consumption itself” (p:179).

When thinking, for example, about ‘what is being consumed in volunteer tourism and how?’ I wondered if these were images of lives being lived or lives being viewed or gazed upon; whose stories were these photographs really telling? By drawing on Sontag’s (2008) argument that nostalgia and photography are such close allies, I am able to add support to my own argument that the consumption of volunteer tourism represents (in part) a nostalgic experiencing of childhoods lost as discussed in the previous chapter. I have also been lead to consider how far the novelty (particularly for the Cambodian child) of being endlessly photographed, conceals (from both the consumer and the consumed) an understanding of the purpose for making these images (read also, taking these vacations); or put more probingly, what are these images (these vacations) being asked to ‘do’ - as opposed, for example, to what they may simply show? And reflecting on ‘how volunteer tourism is able to be consumed’, I considered how far photographic representations of Cambodian children, take into account (if at all) the voices of the photographed? All of these questions lend support I would argue, to the principle research questions that have been considered in this thesis.

Why then is this approach also contentious? Firstly, there appears to be a historical precedent that regards visual communication as abstract and ambiguous in relation

to the 'truth', made more complex by the contention that interpretation relies on the subjectivity of the viewer. As Prosser and Schwartz (1998) argue, "widespread assumptions that photographic images offer a transparent "window on the world" has discouraged critical analysis of the medium" (p:114) and may, as a consequence, at times have inhibited the imaginative impetus to include photographs and photography in the research process. In this study therefore, I defend my reasoning for - in the process of the interpretative exercise - attaching value to emotive readings of photographic images in what strives to be a rigorously conducted thesis. I argue that the notion of power and appropriation recognised in photographic theory (Sontag, 2008, Vokes, 2012) and, the production of 'the rest of the world' through colonial travel recollections (Pratt, 1992) can be drawn upon to support my interpretations. I do acknowledge however that as Stuart Hall (1997) asserts:

There is no single or 'correct' answer to the question, 'What does this image mean?' or 'What is this ad saying?' Since there is no law which can guarantee that things will have 'one true meaning', or that meanings won't change over time, work in this area is bound to be interpretative – a debate between, not who is 'right' and who is 'wrong', but between equally plausible, through sometimes competing and contesting, meanings and interpretations. The best way to 'settle' such contested readings is to look again at the concrete example and try to justify one's 'reading' in detail in relation to the actual practises and forms of signification used, and what meanings they seem to you to be producing (p:9).

I have also used Sarah Pink (2007) as support and primarily her contention that, "to analyse images... it is useful to examine how people's uses and definitions of the visible content and form of photographs or video sequences attach them to particular ideologies, histories and identities" (p:125) – and here I would add geographies - exploring the connections and associations that is, between context and content. These associations, for example, between image and ideologies; image and identities; image and histories and geographies, were central considerations when looking at these photographs. How, for example, does volunteer tourism, promoted as a benevolent gesture (western development ideology) to the 'Third World poor', shape – and as a consequence is shaped by –

the photographs made and circulated by the tourists and the volunteer tourism industries? What are the effects of an image-making practise that is premised on the dualistic principle (and identities) of generous donor/needy benefactor? Being shy of emotive readings of images, I argue, obstructs the collection of valuable data (as well as the opportunities to make use of the researchers 'thinking eye').

Through informed viewing then and the diligent examination of images, themes emerged which both corroborated and broadened other areas in this exploration and as such, validate (for me) this methodology as an integral part of the overall enquiry and the effort to find answers to my research questions. Photographs therefore (both my own and those of other volunteer tourists), become both valuable tools supporting and working with other data – observations, interviews, field notes – as well as data of itself, contributing to the development of a more wide-ranging account of the consumption of this tourist trend and of its incidence in Siem Reap in particular. Unpacking this a little further, I add a note on method as it relates specifically to visual data.

Some thoughts on method

It did become clear when studying images that certain themes were emerging and recurring; in the same way as analysing text, I become absorbed in the material and allowed responses to surface. Often for instance, looking at an image would prompt me to return to other data – a field note, interview, or advertisement for example – and provoke me to ask new questions about something I may have passed over or made other judgements about. Now I could think more deeply about what particular social relations were here that made this happen in this context or what other factors were at play at this point. At other times a photograph would act as a mnemonic device about place; about an activity or action; about a certain vacation provider or NGO, for example. Russell Bernard (2000) also talks about the “ocular scan method, otherwise known as eyeballing” (p:445) which also provided good direction when looking at photographs; look at the images and then look again and again. Nonetheless, whilst these techniques were undoubtedly useful, Barthes (2000) notion of “the co-presence of two

discontinuous elements, heterogeneous in that they did not belong to the same world” (p:23), particularly resonated with my intuitive response of having captured juxtapositions in many of these photographs.

To this end, photographs that as Barthes (2000) describes, “made me pause” (p:23) were initially placed in a ‘found images’ folder (the snipping tool was invaluable) from where it was possible to frequently view them via the slideshow function. Images other than those found on the internet were, where possible scanned and placed in the same folder. I made the decision to regularly re-order the images to avoid a familiarity of sequence or the creation of false pairings (like the awareness of the track sequencing on musical CDs, for example). Selected YouTube and promotional videos from volunteering vacation providers or NGO projects were also captured using Internet Download Manager (IDM), again allowing them to be regularly reviewed even after clips may have been deleted from, or updated on the internet. As Schneider and Foot (2005) highlight, the “ephemerality of web content” (p:166) poses certain challenges for research and data generation that requires certain method and methodological decisions.

Over time as new themes emerged, other folders were created and images or video clips were copied into them. Often images were also added to interview transcripts or field notes where connections or associations were made. In this way categories or patterns were identified that linked with other data. Intuitive descriptions evolved and were given to the images. These included: co-producers; doing the mantra; hokey cokey; kind donors; exotification; gratitude (awkward/posed/innocent); the benevolent; closeness/intimacy; nostalgia; ‘Third World’ production; contact zone and, landscape. Later still many of these descriptions collapsed into each other and then by bringing theory to the images, testing, modifying and refining my thoughts, ideas that have value to this project took shape.

A problem worthy of note is the sheer volume of available photographs and video clips, no less the number of these which struck me as interesting and worthy of

being collected. This was exacerbated further by my research in the social media environment as it is possible to follow links to many other collections of photographs via a single volunteer tourist's page and, more particularly, from NGO Facebook sites. Furthermore, as the number of orphanages and poor schools offering volunteer tourist opportunities in Siem Reap increases - as well as the rapid growth in the number of vacation providers - the available data grows exponentially. It required considerable constraint to know when to draw a line under this particular part of the data collection.

Finally, whilst all of these images (both still and moving) are in the public domain it is acknowledged that, as Teela Sanders (2005) contends, "the virtual field... continues to be an unresolved issue for researchers" (p:71). Ongoing concerns in using images - a concern arguably compounded when the source of those images is the internet - are questions of ethics and identity, as well as ownership and specifically whether (and how) permissions should be sought regarding their representation.

The contact zone, anti-conquest, transculturation and the camera

In this part of the chapter, three concepts are described that provided valuable direction in relation to images in this research. I will show how the contact zone, anti-conquest and transculturation - all taken from Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) book *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* - were used to explore how the act of photographing; the photograph; the photographed and, the camera, can be understood as essential components in the consumption of this particular tourist trend and how connections can be made to colonial and imperial travel and to modes of representation. As such, I will describe what these concepts can do for a discussion around the relationship between the Cambodian child, the consumption of volunteer tourism and photography as well as showing how they can be drawn together to make them relevant to the camera (as opposed in the first instance to the photograph).

1. The contact zone

Pratt (1992) uses the term contact zone to “invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographical and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (p:7). As such, a contact zone in the context of volunteer tourism in Siem Reap can be used to describe a wide range of places including the airport; hotels; the bars and restaurants on Pub Street; other tourist sites and attractions; the orphanages and poor schools – indeed anywhere where tourist and Cambodian come into contact with each other. Significantly however, as Pratt goes on to argue, whilst encounters in contact zones are frequently uneven in terms of power, the ‘contact’ perspective draws attention to the exchanges that often occur through interactions that take place between people from different cultures and backgrounds in these places. As it is clear that the ‘volunteer tourist–hosting orphanage or poor school’ can be identified as a ‘contact zone’, Pratt’s (1992) concept allows that the complexity of the relationships that take place there, be opened up for deeper deliberation. As Steven Hoelscher (2008) also asserts, this perspective recognises that relationships in contact zones rarely progress in one direction but that changes may occur from within either group as a result of these interactions. This is significant when thinking about photographs made by volunteer vacationers of Cambodian children as well as of photographs made by the children of the tourists.

What I found from observations in this study was that much image-making occurs in the orphanage or poor school contact zones. However, against the broader understanding of the multi-direction of influence in these spheres, the view was somewhat challenged that Cambodian children are only victims - “passive recipients of a dominant power, who are merely acted upon” (Hoelscher, 2008, p:13). Engaging with Pratt’s notion of contact zones provides a tool with which consideration can also be given to the role the children may play in these photographic encounters (and as such, in the encounters in general). For example, during the five years I have been visiting Siem Reap, I have observed that progressively children in orphanages and poor schools are gaining technical abilities with cameras and video equipment. Indeed, many of the children on the streets

who regularly come into contact with tourists are now relatively adept at using a wide range of devices. Where willing volunteer tourists allow - and at times even without their permission - children will take photographs using the tourists' equipment. I have had access to many photographs made by children and argue that they provide an interesting perspective to this story. (It is important here to differentiate between these particular images and those made by Cambodian children during instructed photography sessions run by some NGOs, the products of which are usually commercially available to the tourist).

Most of the children's untutored images (I will call them that) focus on detail: a bucket; a coconut; the bell on a bicycle; a can of coca cola on a table - many take self-portraits made by the child holding the camera away from their body with both hands. Most interestingly, the children often take pictures of the volunteer tourists; images which are frequently tightly cropped and most often shot upwards. Whilst the reason for this photographic angle is of course that the child is smaller in stature, this nonetheless presents a noteworthy contrast to many photographs of children used in, for example, marketing and NGO literature. Here it is usually the child that is gazing upwards - having been shot downwards - looking at times vulnerably (and appealingly) into the lens (O'Barr, 1994).

Also of interest is that in many of the images of volunteer tourists made by the children, I observed that the volunteers frequently replicated the children's typical and ubiquitous broad smile and V-sign photographic pose. As the roles are reversed (the volunteer tourist now as *spectrum or target*, the poor child as *operator*), "the one-sidedness that has long typified the transcultural encounter between [here, children] and photography" (Hoelscher, 2008, p:15), is for a moment destabilised. Now through the medium of photography and the (oft times) negotiated use of the camera ('you can use the camera but put the strap around your neck/wrist first'), the complexity of the relationships can be evidence beyond the uneven terms of power most often observed in contact zones. Furthermore, even when the children are the subjects of the photographs they were (again increasingly) observed directing the image-making; 'take me wearing your sunglasses/your hat; make a

photo of me in this tree'. One consequence of the children's agency in these photographic encounters, however, is that similar images of different children, or sometimes similar images of the same children, are found on different Facebook pages or even marketing websites.

However, whilst the Cambodian child has acquired an understanding of what the volunteer tourist would like to see and a confidence in taking some control of the process, there is little probability that the children understand what the tourist would like to show and indeed, where they would like to show it. (A discussion about the circulation of the images will be returned to later). Children rarely have the opportunity to see the images other than briefly on the camera LCD screen. Furthermore, links can be made to Vokes (2012) discussion of photography and power in colonial Africa. Even where Africans did exercise "a degree of agency over the photographic encounter itself" (Vokes, 2012, p:9) he contends, this did not mean that they were able to have any effect on where the images were used, what they were used for, or what they were used to say. It is rare, I would suggest, for children (or indeed adults) in Siem Reap to be offered prints of photographs 'taken' of them by volunteers (or tourists) even though there are plenty of places in the town where this can be done quickly and cheaply. This may be to a large extent a reflection of the general move away from "building up material collections of photographs...as objects" (Van Dijck, p:61); a direct consequence of the digital era. Equally however, it may also be an expression of the taken-for-granted ownership of these images. Whilst the owner of the camera, however, still controls "the conditions surrounding transcultural picture-making, this control [appears to be increasingly less] absolute or unconditional" (Hoelscher, 2008, p:13).

Figure 2 is my own photograph of a Cambodian child using another volunteer tourist's camera. I use it to show both the apparent competency of the child with the equipment as well as the delight in the second child's face of seeing the photograph on the LCD screen. This photograph however requires that the viewer guesses who or what is being photographed, another child, a tourist, a bicycle? Although we know who is seeing, we do not know who is seen.



Figure 2: Cambodian children using a volunteer's digital camera (my own image).

The second image is from my son's camera and is again made by a child. Here the volunteer makes the typical V-sign; a pose that many Cambodian children



Figure 3: An image made by a Cambodian child where the volunteer takes up the typical V-sign pose made by children.

instinctively take up when their photographs are being taken.

2. Anti-conquest

Pratt (1992) also uses the term anti-conquest, which she describes as “the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” (p:7). This is useful when considering photographic images that result from encounters in the contact zones of orphanages or poor school (although it must be said that using this link does not privilege European subjects, rather those from the ‘First World’ for whom this is a vacation choice). Here once again connections to the colonial mission can be identified in the volunteer tourist schema, for example, constructions of otherness; the sense of mission or duty in the enactment of volunteering; the obligation to make happy and protect and, the pursuit of universal salvation (Osterhammel, 1999). What is more, these connections help to inform the relationship between the volunteer tourist and the children of Cambodia; much like the relationships between the colonizer and the colonised; the development worker and the developing world (Pieterse, 2001; Peet and Hartwick, 1999). Expressed as such, these positions come to be understood, not as exploitative and incongruous but rather, as positive and beneficial (Osterhammel, 1991).

When thinking about the photograph however, constructions of ‘otherness’ in the children are often represented by images of cuteness, charm, happiness and exoticness (Hall, 2010); images of poverty represented by just the right amount of need and disadvantage (too much and the viewer may be put-off, too little and the vacation is not represented as worthy); volunteer tourism and the volunteer tourist, by ability and compassion. As Enders and Gould (2009) maintain, “helping others is historically and institutionally embedded in power – privileged people help underprivileged people” (p:428) and as such, the volunteer tourism mantras so often represented in the tourist’s photographs - ‘making a difference’, ‘changing lives’, ‘doing something positive for disadvantaged others’ - have to be examined as, John Hutnyk (1996) argues, “within the global framework of contemporary

capitalist social hegemony” (p:221). Together with Pratt’s notion of anti-conquest, these assertions help shape how these images can be viewed.

Photographs that support the notion of anti-conquest may be likened to those images that I initially coded as ‘doing the mantra’, by which I mean images that represent the taken-for-granted positive view of volunteer tourism where, for example it is claimed that, lives can be changed and differences made – whilst on vacation. These images (although mostly made by volunteer tourists) are predominantly found on marketing websites and in NGO newsletters, for example. Many of these photographs are what may be referred to as, constructed images, children pictured with donated items; items being donated; children holding up fabricated (fabricated by who?) ‘thank you’ signs. These photographs, I argue, are being asked to show the generosity of the volunteer tourists; the gratitude of the beneficiary; the need in ‘otherness’; the capability of ‘us’. (And here again the circulation of images is important as these are not photographs that will be stuck in the family holiday album and seen by a select few relatives and friends). Links can also be made here with concepts in tourism literature that claim that for many tourists, travel and vacationing are used to construct or reinforce “novel identities” (Urry 1995:p169) or as Desforges (2000) asserts, using travel to “stretch out” (p:176) narratives of self.



Figure 4: Gifts being donated to children in a village close to the NGO where the women are volunteer tourists.



Figure 5: A much reproduced image of children with personalised 'thank you' signs



Figure 6: Children holding up donated gifts.

I have used these two images (figures 5 and 6) to illustrate how children, I would argue, are being used to represent the generosity of volunteer tourists as well as the gratitude of the children; as such the needs of 'others' against the benevolence

of ourselves - of capitalist social hegemony seeking its innocence (Hutnyk, 1996; Pratt, 1992).

3. Transculturation

Thirdly, Pratt (1992) uses the term transculturation to describe a phenomenon of the contact zone where she argues, to varying extents “subjugated peoples... determine what they absorb into their own [culture] and what they use it for” (p:6). The concept, originally coined in the 1940’s by Fernando Ortiz is useful for considering the merging and mingling of cultures that takes place in the volunteer vacation setting. Importantly, however, as Pratt (1992) also asserts, “while the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery (in the emanating glow of the civilizing mission or the cash flow of development, for example), it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis – beginning, perhaps, with the latter’s obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself” (p:6).

Employing this concept when looking at photographs made by volunteer tourists, led me to think about how identities (now both of the tourist-consumer and the child) may be transformed, de-formed and reformed (Codell, 2012) by their encounters with each other. I considered, for example, how the Cambodian child is shaped by the tourists’ photographic images made in ‘the periphery’ as well as how these same images are shaped by the ‘metropolis’s’ image of its benevolent-self – of gifts being donated, of care being given, for example. I also recognised, however, as Pratt (1992) highlights, that I am “anchored... in the metropolis” (p:5) - as well as this project - and that until my first visit in 2008 everything I knew about Cambodia and the Cambodian child had been shaped by the cameras of other westerners and primarily white, western volunteer tourists. This of course is not unique, as Berkhofer, Jr. (1979) argues in his exploration of *‘The White Man’s Indian’* “as with images of other races and minorities, the essence of the White image of the Indian has been the definition of Native Americans in fact and fancy as a separate and single other” (p:xv).

Whilst this cycle arguably continues, through reference to the concept of transculturation, it is possible to consider how the western construction of the Cambodian 'other' is now being shaped by the Cambodian's constructions of themselves and their environment; in images that they (now wish to) present to the tourist (Pratt, 1992) and to the world the tourists come from. This is perhaps most visible when looking at Cambodian run NGOs that offer volunteer tourist placements in their own poor schools or orphanages. Often in these particular establishments there is the feeling that tourists are being given what they want - the right kind of poverty, adorable but needy children, few limitations and regulations to restrict the (holiday) relationships between the volunteer and the children –and often signified, I would argue, in the pictures of children (if not actually made by, then chosen) by the Cambodians themselves. (Here I must make the distinction between Cambodian registered and Cambodian managed NGOs, the former most often having been founded and managed by westerners).



Figure 7: My own photograph of a board outside an orphanage with faded pictures of children enjoying KFC chicken.

I offer an illustration (above) that combines my own fieldwork data and a photograph I took of photographs I found at one research site. In 2009 I visited a fully Cambodian managed and run orphanage on the outskirts of Siem Reap after I

had been given a flyer on Pub Street the previous evening. As the flyer was asking for volunteer tourists I was hoping that I would find some there myself. When I arrived there were no volunteers (in fact little activity of any sort at all). I was however made immediately welcome; given a tour around the (very poor) orphanage; offered the director's calling card and a brochure of the project. I was then (despite my protestation) taken to hear the children - who had been gathered together on the command of a young Cambodian man – perform in English, *'If you're happy and you know it clap your hands'* for their audience (me) of one.

Throughout the children's rendition, the same young man invited me to 'take photo of orphans' and later insisted that I made a cash donation. Whilst the images I made of these 'singing orphans' remain a painful souvenir of my visit, the image I took of a notice board at the entrance to the orphanage (figure 7) has relevance to the discussion of transculturation. The notice advertising a 'Children's Art Exhibition' also contained two sun-faded photographs of children looking up to the camera and appearing to relish the food they were eating. The caption on the first read: "First Kids of the Orphanages eat the big piec (sic) of Chicken from KFC"; the second photograph which shows smiling children with chicken bones held aloft reads: "Children Happy with KFC Test!"

I argue that, whilst this 'photograph of photographs' is illuminated by the concept of transculturation, the image also works to inform my own fieldwork narrative from the orphanage site. On a note of method, in this case too, the photograph allowed me to "capture the impossible: a person gone; an event past. That extraordinary sense of seeming to retrieve something that has disappeared belongs alone to the photograph" (Harper, 2002, p:23). In much the same way that photo-elicitation is used with interview participants – to evoke thoughts and encourage memories - later this image also became a valuable tool for 'researcher-elicitation' (Emmel and Clark, 2011) and an important element in my interpretative process. By reference to transculturation I can now understand more about how these images support the notion of what Cambodians have chosen to take from their interactions with 'other cultures' (here volunteer tourists; international NGOs in

the town, for example) and pertinently, what they have chosen to use it for (Pratt, 1992).

4. The camera

Drawing these concepts together within the context of volunteer tourism and photography I now introduce the fourth element from this section, the tourists' camera, here as opposed to the photograph. For Sontag (2002) "the photographic recording is always, potentially, a means of control" (p:156) that is effected through the use of the camera. As the principal tool in this action this leads Sontag to regard photography as an instrument of appropriation and power. That the use of the camera is so widespread and pervasive by volunteer tourists is significant here and as such can be understood as today's "technology of domination" (Hoelscher, 2008, p:10) in the long history of travel to and exploration of, as Mary Louise Pratt (1992) describes, the periphery by the metropolis.

Where in the past, colonial and imperial projects would bear their own particular instruments of conquest, however - the apparatus carried by early scientists used to map, categorize, sample and record the other and the others' environment (Pratt, 1992); the firearms of the colonisers; the shackles of the slave traders; the enticements of the "capitalist vanguards" (Pratt, 1992, p:146) and speculators (from the cotton, tea, tobacco and sugar pioneers to the modern tourist resort developer) – today the camera (often the understated compact digital or those concealed in that other small but powerful technological innovation, the mobile telephone) functions as, arguably, no less passive an instrument of power and control. That it is the volunteer tourist that is most often the one 'armed with' the camera and the Cambodia child the one whose picture is 'taken', is not without significance when linked to these other historical projects.

Terms associated with combat and the camera can be added to those related to warfare identifiable in (development and) volunteer tourism discourse: "fighting poverty" (Rural Community Development Program (RCDP) Volunteer Abroad, 2008); "helping to combat... human trafficking" (Outreach International, 2011);

'Journeys for Good™ - Volunteer Heroes' (journeys4good.com, 2012); the battle against hunger and disease. For Sontag (2002), by regarding photography as appropriation - made real in the term 'to take a photograph' – she argues that "a camera is sold as a predatory weapon – one that's as automated as possible, ready to spring" (p:14). And whilst terms such as "loading" and "aiming a camera, about "shooting a film" (Sontag, 2002, p:14) may be considered outdated by the now almost universal use of digital technology, it is argued here that the generality remains in that we still talk about being 'armed' with our cameras; by the actions of 'aiming' and 'shooting' (even digitally); of the need to get a 'shot' of someone or something; ubiquitously, of 'taking' a photograph.

Pictures of us taking pictures of them

I have found in my research that there are many photographs of photographs being taken (of the camera being used) - which of itself raises interesting questions. Photographs of volunteer tourists with cameras may work to legitimise the 'taking of pictures' as well as signalling the accessibility for the tourist to the children – like the promise of seeing lions on safari. Equally, however, these particular images may simply be an indication of the omnipresence of the camera in the volunteer tourist's consumption of their vacation (if a volunteer tourist is in a photograph they are likely to be carrying a camera too). Links can be made to colony and empire – advertisements for colonial wear often showing 'pioneers' with guns at their sides or over their shoulders (Allen, 1980); the gun then as much part of the 'look' as the camera is to the tourist today. It also evokes images of the white-hunter triumphant with weapon and prey (Herne, 1999); of the thrill and romance of the shoot (Orwell, 1978). There is much that could be interrogated, I would argue, in images of photographers with cameras.

For example the photograph over (figure 8) is from the website of a UK run orphanage and NGO that takes both volunteer tourists and drop-in visitors who can "meet the children" (lovecambodia, 2012). The image is from their gallery page entitled 'our lovely visitors' where photographs from 'your visit can be added' (lovecambodia, 2012). Here the photographer (perhaps a potential volunteer

tourist, perhaps a drop-in visitor) bends to take a close-up, close range picture of the 'orphan'. Whilst again this image acts to legitimise or approve or sanction or encourage the act of taking (close-up, close range) photographs, here an interesting juxtaposition is provided in the NGO's information pack on another page of the same website. It warns that in Cambodia "it is important to be aware that expensive items (such as iPods, laptops, cameras and jewellery) are at risk of being stolen" (lovecambodia, 2012).



Figure 8: The caption on the NGO website reads 'our lovely visitors' (lovecambodia, 2012).

When considering the broadness of volunteer tourism discourse - which includes not only advertising, guide books and NGO information but also, circulated advice, underlying assumptions and visual representations - it is possible to observe how, as Lozanski (2011) contends, "the identities of travellers remain deeply embedded in the spaces *from* which the travel" (p:15, italics in original). It can be argued, therefore, that the act of taking photographs of Cambodian children helps to shape both the world of the tourist as much as the world of the child.

'Here's one of me with some orphans

In his study of the impact on social and political relations of photographs of the Ho-Chunk Native American 'Indians' taken by nineteenth century photographer H.H. Bennett, Steven D. Hoelscher (2008) argues that the images Bennett made said as much about the photographer and his fundamental "cultural assumptions" (p:9) as they did about the people he was photographing. Bennett's photographs, made almost exclusively for sale to tourists, are argued to have been largely responsible for Wisconsin Dells developing into a major vacationing region and as such, Hoelscher (2008) asserts, are an example of visual culture helping to shape the material world. Hoelscher (2008) further claims – a claim I argue is also relevant to questions around photography and volunteer tourism - that "photographic images do not "speak for themselves" or disclose unmediated truths about the world or its people; they are given meaning only through the specific contexts of their creation and subsequent circulation" (p:9). Perhaps more than anything since the invention of the camera however, it is now the availability of easy to use, relatively inexpensive digital image-making equipment that most impacts on 'contexts of subsequent circulation' of photographs.

The digital age has not only significantly altered who now views our holiday photographs – effectively a revolution in the reach of the audience for these once personal images – but also created a vast change in the capacity for reproduction and re-presentation. The post-holiday experience of 'waiting for the holiday photographs to come back' is now obsolete; the process now takes place in what Lash and Urry (1994) describe as "instantaneous time" (p:242) - the image is there to use, in the same moment it is taken. And it is this immediacy, I would argue, that is responsible for the significant shift in the use of the vacation photograph. Within moments, the image of an eighteen year old volunteer tourist in Siem Reap - of 'this is where I'm staying tonight' - can be globally distributed and reproduced ad infinitum (dad in London can simultaneously see the same images as mum in Sydney, Australia, as grandparents in Washington D.C.).

It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that the digital age should have occurred around the same time that volunteer tourism to the 'Third World' developed into a mass niche tourism product; of Cambodia as a new and exciting volunteer vacation destination. How far, for example, has the availability of fast and easy connections to home (including the internet and mobile phone - seeing as well as hearing from) driven the trend of volunteer tourism, now that parents can regularly be reassured of their progeny's whereabouts, wellbeing and happiness - or indeed, as in the case of Mary and Lynette, of distant parents as well? The days of the (anxiously awaited) holiday postcard being the only word from those abroad, are long behind us. These historical intersections are arguably intertwined. Rarely in the world are we now entirely out of reach of the security embodied in 'home'.

But it is important to also consider the role of the abundance of images of Cambodian children, to making poverty palatable, available and attractive for tourist consumption. Whilst in the past what we 'knew' about 'others' and their lives came largely from professional produced still images or expensively made documentary productions, now photographs are personalised and cosy. As Rosie, a young volunteer tourist I interviewed in Liverpool said when showing me images from her volunteer vacation to Siem Reap, "here's one of me with some orphans". Furthermore, as the dynamics of circulation become broader, the signs that have been constructed and captured in the tourist photographic gaze (Urry, 1990) become more complex and multifaceted – here is an image of Asianness, here is one of poverty; another of compassion; of gratitude; of 'our' abilities; of 'their' neediness; of a 'typical poor Cambodian child'.

The circulation of volunteering vacation images also plays, I would argue, an increasingly significant role in the (touristic) fantasies required to attract visitors (Lash and Urry, 1994). Considering the design-intensive production and marketing of the volunteer tourist experience, the use of the image is arguably one of the most powerful components. For both the mainstream tourist and the volunteer tourist, the use of photography goes some considerable way towards making the Cambodian child into a tourist attraction. And whilst photography is extensively

used by the industry to produce a Cambodia that appeals to the fantasies of the holidaymaker, it is also evident that photographs help create the compassionate, caring and enthusiastic volunteer who is able to have a great time in an orphanage. NGO websites as well as marketing literature are teeming with images of happy-looking volunteers together with poor, but happy-looking Cambodian children. Images make real the relationships between the child and the volunteer tourist and confirm the efforts and compassion of the benefactor and the gratitude of the beneficiary. Familiar poses are repeated - much like the fisherman and his catch - the narrative of 'making a difference' frozen in a moment of relief for the child and in testimony of the worth of the commodity for the consumer.

That vacation providers so routinely make use of past tourist-consumers' own images (often alongside vacationer testimonies) also says important things about how the industry allows (perhaps encourages) the self-perpetuation of, what can be critical described as the volunteer vacation myth. This is also a smart business decision in terms of overheads and costs; why pay a photographer to go out to Siem Reap when the consumer is keen to provide their photographs for use in the marketing and advertising literature; a move that arguably serves the consumer too. As critics of volunteer tourism like Harnng Luh Sin (2009) assert "it is important to realize upfront that many volunteer tourists are typically more interested in fulfilling objectives relating to the 'self'" (p:497) - personal development and/or the creation of an identity being viewed as beneficial reasons for choosing to take a volunteering vacation - as Sarah Moore (2008) describes, a "conscious act of self-identification" (p:143). In the increasingly competitive jobs market or race for university places – having your words and your image(s) used by companies that routinely advertise on university campuses is likely to be considered a positive decision in terms of self-promotion.

Images from Cambodian orphanages and poor schools are today the real evidence of the experience which when circulated around the world, complete a circle that began with similar images in the marketing literature of other volunteers and now authenticates the 'been there, done that' of this specific tourist adventure (Urry

1995). Whilst the commodity offered as volunteer tourism in Cambodia is shaped by the marketing skills of the industry, it is equally created and perpetuated by the consumers' own photographic images from their experiences. Furthermore, through an abundance of images the potential volunteer tourist has an informed expectation of the product they have chosen to purchase as well as visual guidance of how to perform the role they are about to consume (Goffman 1990).

In summary

In this chapter I have discussed how the photograph, the photographed, the photographer and the camera all have significant relevance to the research questions in this project. I have argued that despite the sometimes contentious nature of visual methods and data, with the same rigorous care applied to all other data, great value can be brought to the interpretative exercise. Like Mills' (2000) *Sociological Imagination*, Barthes' (2000) "thinking eye" can bring an intuitive dimension to the analytical process that makes research exciting, innovative and fresh, whilst applying theory to images helps to support and enhance other judgements and adjudications. Nonetheless, the association between volunteer tourism and photography is now so strong that to ignore its relevance would be to remain blind to a significant element in the trend's consumption.

Sarah Pink (2007) argues that, when participants 'tell stories', "they might, actually purposefully, and unprompted by the researcher, seek out photographs to employ as part of the narratives that they are developing verbally" (p:88). When during my research process this unprompted offering of photographs occurred, I felt that it helped to develop the interview and as such the quality of the data. As part of this conclusion I wish to draw on two examples to finally illustrate the relationship between volunteer tourism and photography and particularly the notion of what volunteer tourists' photographs are at times being asked to do. Significantly too, these provide a good examples of where emotive readings of an image in conjunction with other methods, can further the interrogation of interpretations of other data sets. Re-viewing these two particular images helped me to return and ask new questions of my interpretation of interview and field note data.

1. Souvenirs of the volunteer vacation

I arranged to meet Teresa in a café to discuss her desire, as she described, to travel to Cambodia as a volunteer tourist and to find a suitable orphanage to work in out there. As I had classified the participants, Teresa was therefore at this stage a potential volunteer tourist. She brought along with her a number of what appeared to be expensively produced photography books from two of her previous volunteering vacations in Vietnam and South Africa; she also described how she had spent time volunteering in a South American orphanage. As she opened the first album a loose photograph fell out which she showed me saying, "I don't know what that's doing in there. It's me dancing with Michael Bubl  ". Presenting a strange juxtaposition with the poverty of the orphans she was about to show me, it was a quote I heavily underlined in my fieldwork note book. Teresa's excitement at sharing her volunteering vacation photographs was, nonetheless, palpable. The first fifteen minutes of the recorded interview is of her hastily paging through the albums, randomly stopping to describe certain photographs to me:

Teresa: These are the children of Vietnam and these are the children of South Africa which I'm seeing again in February. These are the ones who live in the township. In Vietnam we went to the Agent Orange, you know the Agent Orange, that was a centre... with them... in the... in fact I'll show you... ok... I'll show you which are which. I should have brought you more but this is just condensing it.

Me: no, no, this is fine...

Teresa: OK...OK... now these children were in the Pagoda which is for the homeless... OK... They're all mixed up really. Now she was in the pagoda... they're all in the pagoda and there must be about 200 of them in there and... can't tell you ages... don't know how old they are... and this little one while we were there... where is she... OK... he was a little shit... he was an absolute horrible child and he was the only one that was horrible... in the pagoda... now... These kids were in the orphanage... ok... all normal children...

Me: the pagoda wasn't an orphanage?

Teresa: no, just for homeless, homeless ok. These kids were in the orphanage and... let's see if we can get... Like these kids were in the orphanage and when they're eighteen [years old] they're kicked out of the orphanage. OK, this little chap, this little chap is in the special needs place. I'll explain all that to you. Now this was the Agent Orange... and where she is... this woman was an accountant and she gave everything up to open this place...

In many ways I feel now (and in reality, very soon after the event) that I have hardly seen these images at all. In part the rapid rate at which Teresa progressed through the albums left me little time to absorb their significance (although the pleasure she took in them was clear). Most of all however, I was uncertain as to just *what* she was really showing me; what meaning Teresa was creating for herself through these photographs? After the interview she asked if we could keep in touch.

It was over a year until I heard from Teresa again when she sent me via email - out of the blue - photographs from her latest volunteering vacation in Vietnam; and there was the *punctum*. A simple conical hat - the nón lá - an "exotic tiding" as Hutnyk (1996) describes, "from the enormous jumble sale... of endless differences commuted into the sameness of 'things' that can be purchased and brought home" from this year's vacation (p:154).

Set at a jaunty angle on her head, this stereotypical souvenir - "a stylized and theatricalised version" (Hoelscher, 2008, p:68) of (now) Vietnamese culture; a holidaymakers performance of Asianness acted out in the luxury of a hotel bedroom; the rather sadly satirical email subject-line (The 'Wong Family' with five exclamation marks) - laid bare for me a certain essence of volunteer tourism which at that moment, curiously "bruise[d] me" (Barthes, 2000, p:27). This (perhaps contentious) emotive reading drew me back to Hutnyk's (1996) argument that "photographs amount to a material manifestations of the imaginary work of producing understandings and opinions about [places], which can make sense only within the wider processes of commercialization and consumption of [here, Teresa's latest volunteer tourist destination]" (p:150).



Figure 9: Volunteer tourist posing in a Vietnamese souvenir nón lá (reproduced with volunteers permission)

2. Volunteering at Christmastime

The second image (figure 10) is taken from the travel blog of two volunteer tourists who record how they spent Christmas, 2012 in Siem Reap. I knew from my own experience as a volunteer that at Christmastime - for a fee to the NGO or the opportunity to ask for donations – some of the large hotels ask that (Buddhist) children from the orphanages be brought over to entertain holidaymakers with Christmas carol recitals, taught to them by volunteer tourists. Photographs such as the one below (figure 10) of children dressed in Santa outfits, their faces blotched with white talcum powder, are not viewed as disturbing illustrations of schmaltz generated around poverty and disadvantage but, as proof for the holidaymakers of *their own* compassion and generosity ('here are the children we volunteered with'). Images like these are the souvenirs of a fun vacation; instantaneously posted on Facebook, 'liked' or 'shared' by friends and friends of friends. As "the burden of

representation” (Tagg, 1993) of vacation-Siem Reap, these photographs are reviewed on TripAdvisor; their bodies “exist[ing] for the use and pleasure of others” (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p:175).



Figure 8: ‘Christmas Day with the orphans in Cambodia. We had the time of our lives’ (PamandArchie, travelblog.org, 2012).

Chapter Eight

We are familiar, through charity appeals, with the assertion that it lies in our hands to save the lives of many or, by doing nothing, to let these people die. We are less familiar... of a weightier responsibility: that most of us do not merely let people starve, but also participate in starving them.

It is not surprising that our initial reaction to this more unpleasant assertion is indignation, even hostility – that, rather than think it through or discuss it, we want to forget it or put it aside as plainly absurd

- *Thomas Pogge, 2008, p:220*

Discussion and conclusion

In the fictional holiday resort of Delos, its zoned fantasy 'Worlds' are named and simply described as: *WestWorld*: 'lawless violence on the American frontier of 1880'; *MedievalWorld*: 'chivalry and combat in 13th century Europe' and, *RomanWorld*: 'lusty decadent delights of Imperial Pompeii' (Crichton, 1973). It is claimed that the inspiration for the story came to the writer and director of the movie after he had visited Disney World's newly opened *Pirates of the Caribbean* and been captivated by what he saw and experienced there. Baudrillard's (1983) Disneyland is "a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation" (p:23); Crichton's (1973) fantasy resort is staffed by (almost) perfectly humanised robots '*programmed to provide tourists with an unforgettable vacation*'; one in which '*frustrations can find release; desires can end in satisfaction*'.

In the opening sequence of the movie, shot as a commercial for Delos, returning guests are approached by a cheery reporter who asks, '*which world did you just come from?*' Revealing their fantasy 'world', holidaymakers also testify to the excellence of their vacation; '*I just feel marvellous; I mean it's just such a warm glowing place to be*'; '*it's something I've dreamed of doing all my life*'; '*it's the realist thing I've ever done. I mean that*'. Finally, he asks the gathered crowd "*Was it worth a thousand dollars a day?*" - "*Oh yes*", they unanimously respond. The short scene ends with the reporter tightly cropped and voicing 'sincerely' to camera: "*contact us today, or see your travel agent. Boy, have we got a vacation for you*" (Crichton, 1973). Although Delos is (for the time-being at least) just fiction, it is relevant to recall that in the 'real' world too, holidays are "essentially experiences in fantasy" (Dann, 1976, p:19).

I watched this film many years ago and thought little about it for a long time afterwards - although Delos did once come chillingly to mind (specifically the demise of its tourists when the robots malfunction and rage murderously out of control), when my then young son was terror-struck by a giant Goofy in Disneyland

Paris. However, many years later in researching for this thesis, I was examining a considerable quantity of 'real' holiday commercials from volunteer vacation providers; from gap year travel companies and, from NGOs offering volunteer tourist opportunities - as well as testimonies posted on-line by 'very satisfied' consumers of vacations in orphanages and poor schools in Cambodia. It was then that it occurred to me that I could so easily be looking at advertisements for Delos's latest themed zone: '*ThirdWorld*': 'morsels of exotic 'otherness' in the Kingdom of Wonder'

Much like the fictional destination of Delos, today Siem Reap provides a unique and exotic setting in which a growing number of tourists can act out and indulge their vacation fantasies - where '*frustrations can find release; desires can end in satisfaction*' - and where a taste of poverty is promised to be 'so much fun'. Cambodian children at times appear to be worrying facsimiles of the flawlessly humanised robots in Delos:

You'll generally take care of the children and help feed them, play with them, sing songs and may even have the opportunity to take [them] outside the urban area and show them flowers, grass, nature and have a great day trip with them (i-to-i.com, 2013).

However well-meaning volunteer vacations in Siem Reap are intended to be, I have argued that this trend of tourist consumption requires that children be objectified as poor but charming; available and 'there just waiting' - their poverty commodified for use by an ever expanding sector which includes NGOs and local businesses using the imaginary of the delightful but needy child to further their aims or goals (be they charitable or commercial). The discourse of compassion, so much a part of the volunteer vacation, has been deployed, as I have shown, to rework sentiment into an appealing, easy to consume, marketable commodity; Siem Reap with its abundance of volunteering opportunities, in places resembling the '*controlled but realistic setting*' of Delos.

Problematically however, once the decision has been made to cash-in on the selling power of compassion, compassion itself is transformed into a commodity (Moore,

2008). This is because, when “consumption philanthropy [the model of volunteer tourism] demands that we conform to the ontology of the market as a means to be benevolent... it actually leads to a “philanthropy” uncritically narrated by consumption... that [as such] has very little to do with ending poverty or building a global community” (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009, p:981). Here I would add too, the lack of accountability for our actions or the actions of the projects we buy into.

Production

I have argued that Cambodian children (including but not restricted to those described as ‘orphans’), have become a fundamental part of Siem Reap’s tourist narrative (rivalled only by the magnificence of Angkor Wat) and as a consequence, have a value to those in the volunteer tourist industry marketing vacation fantasies. However, in the process of commodification, the children; their lives and circumstances; their schools and orphanage homes are sanitised – or ‘aestheticised’ as Mowforth and Munt (1998) describe – in order to make their ‘poorness’ palatable for holidaymakers - these are vacations after all. Indeed, determining just the right type and just the right amount of poverty is arguably now part of the industry’s’ expertise.

Here commodity fetishism is a useful way of seeing the relationship between what is being bought and what is being sold; “the way in which commodities hide or veil the social relations embodied in their production” (Mowforth and Munt, 1998, p:71). Having looked beneath the surface of what is produced - exploring the ‘made by whom’ and the ‘made for whom’ - it is possible to now see how the industry, not only creates the opportunities and the organisational structure for volunteer vacations but, also works to construct and promote the desires and fantasies in the consumer. As one volunteer vacation provider promotes, “some travellers are content partying their way around the world. You, however, are looking for a more substantial experience” (GoAbroad.com 2011).

Exposing some of the production elements, offers an insight into the manner in which these vacations are created, packaged, marketed and, in the end offered

back into the machinery of the industry itself (in the form of testimonies, recommendations, NGO newsletters, guidebooks, photographs and travel-blogs) - providing more raw material for the production of more products (vacations). Behind the production line - particularly holidays purchased using the internet in advance of travelling - lies the combined expertise of web designers, copywriters, creative directors and accountants, to name but a few. Lash and Urry (1994) argue that the contemporary travel industry is particularly 'design-intensive' and in the case of the volunteer vacation sector, the innovative skills of a host of creatives work to commodify the charm, innocence and availability of Cambodian children, moulding and forming their imaginary into 'exotic morsels of otherness' ready for western tourist consumption.

In this thesis I have described how incorporated into the construction of this compassionate commodity, must also be trust that the consumer can take in the value and worth of the product; as well as trust in the promises of meaningful experiences. Assurance is required that rewards and benefits will live up to expectation and that the right balance of risk and adventure is provided to meet that specific element of these vacations (Simpson, 2005), particularly for the younger consumer. The professionalisation of the industry has been fundamental in this respect – as Richard Oliver the CEO of Year Out Group assured attendees at the Responsible Volunteering Seminar at the World Travel Market in November 2012, "our primary focus is on the safety and support of the volunteer" (2012); as such, I argue here, in developing and maintaining consumer confidence in this now mass-niche product. But this confidence has also been achieved by the 'lifting out' (Giddens, 1991) of production from the local context of Siem Reap ensuring, as Halnon (2002) contends, (and again in deference to Marx) that "the tourist is estranged from what really lies behind the commodity: the haunting humanity of the poor and fearful reality of poverty" (p:508).

I have argued that the photograph plays a central role in the commodification and objectification of children for tourist consumption; photography being employed to help produce a Cambodia and Cambodians that appeal to vacation fantasies. As

Paulette Goudge (2003) contends however, images of smiling, happy children “become so ubiquitous that they detract from the individuality of ‘Third World’ people and create an additional stereotype in the Western imagination” (p:159). Against these arguments it has been possible to make links to the colonial and imperial underpinnings that inform much volunteer tourism discourse: colonial responsibilities and the sense of duty; protection and support of the ‘other’; universal salvation; the civilising mission and, the glorification of the missionary (Bhabha, 2010; hooks, 1992; Heron, 2007; Hutnyk, 2004; Loomba, 2008; Osterhammel, 1999; Pratt, 1992; Said, 2003).

It has also been possible to make links to those narratives of self that say ‘responsible, moral, and good’. Because, at the same time that the industry creates the opportunities and organizational structure to make “benevolent excursions” (Illich, 1968) a vacation option, the sector is equally responsible, for elaborating notions of a ‘compassionate self’ to persuade and encourage potential consumers. Here once again, photographic images help to construct the caring volunteer tourist, and here particularly Pratt’s (1992) powerfully concept of ‘anti-conquest’, as I have argued, is frequently evoked. Working to convince individuals of their own enormous worth, the industry awakens imaginaries of heroism, altruism, obligation and indispensability, along with the intimation that only caring, kind-hearted people will select and buy-into these vacations.

Marketing

When children are reduced to the category of tourist attraction, this allows that vacationers may choose (‘choice’ and ‘lack of choice’ being key to many of these concerns) to become volunteers or simply go and see some orphans or ‘poor’ children - but crucially be reassured that because the children are ‘happy’, this will be a pleasurable experience. As one NGO website states; “You can visit us and see a working orphanage - come and meet the children and see how happy they are” (Sok, 2011). However, each time the much repeated platitude is expressed that ‘the children are poor but happy’, the disconnect between what tourists choose to witness and what children need – as well as the nostalgic fancy that ‘as kids we had

nothing but we were happy' - becomes more apparent. One volunteer tourist told me (sincerely) that she had chosen her vacation in an orphanage because, 'orphans are my thing; I love orphans' (Patricia). The dilemma of choice is distinguished, not by moral deliberation but, by the vastness of availability; by the abundance of products in the marketplace; in the claim that "there are so many ways to volunteer... it can make you feel like a child in a sweet shop" (i-to-i, 2012).

I have argued that an economy surrounds (childhood) poverty in Siem Reap which is successfully exploited by a range of organisations associated with the tourist industry. As well as volunteer placement companies (in their many expressions) there are businesses selling experiences or tours that incorporate visits to orphanages or poor schools (often in the hope of recruiting volunteers and their fees); NGOs and businesses marketing souvenir items that include artwork, craftwork and photographs produced by children (often with the support of volunteer tourists); guesthouses and hostels offering good volunteer tourist rates and, many other businesses affiliated to their own chosen local childrens' concern.

Many of these strike a strange juxtaposition with the sentiment of 'poverty-alleviation'. For example, on a guesthouse notice board covered with posters publicising volunteering opportunities in local poor schools and orphanages, I also observed an advertisement for daytrips to a Commando-run shooting range (with the option to fire at chickens with AK-47s or cows with bazookas). 'Tell me about that', I asked the guesthouse manager. He earnestly related how volunteering groups 'love' to book this activity to celebrate the end of their vacation. As the accompanying photographs of some of these tourists revealed (combat-gear clad and posing like film stars), the paradox appeared to have escaped them too.

In another example – (worryingly, neither are isolated illustrations or parodies) – an orphanage in the town that provides volunteer tourist opportunities during the day, uses the same 'orphaned' children in the evenings as part of a 'Magnificent Sunset Tour' (\$25 per person; 6:30 pick up from your hotel). The on-line advertisement and booking function, describes how "the orphanage kids greet you

with champagne” - although a caption on the promotional video informs that they are still “trying to master how to pour [it] perfectly” - and that after the sun has gone down and you are leaving the orphanage, the orphans will wave you goodbye “until you will be gone from their sights” (www.freelifec, 2011).

Defending entrepreneurial activities (especially in the not-for-profit sector), business scholars Morris, Webb and Franklin (2011) argue that commercialisation is often driven by the need to meet urgent problems and concerns - war, famine, emergencies – although Anderson and Helm (2012) contend that “the results from studies that examine the relationship between nonprofit entrepreneurial behaviour and social and/or financial performance are ambiguous” (p:5). Whilst viewing the trend through a business lens has been outside the bound of this study, it is significant that the Overseas Development Institute claims that whilst many projects generate income through the sale of gifts and souvenirs for example, because of imports and “kickbacks demanded by tour operators from retailers”, pro-poor income... [from] tourists is as low as 5% in Siem Reap (Ashley & Mitchell, 2009, p:3).

Nonetheless, as I have shown, poverty of itself offers many opportunities for a range of individuals and organisations in the town - including expatriates, NGOs and local businesses. Here - much like John Hutnyk (1996) describes in his study of tourism and charity in Calcutta - disadvantage and the needs of ‘poor’ children work “as a reassuring front for the continued extension of the logistics of the commodity system even as it masquerades as a (liberal) project of cultural concern” (p:215). A strategy of my study has been to look below the surface of the expressions of help in the volunteer tourism trend in order to ask why and how children can so easily and unquestioningly can be turned into marketable resources of last resort (Scheper-Hughes, 2002)

Over the period of my visits to Siem Reap, I have observed that there are now a number of NGOs and visitor centres that attempt to ‘educate’ vacationers about some of the issues around the tourist/poor child relationship (especially those that

give volunteer tourism a bad press such as sexual child abuse) – normally at the same time as promoting their own particular cause/agenda/product. These centres represent the responsible face of the tourism/poverty-alleviation alliance and notably often restrict, or avoid entirely, tourists having direct contact with children. Here vacationers can learn about good work and good intentions and discover what opportunities *are* available for them to help. Often still making use of appealing photographic images of children, visitors are encouraged to contribute (at least) financially to this or that particular cause (or of course, to choose not to buy-into it). Alternatively, tourists may just decide to take time out of their holiday schedules to connect sympathetically with the needy and admire the efforts of the benevolent. The benevolent are nonetheless often still ‘First World’ volunteers as many of these centres do offer volunteering placements but claim to operate a more rigorous application process than others in the industry and attempt to match the volunteers’ skills more carefully to childrens’ needs. They also often demand a longer period of commitment. The debate around appropriate skills (appropriate to who, what and where?) is however, again particular suggestive of Pratt’s (1992) concept of ‘anti-conquest’; of the alliance of ‘innocence with hegemony’.

Whilst these establishments do attempt to address some important issues, there remains, I would argue, a lack of appreciable evidence that the position that ‘First World people have the answers’, is being significantly troubled. Indeed, in many ways the high number of international NGOs and concerns in the town is likely to lend weight to this perception rather than challenge it. As Frank Füredi (1994) argues, “global charity initiatives have done more than anything to popularise the view that Third World people need to be looked after and protected” (p:113); and good intentions on behalf of even the more responsible volunteer tourist enterprises, I would argue, have yet to seriously confront this. Deliberations on the links between western consumerism and inequality in Siem Reap appear to remain largely absent.

What continues to occur (in a similar manner to the more obviously inappropriate cases) is a melting of representations into diaphanous and one-dimensional symbols of an appealing imaginary of hardship; of “aesthetic criteria replac[ing] considerations of history, politics, power and morality” (Giroux, 2000, p:79). This can be seen in, for example, the at times sexualised images of children which the unrestricted nature of volunteering allows us access to make. In turn all this perpetuates and justifies the connections between consumerism, need and compassion; between the ‘First World’s’ continued sense of duty and the ‘Third World’s’ continuing need of redemption; of the ‘First World’s’ obligation to educate and relieve - in short again, of the colonial and imperial underpinnings that inform volunteer tourism discourse.

And it is here too, that connections to the Foucauldian notion of power can also be evidenced - no longer oppressive but ‘insert[ing] itself into actions, attitudes and discourses’ (Foucault, 1980, p:39); of “position[s] of marked racial privilege” (White, 2002, p:408) in the volunteer tourist experience and, of Giroux’s (2000) assertion (in his discussion of the mix-up between the realities of human suffering and the consumption of crude market spectacles), of “social responsibility los[ing] out to the imperatives of the bottom line” (p:67).

The consumer

This thesis has, I believe, been made richer by the voices of participants who willingly gave their time to discuss their expectations, experiences and reflections with me about volunteer tourism in Siem Reap. Indeed many of these conversations helped draw my attention towards issues I may not have encountered alone or areas of interest that had initially been placed beyond the bound of the research. However, that some of these conversations lasted long into the evening and at times developed into spontaneous group debates that yielded the views (at times angry) of many individuals, speaks to me of a desire for much greater reflection of these experiences; opportunities that do not exist within the current shape of volunteer tourism. From participants I contacted via Facebook or

email, their response to the possibility of being able to discuss their thoughts were much the same:

Greta: I was volunteering ... only for a few weeks but hey enough to get a picture how volunteering is entering Cambodia. Of course I would like to talk about it, it's interesting and I think a difficult subject.

Tasha: Your research sounds really interesting, and extremely worthwhile. I'm more than happy to take part. It'll be interesting to go back to some of the thoughts I had when leaving Cambodia actually. It all seems so far away now but it's still left me with so many questions.

Ruth: I've seen a lot and thought a lot. If you still want to interview me - I'm up for it!

The reoccurring themes I identified in these messages and conversations set in motion an iterative processing - between data and ideas; ideas and data – directing me again to NGO websites or advertisement headlines; to other interview transcripts and then back to ideas and theory.

The notion of privilege and the complex ways in which volunteer tourists negotiated their privilege was one of the most persistent ideas. What I found was that through recourse to discourses of generosity and benevolence; through positioning vacations as non-political activities, volunteer tourists were able to leave issues of inequity, injustice and racism, at best to other people – in general, to ignore or deny them completely. Furthermore, the volunteer tourists I spoke to and observed often worked hard to disassociate themselves from the consumption patterns they associate with mainstream tourism by including compassion and care into the expressions of their own experiences and practise. As a consequence, many of the people I interviewed were able to place themselves outside of the problems they saw linked to tourism, simultaneously absolving themselves of any complicity in - or a responsibility to confront - other important issues.

An 'epistemology of ignorance' (Mills, 1997), as I argued, allowed many volunteer tourists to construct knowledge out of failing to ask what, why and how; taken-for-

granted assumptions therefore being allowed to produce the simplistic (constructed) understanding that 'poverty' is the problem, 'they' lack the tools, 'we' have the answers' – and volunteer vacations are a great way to provide these answers. What is more, this mis-representation in turn allowed the re-production of privilege in testimonies, social media postings, photographs and word-of-mouth recollections for example, again reaffirming the claim that volunteer tourism can easily mend the problem.

Whilst many volunteers expressed notions that could be interpreted as 'good global citizenship' - where "core competencies.... allow [them] to actively engage in the world... to make it a more just and sustainable place... an outlook on life, a belief that [they] can make a difference" (Oxfam education, 2013) - these expressions often sat uncomfortably with the assertion that the benefits of acquiring these 'competencies' will enhance *their own CVs*; provide skills *to them* that employers are seeking; *help them* to outdo competitors for university places as well as, pertinently, being enormous fun to achieve and obtain. As consumers therefore, participants were "inoculated from [the] unpleasant realities... thus [taking] a position that appears liberal or open-minded while still being complicit in reproducing the structures of racial [or colonial] inequality" (Farough, 2004, p:246); in short, the privileges embedded in their vacation choice.

Consumption

In order to better understand how volunteer vacations are *able* to be consumed and why, I looked at contemporary western culture, focusing attention on power and the 'First World' consumer rather than the more commonly researched disempowered in the 'Third' (Hutnyk, 1996). I endeavoured to unpack the relationship between pleasure and compassion, asking when and how responding benevolently became so closely coupled to entertainment, pleasure and reward. It is significant to the volunteer tourism trend I believe, that today's marketplace is flooded with services and products that have connections to charitable causes or benevolent campaigns and, that buying into compassion has never been easier -

eat more chocolate to save hungry children; wear fancy dress in aid of the casualties of war.

For those from the post-Live Aid generation at least, the centrality of compassion in today's culture (Moore, 2008; Tester, 2010) is both familiar and mainstream and, as such volunteer tourism fits snugly alongside empathy wristbands; awareness ribbons; Red Nose Days; Pudsey Bear and, the Pampers nappy/UNICEF neonatal tetanus vaccine partnership (why would consumers even consider other brands?) What has resulted, I have argued, is a marked blurring of problems and solutions; a strange mishmash of the desire to help and, the rewards and/or gains from acting out (buying, doing, wearing) these compassionate expressions. Whilst at its extreme, this distortion can be witnessed in what Fassin (2012) describes as a "lament[ing] of the dead [while] celebrating our generosity" (p:ix), the day to day mechanisms of compassionate consumption, not only allow the effortless buying-into of similar paradoxical examples, but also drive the inexorable petitioning to make these choices.

I also examined the rewards and benefits that volunteer tourism personally offers to consumers. In regards to young people it is clear that a competitive jobs market and/or rivalry for good university places, contributes to the elaboration of volunteer tourism as a positive (at times almost necessary) thing to do in order to gain or hone personal characteristics now considered essential for securing the best chance in life. My research also supported other scholarship that argues that volunteer tourism and similar development-type vacationing, is often used as a vehicle for self-improvement allowing and encouraging, as Salazar (2004) critically argues, "Western 'ego-tourists' [to work] on their self-realization and personal development" (p:104). Reward and gain, unselfconsciously promoted and regurgitated – 'It sounds silly but I've really grown up here' (Laura) - have also fuelled a drive by the industry to provide something "for all so that none may escape" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2000, p:5).

As such, volunteer vacation providers selling holidays with children in Siem Reap, as I have shown, now target groups outside the traditional eighteen to twenty-four year old demographic - each category of consumer having their particular 'reward-needs' woven into the construction and marketing of these holiday choices. Here too the mingling of inequity and privilege can be witnessed in the creation of such variations as 'honeyteering' (hands up holidays, 2012) and 'corporate incentive trips' (hands up incentives, 2010). As Simpson (2005) describes, what originally started out as part of the 'alternative scene', "dominated by charities and inspired by the travel of the hippy generation [has now become] an institutionally accepted commercial.... industry" (p:447). What may also be argued is that somewhere along this trajectory, moral sentiment appears to have given way to personal gratification. What is fundamental to all of this, however, is the recognition that travel has an enduring history of power and authority that has informed – and continues to inform - tourism discourse in terms of discovery and adventure; of rights of access; of the delights in gazing (Urry, 1990); of pleasure in the exotic (Said, 2003); of escape and renewal (from the Grand Tour to the gap year; from the all-inclusive package to the 'eco-educational' break).

From tourism consumption too, is the equally enduring notion of fantasy, which when connected to childhood nostalgia and innocence begins to reveal, as I have argued, worrying elements of 'abuse in the benign' (Giroux, 2000) practise of volunteer tourism. That volunteer tourists also showed how re-connecting with their own childhoods' pasts enriched their vacation experiences, offered further support. Whilst notions of otherness also made significant links here, it was particularly in the consumption of the 'morsels of exotic otherness', that these concerns came round full cycle.

Conclusion

Whilst Zygmunt Bauman argues that sociologists are called to perform the twin roles of "*de-familiarizing the familiar* (debunking its alleged self-evidence) and *familiarizing* (taming, domesticating, making manageable) *the unfamiliar*" (in Jacobsen and Tester, 2013, p:105), Didier Fassin (2012) also contends that "critical

thinking sits at the crossroads between... curiosity and indignation, between the desire to understand and the will to transform” (p:243). In the conduct of this research and the construction of this thesis, my aims have been both an attempt to ‘debunk the self-evidence’ deeply-rooted in the trend of volunteer tourism as well as the desire to, if not transform (that would be an ambition too far), then at least to agitate and expose *the unfamiliar* issues embedded in the consumption of these vacations - as such, to contribute to attempts to re-present ideas around this particular tourism product. What is more, all this *was* provoked by a curiosity that led me to ask that first simple question, ‘*just what is going on here?*’ At its core, this critique was motivated by both a desire to understand as well as a desire to “drive a wedge into what is generally [a] subject of consensus” (Didier, 2012, P:244).

But I have also been motivated by the Latin phrase ‘*malum in se*’ – wrong in itself - which I have pinned by my desk as a constant reminder of my intuitive sense that poverty and tourism - or more specifically, one groups’ consumer pleasure and another groups’ enduring disadvantage - are at the least, awkward bedfellows at worst, plain wrong. Because concealed in this dichotomous relationship is the potential to mistake a rationalisation of inequality, as tolerance; to ignore injustice in the enactment of good intent (Illich, 1968); or to accept (and come to love) the ‘Third World’ just as it is (Žižek, 1997). The message embedded in the story of volunteer tourism - of compassion through consumption - is one that allows pleasure to be taken in the values and rewards of global capitalism, at the same time as expressing sympathy towards its casualties (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009). Here the concepts of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, c1991) and civilised oppression (Harvey, 1999) have been relevant and valuable ideas when thinking about the notion of good intent associated with these vacation choices.

As Cynthia Enloe (2000) argues, “although [tourism] is infused with masculine ideas about adventure, pleasure and the exotic, those are deemed ‘private’ and thus kept off stage in debates about international politics.” (p:20). With these assertions as a backdrop it is pertinent to ask why an examination of volunteer tourism would ignore these relationships. By viewing this trend through the lens of consumerism,

it has been possible to widen my initial concerns, but now with a renewed framing and importantly, with a re-connection to the political – because in issues of consumerism, as Trentman (2007) asserts, ‘politics are back’.

I must, however, acknowledge here the difficulties that exist in the very act of critiquing what many accept as legitimate gestures of help and compassion - volunteer tourism as the taken-for-granted positive, ‘no harm done’, vacation choice. Whilst many scholars argue that the trend has not been sufficiently scrutinized (Birrell, 2010; Heath 2007, Salazar 2004, Simpson 2004, Sin 2009; Zavitz and Butz, 2011) - and that there exists “a critical need for research to provide a firm foundation for a deeper understanding of volunteer tourism – in both its positive and negative aspects” (Sin, 2009, p:48) - other scholarship continues to defend and promote the potential of the tourism/poverty relationship by focusing on transformative agendas and positive outcomes, for example (Goodwin, 2008; Jones, 2005, Mclellan, 2007).

Moreover by association, critical evaluation could be viewed as a trivialisation - or a lack of understanding - of the ‘real’ problems in Siem Reap. The charge of having the luxury to spend four years contemplating my concerns - whilst never quite uttered - was something I occasionally saw in the eyes of those getting their hands dirty at the coalface, as it were.

But then I remember Pub Street, the centre of tourist nightlife where children canvass holidaymakers to attend dance shows performed by other orphans from an orphanage where volunteer tourists spend their vacations. Whilst promoting the imaginary of ‘innocent exotic otherness’ conceals the commercialisation of vulnerability, the final wedding of this image to that of the ‘welcome’ international volunteer, allows the inequality that defines this relationship to remain unseen.

That children today, in ‘Third World’ destinations such as Siem Reap, can be marketed as ‘cute enough to eat’ and their poverty and circumstances used as things that appeal to vacationers, allows the reality of their lives to be papered

over, silenced and neglected at the expense of providing tourist fantasies to meet the needs of the 'First World' consumer. When viewed through the lens of consumerism even the terms of good intentions appear to rest on the notion of fantasy and desire, "repackaged in luminous ways for ravenous consumption" (Kaur and Hutnyk, 1990, p:1). Whilst supposedly those of us who choose these vacations care about the lives of Cambodian children, what we may care more about can be revealed when asking the question, 'just what is being consumed' in Siem Reap; volunteer tourism as a product for tourist consumption being a rather sad paradox of the reasons we bought into it in the first place.

Recommendations for future research

The photographic image, image production and circulation and, the use that images are put to, are significant to the trend of volunteer vacations. From arguments that centre on the camera as today's "technology of domination" (Hoelscher, 2008, p:10) or/and "*the* international signifier of tourism" (Hutnyk, 1996, p:145, italics in original), to the photograph as a key factor in how the 'Third World' continues to be understood, here is an area that deserves more attention. And as the technologies of image-making are rapidly transforming - as well as the mode and methods of broadcast – an understanding of the context, status, power and intertextual meanings (no less the subjective interpretation) of photographs made in these spaces, will be required to keep apace. As such, I see this as an important area for future research.

Secondly, I see the presence of an increasing number of older volunteer tourists as an interesting change in the consumption of this trend. Examining how these more mature consumers will affect the overall image and understanding of volunteer tourism is a potential area for study. Will, for example, an increased proportion of over fifty year olds put-off the younger, less experienced, nineteen to twenty-five year olds and trouble their concepts of fun? What too of the requirements of the vacation providers when thinking about older volunteers? One NGO manager talked to me, for example, about a man over sixty-five who had taken a four week volunteering placement with them. What she told me was, "he was actually more

trouble than he was worth to be honest. When I wasn't worrying about potential health issues I was worried that I wasn't able to keep him properly occupied. Give me the youngsters any day". By focusing on the tendency for more mature individuals to become volunteer tourists, alternative perspectives may be offered to expectations, motivations, experience and reflection. However, in recognising that tourism is prone to trends and fashions, this also leads me to ask what will happen to Siem Reap when it too becomes passé?

Finally, the 2011 UNICEF report into Cambodian residential care facilities raised a number of serious concerns that make connections with my own research. The report concludes that many children are showing several symptoms of institutionalization; being exposed to varying forms and degrees of risk and, were often expected to be involved in fundraising activities (dance show performances, the production of crafts and souvenirs) "for their own care and support" (p:9). Although an examination of these factors was beyond the scope of this research, these concerns were observed in children in a number of residential and non-residential establishments during my fieldwork to projects where volunteer tourists were encouraged and made welcome. Exploring through rigorous academic research the alleged links between these issues and volunteer tourism in Siem Reap is now, I would argue, an imperative.

Finally

In no way did this project ever intend to make light of the challenges that Cambodian families and children face on a daily basis or, to fail to recognise the work of those individuals who want to see serious change. Rather, in challenging the 'morally untouchable' (Didier, 2012) status of these increasingly popular vacations - by heeding Hutnyk's (1996) appeal to "question everything" (p:223) - I have sought to make (even a little) room for the attention that poverty and inequity actually deserves.

What I have attempted to do is to ask questions of a touristic product and practise that - as an expression of compassion - consumes children and their poverty as a

sanitised but integral part of a rewarding vacation choice. Furthermore, I have sought to understand more of the consumers' (the volunteer tourists') complicity - in terms of politics, history, morality and power - in issues that it is often claimed, are capable of moving us to 'buy something'. Volunteer tourists, I believe, deserve the benefit of these insights too, but solving any problem first requires awareness that a problem indeed exists. As Hutnyk (1996) again, effectively puts it, "word needs to get around" (p:223).

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Appendix 1

Brief vignettes of interviewees

Rose (A past volunteer)

I travelled to Dublin to interview Rose where we spent two hours in the corner of a busy bar. A second year student studying International Development, she had travelled to Siem Reap with a female friend also from her course specifically to volunteer at an orphanage. Rose claimed that they were encouraged to get, what she described as, some 'overseas experience' and during their first year summer break the young women had volunteered together in a Belarusian orphanage. During their final year they were required to travel to Africa on a six month placement. Rose said that they saw their trip to Cambodia as preparing them for the longer experience. She talked at length about their time in Belarus; about how they were told their role was to 'put a smile on the children's faces' and, about how the emotional attachments they formed left both them and the children 'in bits' when they left.

The students had booked their vacation at the orphanage in Cambodia after a short on-line search and despite being critical of the organisation she was happy to allow her positive testimony to remain on the NGO's website. Rose warned me before our meeting that she thought her opinion of volunteer tourism was going to be very different to others I may encounter. She was in general highly disparaging of volunteer tourism and volunteer tourists and told me that following her own experience in Siem Reap she would 'never work with children again'. She also compared her time in Cambodia with another volunteering role she had in Eire where, before they began volunteering, they had received considerable training as well as being expected to make a long-term commitment to the project. Following her graduation, Rose moved out to Germany where she teaches English at a language school.

Sam (A past volunteer)

After graduating from university Sam returned home to find work and - living rent-free thanks to his mum - he was able to save for his round the world trip which he set-out on in early 2008. He was attracted to South East Asia because of, as he described, the many cultures in a relatively small area; the regions popularity amongst back-packers; an understanding of the availability of cheap food and accommodation - '\$3 per night accommodation and not much more than a dollar for a meal' and, its reputation as being a 'challenging but relatively safe part of the world'.

Sam had not considered becoming a volunteer until he reached Siem Reap where he met two European women who talked to him about the experiences they were

enjoying at a local orphanage. They also told him that there were plenty of volunteering opportunities available there. Sam went along to see 'what it was all about' - observing lessons being led by other volunteers and helping children in the classroom. Thoroughly enjoying the day, he decided to pay the \$20 fee and register as a volunteer himself. Having initially planned only three or four days in Siem Reap - to see the temples and the town - because of the volunteering opportunity and the friends he made at the orphanage, Sam postponed his flight to Australia and stayed on for a further five weeks. Following his world trip, Sam studied for an MSc in physiotherapy and now works in the NHS.

Elliot (A volunteer in situ/past volunteer)

At twenty-two years old, Elliot had spent the three previous summers working with children in California as a councillor on the Camp America scheme. He had booked this volunteering vacation to Siem Reap through a major volunteer vacation provider. Elliot had worked since leaving school in shops and restaurants close to his home in Lancashire, UK, saving his earnings to pay for, what he described as 'his adventures'. He told me that he had not as yet decided what career he was going to pursue in life but hoped that this trip would help him to make some important decisions. I spoke to Elliot on a number of occasions whilst he was in Cambodia and also contacted him when he was back in the UK – again living at home with his family and working in a supermarket. A thoughtful young man who, whilst enjoying his time in Siem Reap – the camaraderie with the other volunteers, the night life and weekends away - often appeared troubled by his volunteering role. Elliot subsequently applied to university and after graduating in Creative Advertising, now lives and works in London as a copy writer.

Kate (A past volunteer)

Kate was a twenty-five year old woman from Liverpool, UK with a degree in law. I had met her whilst I was a volunteer tourist myself in Cambodia and contacted her a year later to ask if she would be willing to be interviewed about her experience. Back in Liverpool she was working with the same law firm she had left to go travelling. Whilst Kate had previously spent a term teaching English in China with a large teaching abroad company, she was keen on her SE Asian trip to find somewhere to do some 'genuine', as she described, volunteering. She had deliberately not made plans in advance as she hoped to just 'come across the right place to be'. Kate was delighted to find that the orphanage where we met welcomed walk-in volunteer tourists at a very reasonable cost, an opportunity she described as being like a dream come true. Kate, who still enjoys travelling, is now a corporate solicitor.

Lilly (A past volunteer)

About to leave home to begin university I met Lilly at the same time as meeting Kate in Liverpool to talk about her experience in Siem Reap. Lilly and Kate had met in Cambodia. Although I had hoped to interview both women, Lilly offered only a short description of her experience and then told me that she had little else to say and would rather concentrate on preparing herself for her forthcoming move to London.

Sheila (A potential volunteer/past volunteer)

In her early sixties, Sheila had lived and worked in France for ten years until returning to the UK some time ago to care for her aging parents. After her father's death she planned her trip to Siem Reap whilst her brother and sister-in-law 'took up the reins with mother' for a time. Sheila had upholstery and weaving skills and talked about teaching women to make toilet roll covers to sell to the tourists. Although having made some tentative arrangements to work with women in a sewing workshop, when she arrived in Siem Reap her plans fell through as there were no women to teach, as she described. Sheila subsequently spent her time moving between different projects at times working with children – a choice she would have preferred not to take, she said.

Whilst planning her trip Sheila had attended a briefing from a major volunteer vacation provider but although inspired to do something was not impressed with the company's marketing and had therefore decided to plan her journey independently. Having some years early travelled to India as a tourist, she said that she specifically wanted to give something back on this particular vacation. Sheila conceded that she had needs that younger tourists may not have hence choosing a comfortable although 'not swanky' hotel to stay in. She frequently spoke, however, about being 'prepared to get stuck in' and being happy to get her 'hands dirty'. Sheila described her experience in Siem Reap as a 'massive let down' and after returning to the UK began volunteering in a children's hospice charity shop near her home where she claimed she could do much more good than 'at the other side of the world'.

Laura (A volunteer in situ)

I met Laura at the guesthouse we were both staying in. She was with a group of twelve 18-20 year olds taking part in a ten week organised 'South East Asia Ethical Adventure Trail' that included spending four weeks in a Cambodian community school - a short daily tuk-tuk ride out of town. This part of the adventure earned the young people a company certificate for teaching English as a foreign language. Laura was a friendly and open young woman who had only taken family holidays to typical holiday places, as she described, before this vacation. She suffered from infected bites during much of her time in Siem Reap.

Despite hating the term 'gap year', Laura acknowledged that this was for her the gap between school and university. She was waiting to hear if she had been offered a place to study politics and history and Skyped her mother most evening to ask, she claimed, if anything had arrived in the post. Laura told me, however, that even if she was offered a place she was now thinking of not taking it up. After her first week at the school in Siem Reap she was talking about coming back to set up an orphanage with her new Cambodian friend. She was concerned though about what her parents would think of this new idea as she was to have been the first person in her family to go to university and they were very proud of her ambitions to be a journalist.

Mary (A volunteer in situ)

A widowed, retired school teacher from London I interviewed Mary towards the end of her four week volunteering vacation. Having raised her family and enjoyed a rewarding career, her husband had died within a year of her retiring. Now, almost three years after her loss, she hoped that she would 'find herself again' through a volunteering vacation in a Cambodian orphanage. Mary talked about how being a volunteer tourist would also give her an opportunity to regain her confidence and sense of purpose in life. Mary was in daily contact with her daughter. She planned to fund-raise for the project when she got back to England. Although missing her grand-children, Mary said she was going to use her experience in Siem Reap to make sure they understood just how lucky they were having 'plenty to eat and so many toys to play with'.

Jonny (A volunteer in situ)

Jonny, a thirty-two year old from America was volunteering for one week at an orphanage that put on nightly traditional dance shows for tourists. Having been travelling around South East Asia for some years he said he had no plans yet to return home. He told me that he often took up volunteering opportunities when 'it took his fancy' and talked about his time at orphanages in Vietnam and Laos. Jonny divulged little about himself but said he would be moving on to Thailand very soon to meet back up with friends he had made earlier in the year. He told me was happy with his current lifestyle which he decided as 'broadening'.

Patricia and Teresa (Potential volunteer tourists – to Siem Reap)

Patricia, originally from Wales, is an active woman in her late fifties living full-time as an expatriate in southern Spain. Patricia claimed to have plenty of money at her disposal and lots of time to follow her own interests and projects. Many of these projects involved travelling to different countries for volunteering holidays. She went annually, for example, to South Africa and also talked about her trips to South America and Vietnam. Sometimes she would travel with her husband and

volunteer whilst he was on business, at other times she travelled with her friend Teresa.

Patricia was keen to be interviewed as she had heard that I had been a volunteer tourist in Cambodia. She told me that Cambodia was one place she would love to go to. I initially interviewed Patricia in Spain. She brought a number of photo-albums of her vacations along with her and had asked that I did the same. A warm and friendly woman she spoke with great enthusiasm about her times being a volunteer with 'very poor' children.

I met Patricia again with her friend Teresa over a year later during my fieldwork trip in Siem Reap. They were at the time on a volunteering vacation in Vietnam. Teresa and Patricia had met over twenty years ago when they were both living in Wales and were both members of the same lunch club. They had booked this trip through the major UK volunteering vacation provider that they always used when volunteering in Vietnam. Wanting to take a look at Cambodia to decide whether to book a vacation there, they flew down to Siem Reap for a long weekend and we were able to meet up - and I was able to conduct a joint interview with them. Teresa was also now an expatriate but lived and ran a business in France. A divorcee of similar age to her friend, she told me that she had nearly as much money as Patricia but joked that she had far less time as she had to work for a living. The women had been volunteering in Vietnam for two weeks every year for the last three years and had every intention, as they told me, of continuing. At the end of their weekend the women decided that they would not volunteer in Cambodia but both left considerable financial contributions to projects in the area.

Pete (A volunteer in situ)

Pete, from Australia, described himself as being part of the Woodstock generation and had been travelling to Asia since the 1960's having 'fallen in love with the whole Asian lifestyle', as he described it. He returned to Australia shortly after marrying a Thai woman during which time he told me he had 'lifted his game a bit and studied social work and worked with Aboriginal people, homeless people, drug and alcohol stuff... and in the prison system'. After his marriage failed he often returned to Asia for varying periods of time – 'sometimes a few months, sometimes a few years'.

On one of these trips Pete had met a Cambodian woman who he had recently married in a traditional ceremony in her village. He was at the time waiting to obtain official papers so they too could move back to Australia, which he told me, was what his new wife wanted to do. In the meantime Pete was volunteering at a Pagoda in town where he taught English three evenings a week to children and young people. He said that as he had a lot more experience than the tourists he

had offered the pagoda his services but not a fee. He told me that he had seen a lot of changes around the place in regards to volunteering, much of which depressed him. Since interviewing Pete I have received some communication from him. Now in Australia, he tells me that his new wife wants to study age care but that he advised her to volunteer first. He said that life back home these days is challenging and that he doesn't envy young people trying to get somewhere. "Oz has been very spoilt; the whingers should spend time with the poor of Cambodia".

Jean (A past volunteer)

Jean was single and in her early thirties. A trained nurse, she told me working in London hospitals had exhausted her. Having just been accepted for health visitor training she had a month between the end of her current contract and beginning her new course. She had booked to volunteer at the orphanage for the month where she told me she hoped to be able to use her skills 'unencumbered by red tape'. Jean was very upset at what she described as the exploitation of some of the children and said that, whilst she had enjoyed the experience, she could see that in retrospect her motivation to go to Cambodia was largely to do with her own particular problems at the time.

Gwen and Steven (Past volunteers and volunteers in situ)

A retired couple in their early sixties Gwen and Steven were on their third volunteering vacation to Siem Reap. I interviewed Gwen two weeks into their current five week trip. Previously they had volunteered at an orphanage that had since been closed down when the British expatriate manager had been jailed on paedophile charges. They had nonetheless returned to Cambodia to volunteer with another NGO being run by an Australian woman they had met and socialised with the previous year. Steven was a very practical man and had many skills including plumbing and electricity; Gwen was a retired primary head teacher and was keen to introduce learning-through-play innovations into the NGO classrooms in Siem Reap.

Although from Northern Ireland, Gwen and Steven's son had settled in Australia and after their vacation in Siem Reap they were flying on to spend three months with him and his wife and their (imminent) first grandchild. The following year Gwen and Steven returned to Cambodia and committed a whole year to working in the orphanage.

Lynette (A volunteer in situ)

Lynette was an Australian woman in her late fifties. A retired market gardener she had travelled alone to Siem Reap having been inspired by the biography of a 'backpacking granny' who had also been a volunteer in an orphanage in Cambodia.

Lynnette came from a small town on the east coast and a number of years previously had raised money for another orphanage but told me that the money had 'got lost in the system' – a mistake she said she would not make again. This was one reason, Lynnette claimed, for deciding to come out herself to Cambodia to make sure that this time her money went to the people who needed it. Lynnette's family had been concerned about her travelling alone but she was in regular contact to reassure them of her well-being. She also told me jokingly that it would do them good to worry about her for a change.

Helen (A potential volunteer)

Helen contacted me as she was interested in travelling with two friends to Cambodia for a volunteering vacation. At seventeen years old Helen had spent two weeks at a Christian orphanage in India as part of her school's religious education programme. Her independent boarding school had been taking groups of final year pupils to the same orphanage for a number of years. Brought up by her American mother, Helen reflected deeply on her experience and was keen to do things another way on her next trip. She talked about how she had felt very differently about her experience to lots of her school companions. For example, she said *she* was very uncomfortable about the difference in living conditions they had compared to the children. She was also unhappy that they were provided with much better food than the children too. After leaving school, Helen attended a private make-up academy and now lives and works as a make-up artist in London.

Robyn (A volunteer in situ)

Robyn, a retired nurse from Eire, spoke with passion about how she had dreamt about volunteering in a Cambodian orphanage for many years. A doctor friend from Robyn's home town travelled often to Siem Reap and was a major fundraiser at the project she was volunteering with. The doctor was also in town at this time with his daughter. Robyn and I met up on a number of evenings on Pub Street and on one occasion I was invited to join her, the doctor and his daughter for dinner. Robyn spoke enthusiastically about returning to Siem Reap with a group of young trainee nurses. She felt that it would be beneficial for them to see the conditions that the children in Siem Reap lived in and 'count their blessings'. My overriding memory of this evening, however, came at the end of the meeting when the doctor loudly berated a young Cambodian waiter because the restaurant had run out of the brand of whisky he particularly enjoyed after a meal.