



OPPRESSION, EMANCIPATION, AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM

Research Propositions

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Abstract: This paper develops research propositions for volunteer tourism using a combination of critical theory and social movement theory as a foundation. As is often the case with emerging areas of research, a theoretical foundation has been difficult to establish in volunteer tourism. The inherent contradictions of volunteer tourism, particularly concerning the interplay of oppression/emancipation, dependency/resistance and dominant hegemony/agency beg to be deconstructed with a critical theory lens. Social movement theory then in turn offers a tool through which researchers can look to break the hermeneutic circle by examining good practices in volunteer tourism, particularly concerning potential improvements for all stakeholders in self-efficacy, resource networks, and consciousness-raising experiences. The paper culminates with a proposition model based on these theoretical perspectives. **Keywords:** critical theory, human emancipation, social change, discourse, hermeneutic circle, self-efficacy. © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

A steadily growing body of work exists in the area of volunteer tourism. McGehee and Santos (2005, p.760) define volunteer tourism as “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need.” Wearing (2001, p.1) defines volunteer tourists as “those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment.” While good progress has been made toward defining the concept, debate persists as to the more subtle components of volunteer tourism, including the language of volunteer tourism, the system of volunteer tourism, how various stakeholders view themselves, and the role of volunteer tourism organizations. Perhaps most importantly,

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there is a lack of an overall cohesive theoretical framework and accompanying research agenda underpinning these various debates.

As is often the case with emerging tourism-related research, a theoretical foundation is vital to help address these debates and issues, but it is also difficult to establish. A wide variety of theoretical models have been used in the domain of volunteer tourism. These include early, foundational work by Wearing and others (Wearing, 2001, 2004; Wearing & McDonald, 2002) that used decommodification and feminist theory to point to NGO's as examples of spaces where tourism can exist in a decommodified and egalitarian form, escaping the strictly economic for a more diverse definition for tourism. This was closely followed by McGehee's use of social movement theory (McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Norman, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005) applied as a way to examine the role of volunteer tourism in impacting the resource networks, self-efficacy, and consciousness-raising of individual volunteer tourists. Many others have since contributed solid theoretical work from a wide variety of perspectives, including Simpson's (2004) focus on development theory, which highlighted the dangers of over-reliance on volunteer tourism as a prescription for international development and Mustonen's (2005) application of postmodernism used to argue that volunteer tourism is a convergence of the traditional pilgrimage with modern leisure tourism. In addition, social exchange theory (McGehee & Andereck, 2009) was applied in a survey of host community residents to look for predictors of support for volunteer tourism planning; equity theory (Pearce & Coghlan, 2008) provided the foundation to examine the underlying psycho-social forces at work that are giving rise to volunteer tourism; Palacios (2010) utilized a neo-colonial theoretical perspective to warn that international volunteering and service programs must engage themselves in the development aid discourse and recognize the challenges of volunteer tourism. These various theoretical perspectives have been utilized to develop solid research examining the three primary stakeholders of volunteer tourism: volunteer tourists, hosts/residents, and the various forms of volunteer tourism organizations. While these efforts demonstrate a good start, many researchers agree that volunteer tourism needs both additional examination through a variety of theoretical perspectives (Wearing & Ponting, 2009) as well as a more cohesive theoretical strategy (McGehee, 2009) that involves all of the components of the volunteer tourism phenomena at an appropriate scale.

Establishing an appropriate scale that is suitably large enough to address the volunteer tourism system while keeping the perspective manageable is not an easy task. The aforementioned research applied theories at a level referred to by Merton (1957) as narrow empiricism. This level of theoretical application certainly has merit, especially in the case of a fledgling area of study such as volunteer tourism. Of equal importance, others have focused on a larger, nearly-grand theory perspective that attempts to construct a theoretical framework covering all aspects of sustainable tourism (and have included volunteer tourism as a component of the system) (Butcher, 2006, 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Wearing, McDonald, & Ponting, 2005; Wearing & Ponting,

2006, 2009). While the author agrees that the lines between volunteer tourism, eco-tourism, backpacker tourism, sustainable tourism, and even mainstream mass tourism are difficult to draw, the propositions set forth in this document target volunteer tourism as opposed to the broader context being presented by Wearing et al and Butcher. This paper is an attempt at a comprehensive, all-encompassing middle-range theoretical approach applied strictly to the volunteer tourism system that includes the volunteer tourist, the host community, and the volunteer tourism intermediaries and *also* provides a proposition model for the theoretical approach.

The stakeholder group which has received the most attention within volunteer tourism is the volunteer tourist. Studies have uncovered different motivations for travel than the mass tourist, including personal self-development, altruism, and seeking cultural understanding (Broad, 2003; Mustonen, 2007; Pearce & Coghlan, 2008). Preferred volunteer tourism activities include a desire to give back to the host community, participation in community development, and/or cultural/historical restoration, provision of medical assistance, educational support, and ecological conservation (Brown & Morrison, 2003; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Coghlan, 2008; Gray & Campbell, 2007; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Uriely, Reichel, & Ron, 2003; Wearing, 2001). Researchers argue that it is this differentiation between volunteer tourists and other tourists that begs for specific theoretical framework of its own.

In contrast with the focus on research targeting volunteer tourists, host communities as the least-studied stakeholder group (Guttentag, 2009; McGehee & Andereck, 2008, 2009; Simpson, 2004). Guttentag (2009) and Simpson (2004) found mixed results regarding the degree of benefit for the receiving destination. In fact, their findings indicated that some forms of volunteer tourism may burden the host communities and/or increase the level of dependency of the receiving countries upon the volunteer sending nations. Guttentag (2009) found evidence of such negative impacts as the neglect of local resident's desires, unsatisfactory/incomplete work conducted by volunteers, the reduction of potential employment for locals, the promotion of dependency, and the 'othering' of locals. Simpson (2004) also critiqued volunteer tourism as an over-simplification of international development that has potential to undermine larger development initiatives. An appropriate theoretical foundation that addresses these inherent contradictions of volunteer tourism is needed to find ways to maximize the positive impacts while recognizing and minimizing the negative impacts on the host community.

Research targeting volunteer tourism organizations has revealed the crucial role that the organizations play. Volunteer tourism organizations have the potential to act either as catalysts for positive socio-cultural change or facilitators of neo-colonialism and dependency. Wearing (2001) was the first to identify the role of NGO's as a new and vital opportunity to change the face of tourism overall and has expanded his exploration more recently to embrace sustainable tourism (Wearing & Ponting, 2009; Wearing et al., 2005). Raymond

(2008) built on this work and utilized appreciative inquiry to explore how volunteer tourism sending organizations can best develop and manage their programs through volunteer selection, pre-departure preparation, orientation and debriefings. McGehee and Andereck (2008) also found evidence of the importance of local, grass-roots volunteer tourism organizations as gatekeepers between volunteer tourists and members of the host communities. These efforts represent a good start, but a paucity of research and theoretical grounding in this area continues to exist.

As demonstrated above, there has been increasing research targeting each of the three primary volunteer tourism stakeholder groups, and even some important work that examines the interplay between two segments of the volunteer tourism system (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Wearing, 2001). However, little research has investigated how the differing motivations and activities of volunteer tourists interplay with volunteer tourism organizations, or how the volunteers and organizations impact host communities and other volunteer tourists, and in turn how these interactions affect society overall. Specifically, the question becomes whether the unique motivations and attitudes of volunteer tourists, the catalytic potential of volunteer tourism organizations, and the agency of the host community can overcome the predominantly western, capitalist environment in which they are often situated, an environment which depends upon production and consumption, supply and demand, and the perpetuation of inequality. Are there “third spaces,” as discussed by Wearing and Wearing (2006), to be found where the agency of the volunteer tourist, volunteer tour operators and suppliers, and members of the host community can overcome the structure of the dominant hegemony? In practical terms for communities and volunteer tourism organizations, is there a way to examine volunteer tourism in order to evaluate and highlight good practices that maximize potential benefits and minimize potential negative impacts (Ellis, 2003; Jones, 2005; Ruhanen, Cooper, & Fayos-Sola, 2008; Spencer, 2008; Wearing, 2004)? A solid, cohesive theoretical strategy and research approach to volunteer tourism could serve to answer these very practical and applied questions well. The aim of this paper is to use a combination of critical theory and social movement theory as a foundation to develop research propositions for the volunteer tourism system.

In this article, the term “proposition” refers to a statement describing a possible relationship between volunteer tourism and larger social structures that exist both within and outside the realm of volunteer tourism. These propositions have been developed as a result of the merging of two important theoretical perspectives: critical theory (primarily from a Foucauldian perspective) and social movement theory (primarily from the New Social Movement theoretical perspective). The propositions came to fruition over many months of what Weick refers to as “thought trials,” which, in its ideal form embodies “a theorizing process characterized by a great number of [heterogeneous] diverse conjectures” (1989, p. 522). Every effort was made to combine both what we *know* empirically about volunteer tourism, critical theory,

and social movement theory, with what we *think* about these concepts if we open our minds to the creative side of theory and proposition building in an organized, heuristic manner.

A number of techniques of creative thinking were utilized in the thought trial process, including attribute listing and developing provocations (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004). The technique of attribute listing involves developing a compilation of all the various components of an idea, object, or process. The components of the list are then examined in terms of how they impact the overall process. For example, host-guest interactions are one attribute of the volunteer tourism experience. This attribute was then examined in terms of what the literature tells us about how it impacts and is impacted by each of the other components of the volunteer tourism experience. In addition to attribute listing, the development of provocations was especially helpful for the creation of propositions. This process involves the creation of provocative statements as a way to challenge existing research assumptions and paradigms (De Bono, 1992). For example, one can take the basic assumption from the literature that dependency of lesser developed countries upon more developed countries has negative consequences, then turn that on its head to develop the following provocation (Po): “Po: Dependency cultivated by volunteer tourism is beneficial to host communities.” Provocations are useful in that they challenge assumptions and help researchers expand their horizons in directions they normally would not go.

The following is an overview of the specific components of both critical theory and social movement theory utilized for the development of the research propositions presented in this article. Both theoretical perspectives are very broad and rich, so it is important to delineate the parameters from which the propositions were developed. Following the overview of these perspectives, the propositions will then be laid out, beginning with the critical theory propositions as a way to deconstruct and critique volunteer tourism, then following with the social movement theory propositions, which offer hope for the (re)construction of volunteer tourism as a potential mechanism to be used toward the greater idea of emancipation that is so critical to enduring social change.

Critical Theory

Critical theory offers rich ground from which to cultivate a theoretical foundation for volunteer tourism. Since its inception, critical theory has grown to include such varied sub-sets as post-colonialism, feminism, deconstructionism, cultural materialism, postmodernism, and queer theory (Sim & Van Loon, 2009). In spite of the broad range of perspectives within critical theory, issues of power, domination, and oppression are central to critical theory: who has power, who does not, and why (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003). It is this perspective of critical theory that the propositions in this paper are based upon.

Originators of critical theory aspired for the ultimate goal of human emancipation, achieved through the exposure of power relations in all circumstances of domination and oppression, both subtle and obvious, followed by the application of consensus or “real democracy” (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 250) as the location for cooperative, practical, and transformative activity (Habermas, 1978). There are a number of interpretations of the power-emancipation relationship. For example, Marx argued that capitalism was the crux of the oppression of the proletariat (Marx, 1844). Over time, the power-emancipation relationship was interpreted differently by postmodern critical theorists such as Foucault (1975, 1977, 1978), for whom power and emancipation are more evasive and complex notions. Foucault argued that power is not static or institutional, and therefore not ascribable to the institution of capitalism as Marx posited, but rather power is fluid and unstable, strategic and inextricably related to knowledge (Foucault, 1978). Foucault also stresses that power does not exclude or repress, but rather it produces the realities, the knowledge, and the truths that in turn may exclude or repress (Foucault, 1977). It is also power that can create knowledge that can ultimately result in new, emancipatory realities.

These two different perspectives demonstrate that, as with any other well-developed theory, there are numerous perspectives and inevitable tensions amongst and between critical theorists. While it is quite difficult to find consensus across the various sub-groups within the critical tradition, there are some generally acceptable commonalities and assumptions, adopted from the work of Kincheloe and McLaren (2003), which include:

- (1) All thought is fundamentally mediated by socially and historically constituted power relations;
- (2) Facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription;
- (3) The relationship between concept and object/signifier and signified is never stable and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption;
- (4) Language is central to the formation of subjectivity;
- (5) Certain groups in any society are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable;
- (6) Oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others (eg class oppression versus racism) often discounts the interconnections among them;
- (7) Mainstream research practices are generally, although often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, p. 280-281).

Critical theory has not always been welcomed in tourism research circles, but this does seem to be changing. Wilson, Harris, and Small (2008) argued that the dominant hegemony of tourism research appears to be turning the corner in terms of its acceptance of critical theory and critical methodology. This was also exemplified most recently by the publication of Tribe's (2008, p. 245) work whereby he outlined the importance of critical theory to tourism overall as both a valuable theoretical concept for research and as "vital to the management and governance of tourism." Foucault's perspectives on critical theory, particularly the concepts of power, resistance, and emancipation, have appeared to attract the most attention of those researching tourism (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Feighery, 2009; Hollinshead, 1999; Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Palacios, 2010; Urry, 1990; Wearing, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006; Wearing, Wearing, & McDonald, 2010).

One of the earliest works that utilized Foucault's perspective was Urry's (1990) classic book "The Tourist Gaze." Specifically, Urry described how the tourist gaze is constructed and perpetuated and points to the numerous ways in which it is authorized and by whom. This was one of the first important theoretical works in which tourism was contextualized within the greater society, and certainly falls within the parameters of Kincheloe and McLaren's first critical theory assumption that all thought is fundamentally mediated by socially and historically constituted power relations. Subsequently, Hollinshead (1999) built upon Urry's work, as he further explored Foucault's notions of power as they apply to tourism in the form of the gaze and its connection not only with the tourist but also with the power and surveillance utilized through the institutions, organizations, and agencies of tourism (i.e. governance). Hollinshead argued that the people within these organizations possess the power to regulate tourism environments but simultaneously constrain themselves in the process. More recently, Feighery (2009) also examined the notion of governance through his examination of the use of photographs by tourism organizations. Both Hollinshead and Feighery's work encapsulates many components of critical theory, but with particular attention paid to Kincheloe and McLaren's third and fifth critical theory assumptions.

Wearing et al. (2010) applied Foucault's ideas to contextualize the power struggles between tour operators and local villagers in Papua, New Guinea, which, among other critical theoretical concepts, included discussion related to Kincheloe and McLaren's sixth critical theory assumption regarding oppression. Others have also focused their work on oppression, including Cheong and Miller (2000), who were one of the first to compare the tourist with Foucault's madman and criminal as not only the possessors of the gaze, but also vulnerable to the gaze of others. Jordan and Aitchison (2008) also found Foucault's gaze to be both fluid and constantly negotiated in the context of solo women travellers.

Kincheloe and McLaren's third and fourth critical theory assumptions regarding the roles of signs/signifiers and language have also been examined within mainstream tourism (Jenkins, 2003; Ponting,

2009; Santos, 2006; Soguk, 2003; Urry, 1990). Urry highlighted the importance of language and images in his discussion of the media and its role in creating anticipation and influencing the actual tourist experience. The tourist experience is then interpreted post-trip in a way to reconfirm the media images, thereby perpetuating the cycle. This is well-documented as the hermeneutic circle (Caton & Santos, 2009; Urry, 1990). Both Soguk (2003) and Jenkins (2003) examined texts and images to analyze the role and governmentality of the Hawai'ian tourism industry in its "production of the dominant paradise story" (Soguk, 2003, p. 35) and the hermeneutic circle in which backpackers in Australia reproduce and perpetuate the iconic images displayed in promotional brochures (Jenkins, 2003). Ponting's (2009) work is similar to Jenkins, in that he also utilized the hermeneutic circle of representation in the context of surfing tourism.

All these are important works that have contributed to the maturation of critical theory within the area of tourism research in general. However, with exception of Wearing's work (Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Wearing, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006), very little attention has been paid to the utility of critical theory in the specific context of volunteer tourism, which is ironic given the inherent complexity and contradictions of volunteer tourism. For example, while the role of power, resistance, and oppression between the volunteer and the voluntoured have been studied by some, much work remains to be done (Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Palacios, 2010). Additionally, the language and images utilized in various forms of media to depict volunteer tourism reflects the social construction of volunteer tourism in the context of the dominant hegemony as well as the hermeneutic circle. Critical theory provides a rich foundation for the study of the volunteer tourist-volunteer tour organizations-host relationship as a potential form of resistance to the dominant-subordinate dichotomy relationship whereby the tourist possesses socially and historically constituted power over the host community.

Social Movement Theory

Power relations, privilege, and oppression are concepts that are central to critical theory. One critique of critical theory is that there does not seem to be much room for agency or enduring social change. Social movement theory has sprung from critical theory in part as a potential solution to that critique. At the simplest level, modern social movements are "an organized effort by a significant number of people to change (or resist change in) some major aspects of society" (Marshall, 1994, p. 489). Generally, social movements take place outside the mainstream political system. They often consist of people who either choose to be or are excluded from routine institutionalized channels of participation. Examples include the civil rights movements in the United States during the 50s and 60s, the anti-nuclear arms movements in Europe in the 70s and 80s, and the nearly global anti-apartheid movement of the 80s and 90s.

Social movement theory has emerged from the study of social movements over several decades, and examines both the organizational level and the individual level. At the organizational level, resource mobilization has received a great deal of attention. This involves the examination of how and through what *networks* social movement organizations obtain economic, political, and human resources. Theorists argue that people who are excluded from routine access to power participate in movements to implement social change in ways that maximize whatever limited power and resources they possess (McCarthy & Zald, 1973). At the individual level, the social psychological aspects of *self-efficacy* and *consciousness-raising* are central. Self-efficacy may be defined as one's sense of an ability to overcome obstacles in life (Wiggins, Wiggins, & Vander Zanden, 1994). Without a strong sense of self-efficacy, a person would be disinclined to participate in social movements. Mueller (1992) characterizes consciousness-raising as an individual's identification with and awareness of the "battlegrounds" of social conflict. Consequently, it is closely bound with participation in and support for social movements (Eisenstein, 2001).

The ontological relationship between critical theory and social movement theory lies in the fact that both are concerned with issues of power. While the former provides the foundation for social movement theory in its exposure of oppression, the latter provides a location for praxis and social change. In other words, if one of the big questions of critical theory is how society may overcome oppression and achieve human emancipation, social movement theory is attempting to provide a possible solution. While it must be stressed that volunteer tourism organizations are not social movement organizations, they may provide a conduit for the development of social movements (McGehee, 2002; Spencer, 2008). Much like social movements, volunteer tourism organizations may provide a place for the powerless to gain power and act as agents of change.

Social movement theory offers a strong lens through which critical researchers can examine volunteer tourism as a catalyst for social movements. In particular, social movement theory can provide a framework whereby good practices in volunteer tourism may be discovered, facilitating networks, self-efficacy, and consciousness-raising experiences, and ultimately, social change. The following demonstrates how two theoretical perspectives, critical theory and social movement theory, can serve as the foundation for a series of research propositions to guide future research in volunteer tourism.

VOLUNTEER TOURISM PROPOSITIONS

Critical Theory and Contentious Contradictions

Tour operators and promoters of volunteer tourism commonly cite the ideals of giving back or contributing to society by helping those in need, while simultaneously creating an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding. Many volunteer tourism organizations offer

opportunities for participants to learn about the complex socio-economic and political issues that are the cause behind the inequalities they may see in the host communities, or between the host communities and themselves. Critical theorists may characterize this as an attempt to provide a mechanism by which they “uncover the winners and losers in particular social arrangements and the processes by which such power plays operate” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, p. 281). In particular, both include the Kincheloe and McLaren’s critical theory assumptions that certain groups in society are privileged over others and the first step in reducing these inequalities is via the exposure of the power relations that exist between various social groups. In this context it could be argued that the goals of many volunteer tourism organizations align closely with that of critical theorists. Two organizations that immediately come to mind are Via International (formerly Los Ninos) of San Diego California (viainternational.org), and Global Exchange of San Francisco, California (globalexchange.org). Again, we see an opportunity for Wearing and Wearing’s (2006) “third spaces” to provide a place for a decommodified exchange between the various stakeholders of volunteer tourism.

However, while these efforts are commendable, it is arguable that, much like the tourism industry as a whole (Hollinshead, 1999), the very foundation of volunteer tourism exists in a commodified environment and serves as a stronghold for the privileged (Butcher, 2006; Butcher & Smith, 2010; McGehee & Andereck, 2008). The volunteer tourism industry itself establishes power/knowledge relations between the economically and socially powerful volunteer tourists (who are, by nature, in possession of enough economic power that they have the discretionary time and income to travel to a distant destination) who can pay to volunteer and can stay for several days to upwards of several weeks, and the less powerful host communities (who are, by nature, being exploited or dominated by forces that place them in the position of being “voluntoured”). This relationship in itself shatters any notion of human emancipation, and in fact can perpetuate inequality (McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Raymond, 2008; Sin, 2009).

Conversely, there are numerous volunteer tourism organizations which are adamant about equalizing power relations between volunteers and the host community. Some organizations go to great lengths to make sure that the volunteer tourism experience is resident-controlled and resident-driven, In fact, many have the goal of putting



Figure 1. Proposition 1. The Contradictions of Volunteer Tourism

themselves out of business (again, Via International and Global Exchange are two examples of this phenomenon). That is, some volunteer organizations explicitly state that their primary objective is to eliminate the oppression that exists within the communities, and as a result, be no longer needed (McGehee & Andereck, 2008). These organizations actively seek to resist and challenge western, tourist-centric perspectives in favor of a more egalitarian model (Wearing & McDonald, 2002; Wearing et al., 2005). Therefore, the following proposition is suggested to frame future research inquiries:

Proposition 1. There are inherent contradictions surrounding the idea of volunteer tourism organizations as power equalizers and decommodifiers, if, in fact, the industry itself may be perpetuating its own existence, and in turn, perpetuating inequality through its goals and actions (Figure 1).

Critical Theory: The Many Faces of Oppression and the Oppressed

Critical theorists argue that there are multiple forms of power beyond merely the economic; in fact, it has been characterized as a theory which embraces the “rejection of economic determinism” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, p. 281) and recognizes other forms of oppression that are often race, class, and/or gender based (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008). Cheong and Miller (2000) were some of the first to draw attention to the use of this Foucauldian perspective to reveal the vulnerability of the economically powerful but otherwise subjugated tourist to the oppressive “composite gaze of others” (p. 371). Volunteer tourism as a space for emancipation for both the tourist and the host has been discussed at length in the context of Bhabha’s notion of ‘third space’ (Wearing & Ponting, 2009; Wearing, Stevenson, & Young, 2010). They support the argument that volunteer tourism could potentially be developed as a mechanism of emancipation, aimed *not only* directly at those who are most obviously economically oppressed (e.g. members of the host community), but could also target the more economically comfortable but nevertheless emotionally and spiritually hamstrung proletariat (working and middle-class volunteer tourists). Volunteer tourism has tremendous emancipative appeal to the economically secure but over-worked and sensory-overloaded working and middle classes of the West who suffer from a lack of human interconnectedness (Putnam, 2000). They are expected to work longer hours and consume more, often leaving no space for genuine human interaction. The television, cell phone, ipod, and the computer all fight for our attention, distracting us from the cultivation of human exchange in both our homes and our communities (Hollinshead, 1998).

This perspective conjures images of technology as the distraction formerly assigned to the church by Marx as the “opiate of the masses” (Marx, 1844). Volunteer tourism could provide one possible method of resistance as an emancipatory outlet for this kind of oppression of the working and middle classes. Volunteer tourism operators often tout the benefit of escaping capitalist production and consumption

through a volunteer tourism experience, and as a result, act as a catalyst for changing participant's lives. This notion is supported by past research where volunteer tourism has been identified as a potential cultivator of agency for the volunteer tourist (McGehee & Santos, 2005; Wearing, 2001). Ideally, this could provide a method of resistance to the oppression that is "reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, p. 281).

It is also important to point out the necessity of emancipation of the working and middle classes as vital to the emancipation of their more oppressed counterparts, as in Kincheloe and McLaren's discussion of critical theories' "many faces of oppression" (2003, p. 281). Critical theorists argue that one's emancipation is inextricably bound up in the others. Hence, the questions then become: is human emancipation in the critical theory sense only for those who are most oppressed, or is this also available to *and necessary for* the working and middle classes? In the context of volunteer tourism, is it possible that a scenario exists in which emancipation can occur for both the volunteer and the volun-toured? Is this, in fact, the *only* way in which true emancipation can occur? This presents another area of research which could benefit from the marriage of critical theory and volunteer tourism. A proposition reflecting this research focus may be stated in the following way:

Proposition 2. In order for emancipation of those most oppressed to occur, the working and middle classes must also be emancipated. Volunteer tourism, if developed correctly, provides a potential space for the emancipation of both the volun-toured within the host communities and the working and middle class volunteer tourist (Figure 2).

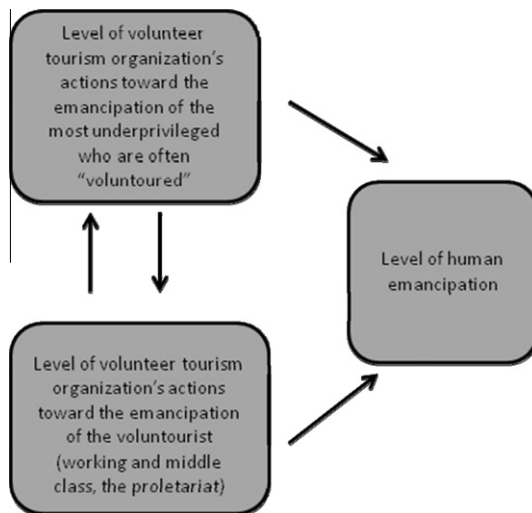


Figure 2. Proposition 2. The Oppressed and Volunteer Tourism

Critical Theory, Hegemony and Discursive Power

There is a great need to evaluate the portrayal of the dominant hegemony through the discourse of volunteer tourism. Research in the broader area of mass tourism provides a rich source of critical theoretical framework and methodologies in this area (Caton & Santos, 2009; Dann, 1996; Feighery, 2009; Hollinshead, 2009; Jenkins, 2003; Ponting, 2009; Soguk, 2003). An abundance of fascinating examples of the use of signs, signifiers, language, and images exists within the culture of volunteer tourism, geared toward the maintenance of power and control and often perpetuating the dominant hegemony through governance. The images associated with many volunteer tourism operator websites include examples of the subtlety of power relations between the volunteers and the voluntoured, particularly images that include the children of the host communities. The often Anglo-European, young, and vigorous volunteers are depicted in protective poses with children, e.g. with their arms around them, bestowing them with material gifts (trinkets or inexpensive school materials), intellectual gifts (reading or otherwise educating them), or emotional gifts (hugs, smiles, hand-holding). Rarely are members of the host community shown in positions of power or dominance over the volunteers, or even in neutral positions (Guttentag, 2009).

Analysis of the signs, language, and images depicted within the volunteer tourism promotional materials as a form of governance and as fodder to keep the hermeneutic circle turning begs to be analyzed in much the same way that the researchers mentioned previously have approached mass tourism (Dann, 1996; Feighery, 2009; Jenkins, 2003; Ponting, 2009; Soguk, 2003). For example, while not a strictly Foucauldian analysis, Dann (1996) was one of the first to examine the subjective meaning of tourism-related pictorial stimuli using Barbados as a case study. As mentioned earlier, Feighery's (2009) work explored governmentality and the role of stock photographs as a form of Foucauldian governance utilized by tourism organizations to exert influence over the decision-making process of tourists. Work targeting volunteer tourism could build upon these studies.

The language or discourse of volunteer tourism operator websites certainly provides fertile ground to examine the social construction of "what can and cannot be said, who has authority and who must listen, and whose social constructions are valid" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, in Tribe, 2008, p. 247) within the contradictions of volunteer tourism, particularly concerning the role of religion (McGehee & Andereck, 2008), the othering of the voluntoured (Lyons & Wearing, 2008, and the contested perpetuation of dependency (Butcher, 2006, 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010). These mechanisms then work to perpetuate the dominant hegemony *vis a vis* the generation of a continuous new crop of potential volunteer tourists, not unlike McKay's (1994) Smith-based (1986) mythomoteur of tourism, or creator of "ideological narratives and iconological machinery" of the tourism industry as a whole that in turn perpetuates the status quo of the greater society (Hollinshead, 2009, p. 530). Perhaps Caton and Santos (2009) come

the closest of any previous researchers to a volunteer tourism-esque scenario in their exploration of a non-profit, humanitarian organization known as Semester at Sea (SAS). They found that despite the stated mission of SAS to promote cross-cultural interaction and global citizenship, the program materials were rife with examples of the perpetuation of “a western superiority ideology” (2009, p. 191). A similar deep critical analysis of current volunteer tourism websites, blogs, brochures, and other forms of communication and promotion utilizing the critical theory concepts of the hermeneutic circle and subsequent governmentality would constitute a timely research focus. Therefore, the proposition for this line of research is as follows:

Proposition 3. The signs/signifiers of volunteer tourism, including images, language, and discourse of volunteer tourism organizations, reflect the dominant hegemony, which in turn (re)produces the social construction and perpetuation of volunteer tourism. The social construction of volunteer tourism then, in turn, perpetuates the dominant hegemony in a hermeneutic circle of representation (Figure 3).

A Critical Theory Model of Volunteer Tourism

A close examination of these three propositions reveals potential for integrating them into a larger model reflecting the interplay of critical theory with volunteer tourism (Figure 4). The model begins with the dominant hegemony and its relationship with both the discourse and social construction of volunteer tourism (Proposition 3). The discourse of volunteer tourism then influences the goals and actions of individual volunteer tourism organizations. In their efforts within host communities, volunteer tourism organizations actions and goals then influence the actual degree of equality between the volunteers and the voluntoured (Proposition 1). Both Propositions 1 and 2 include the actions a volunteer tourism organization takes (or does not take) toward the emancipation of the often-oppressed voluntoured, but Proposition 2 adds the emancipation of the volunteer tourists. All of these factors are crucial to human emancipation, which then in turn has an influence on the dominant hegemony, completing the hermeneutic circle of representation model (Figure 4). It should be very clearly stated that in no way is volunteer tourism the only influence on the dominant hegemony, nor is it the only possible answer to the

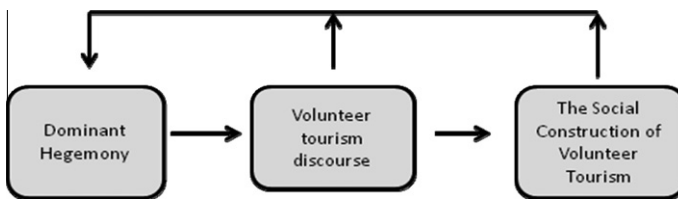


Figure 3. Proposition 3. Hegemony, Discourse, and Volunteer Tourism

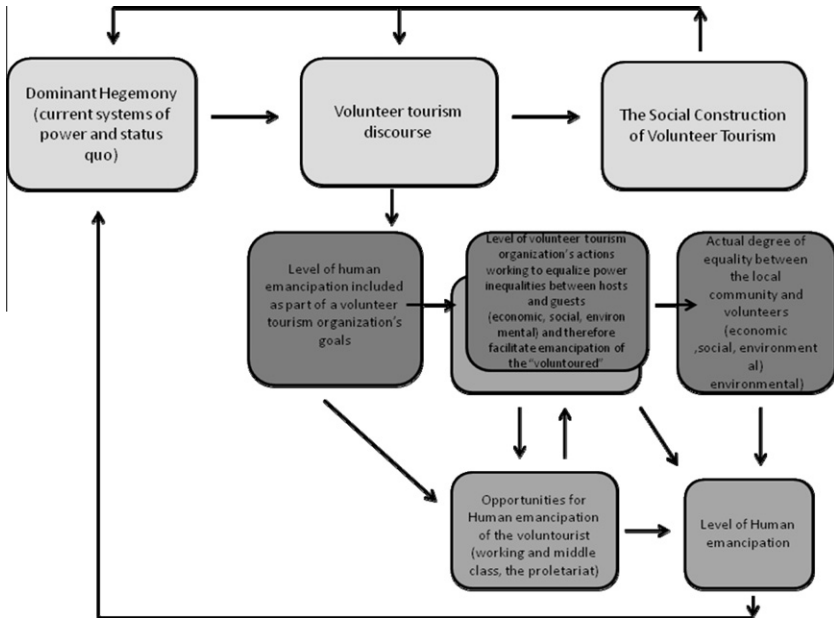


Figure 4. The Volunteer Tourism Critical Theory Model

quest for human emancipation for all. The model merely reflects the potential for volunteer tourism to contribute to the critical theory goal of human emancipation.

Social Movement Theory and Social Networks

One suggested area of volunteer tourism research involves the exploration of social networks established between volunteer tourists and the voluntoured. According to Knoke (1988) and other resource-mobilization proponents (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; McAdam & Rucht, 1993), networks are important predictors of social movement participation. The individuals and organizations that are linked together through one or more social relationships form one’s networks. In that they reinforce social movement activities, such examples of networks as personal ties and organizational alliances are all predictors of social movement participation and activism support. In fact, Barkan, Cohn, and Whitaker (1995) argued that while microstructures and networks were not the only predictors of social movement participation, they were generally the strongest. Some research has focused on the power of tourism in general as a social force (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006), as well as the role of volunteer tourism and social networks (McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Norman, 2002) While Higgins-Desbiolles (2003) did an important study of the role of volunteer tourism in reconciliation between white Australians and indigenous Australians, to date, no one has examined the potential for post-trip resource

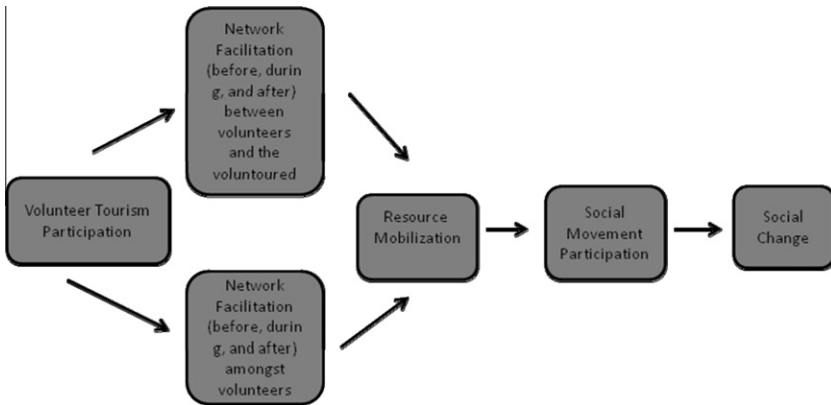


Figure 5. Proposition 4. Networks, Resource Mobilization, and Volunteer Tourism

mobilization via networks established between volunteer tourists and the volunteered.

Research that focuses on unearthing examples of good practices similar to those recommended by Ellis (2003), Jones (2005), Spencer (2008), and Wearing (2001) whereby volunteer tourism organizations facilitate social networks, and subsequently mobilize resources between volunteers and the volunteered could potentially revolutionize volunteer tourism. The question becomes: are there existing volunteer tourism organizations that have found ways to facilitate the development of networks between the volunteer tourist and the volunteered? How are they tracking these networks and continuing to support them even after the volunteer tourism experience is over? Therefore, the proposition may be stated as the following:

Proposition 4. Existing volunteer tourism organizations can find ways to facilitate the development of networks between the volunteer tourist and the volunteered, thereby increasing resource mobilization, and subsequently, engaging in social change (Figure 5).

Social Movement Theory and Self-efficacy

Since scholars began studying social movements, one of the major questions has remained the same: Who participates in social movements and why? Prior to the 60s, social psychological theorists argued that people participated in social movements because they were frustrated, irrational, or social outcasts. Such perspectives proved inadequate during the 60s, when people from a variety of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds who were not perceived as irrational or social outcasts became activists. As a result, the social-psychological concepts of self-efficacy and consciousness-raising emerged from the study of social movements (Gamson, 1992). Proponents of social

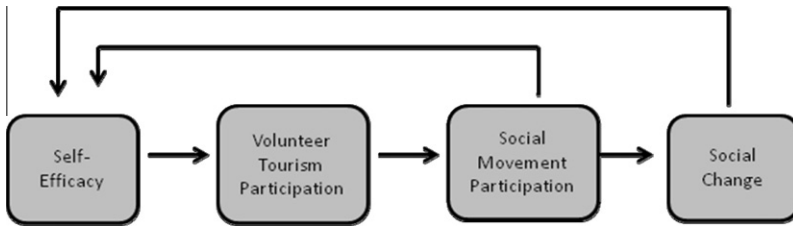


Figure 6. Proposition 5. Self-efficacy and Volunteer Tourism

psychological explanations of social movements have argued that a high level of self-efficacy is an important prerequisite for participation (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996), because an individual must possess a personal sense of her/his ability to overcome obstacles before participating in an organization advocating change to the *status quo*.

Self-efficacy has been examined as a link between attitudes toward social issues and social movement participation (Emig, Hesse, & Fisher, 1996; Kernis, 1995). For example, a person may have strong attitudes about racism, but if that person has low self-efficacy, she/he will feel unable to do anything about the problem and will be less likely to join a social movement organized to combat racism (Gamson, 1988; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996). In addition to being a pre-requisite for participation in social movements, there is some evidence that once a person engages in participation, self-efficacy is further strengthened, which then perpetuates further participation in social movements. The question then becomes: while volunteer tourism is not considered a social movement, given the participatory nature of volunteer tourism, is self-efficacy a potential measure of likelihood to participate in a volunteer tourism experience? In addition, how might volunteer tourism impact self-efficacy, and in turn, social movement participation?

As indicated earlier, several studies have focused on the benefits of volunteer tourism on the volunteer tourist themselves (Broad, 2003; Brown, 2005; Gray & Campbell, 2007; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Ruhanen et al., 2008; Wearing, 2001) but the only studies examining the specific notion of self-efficacy have been McGehee's (2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005) studies of how and whether participation in an Earthwatch expedition (a form of volunteer tourism) impacted participation in social movements by facilitating changes in self-efficacy. Because of this lack of research, a proposition that targets the examination of changes in self-efficacy amongst volunteers and the voluntoured seems in order. The research proposition thus becomes:

Proposition 5. Self-efficacy acts as both a precursor to and an end product of volunteer tourism (Figure 6).

Social Movement Theory and Consciousness-raising

The irony of consciousness-raising is that it is an intensely individual experience that nearly always occurs within a group context.

Additionally, people cannot simply be told to change; that have to discover change through personal experiences (Gordon, 2002). Consciousness-raising can occur not only through collective action within a specific social movement, but also through interactions with members of other outside coalitions (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). A volunteer tourism experience may provide a similar indirect/informal channel for exchange of ideas, and in the process, result in a consciousness-raising experience (McGehee & Norman, 2002; Spencer, 2008). An important by-product of consciousness-raising is a phenomenon known as taking on the personal as political (Srivastava, 2003). An example of this concept is found in Taylor and Whittier's (1992) examination of lesbian feminist mobilization. For example, women of the movement may shop only at gay-friendly stores, subscribe to magazines that promote their political and social platform, and travel using only gay-friendly airlines, accommodations, and restaurants.

From this theoretical perspective an argument may be extended that a volunteer tourism experience presents a unique opportunity for exposure to social inequalities and environmental and political issues, subsequently increasing social awareness and perhaps leading to a consciousness-raising experience. The consciousness-raising experience may then in turn lead to an adoption of actions in one's everyday lives that reflects a newly adopted decommodified perspective (Wearing & Neil, 2009). A heightened awareness of oppression and inequality may lead a volunteer tourism participant to shop at fair trade businesses, utilize more locally-owned and operated enterprises, eat locally raised food, and target locally-owned accommodations and restaurants whenever they travel. In other words, if volunteer organizations provide ample opportunities for consciousness-raising experiences, the potential for actual change amongst volunteers in the everyday adoption of more socially-conscious economic and social behaviour (i.e. personal as political) could be enormous. A proposition for this line of research may be stated as follows:

Proposition 6. Volunteer tourism participation can lead to a consciousness-raising experience, which in turn can cause a person to take on the personal as political and consequently lead to social change. In addition,

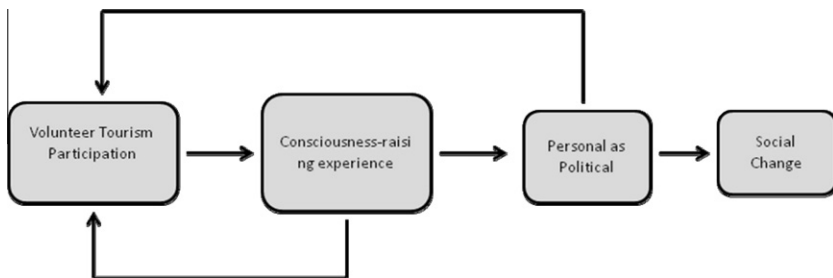


Figure 7. Proposition 6. Volunteer Tourism Participation and Consciousness-Raising

taking on the personal as political will lead to continued volunteer tourism participation (Figure 7).

A Social Movement Theory Model of Volunteer Tourism

As with the critical theory model of volunteer tourism, there is great potential for integrating the three propositions into a larger model that reflects the interplay of social movement theory with volunteer tourism (Figure 8). This larger model begins with the assertion that some level of self-efficacy must exist in order for an individual to participate in either social movements or volunteer tourism (Proposition 5). All three propositions related to social movement theory have an end product of social change. Not surprisingly, all three propositions include volunteer tourism participation as an important component of the early stages of the model. Volunteer tourism participation, brought on in part by pre-existing self-efficacy as indicated in Proposition 5, may serve as a consciousness-raising experience, inducing personal activity that reflects one’s political perspective, again leading to social change and additionally repeat volunteer tourism participation in a kind of positive hermeneutic circle (Proposition 6).

While consciousness-raising and self-efficacy are both phenomena that occur at the individual level, resource mobilization occurs at the interface of the individual and organizational levels. It is through the collection of individual resources that social movement organizations gain momentum, and as reflected in Proposition 4, the establishment of networks is one of the ways in which resource mobilization can

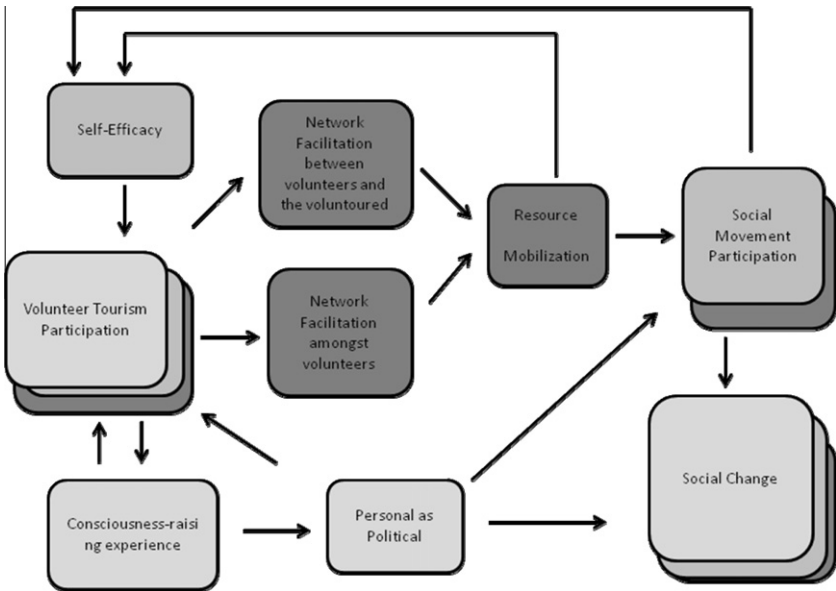


Figure 8. The Volunteer Tourism Social Movement Theory Model

occur, again leading to social movement participation and subsequently social change. As with critical theory, it should again be clarified that in no way is the author attempting to claim that volunteer tourism is the sole influence on participation in social movements nor is it the only possible answer to the quest for social change. The model presented merely reflects the potential for social movement theory to provide theoretical context for volunteer tourism, and volunteer tourism to in turn to contribute to the development of social movement theory, as it presents a possible agent of social change outside the traditional realm of social movements.

CONCLUSION

This paper represents an effort to present critical theory and social movement theory as promising foundations for a holistic study of volunteer tourism, in particular its potential role in social change and human emancipation. Within each of the theoretical contexts, three propositions were developed separately, then integrated together to create a model for each theory. For the critical theory perspective, the contradictions of volunteer tourism, the potential for a de commodified volunteer tourism to aid in the human emancipation of all, and the hermeneutic relationship between the social construction of volunteer tourism and the dominant hegemony were the primary factors of interest. These were derived primarily from Kincheloe and McLaren's (2003) critical theory assumptions and contextualized with a Foucauldian view of power, oppression, and emancipation. From the social movement perspective, three lines of research were discussed, including the potential for the establishment of networks via volunteer tourism as a way to induce resource mobilization and subsequently social change, the role of self-efficacy as a precursor for both social movement and volunteer tourism participation, and the notion of the consciousness-raising component in volunteer tourism. This line of thought comes primarily from the New Social Movement theoretical lens. The rationale for including both perspectives is that critical theory can provide the critique and shed light on the points of tension within the volunteer tourism system, while social movement theory can provide a possible framework for agency and enduring social change. Critical theory opens the wound, while social movement theory provides the salve to heal. It is the author's hope that this crystallized perspective can allow for multiple voices and perspectives of volunteer tourism to be heard and validated.

Perhaps additional theoretical perspectives that have been introduced at the empirical level (as well as new, previously untapped theories) can be incorporated to further move the models toward Hollinshead's (2004) notion of the role of the multi-talented *bricoleur* in constructing a crystallized middle-range theory. Of particular merit are feminist theory as applied by Lyons and Wearing (2008) and Wearing and McDonald (2002), as well as social capital as utilized by Jones (2005) in the context of community-based ecotourism. The connection

between decommodification and feminist theory is strong, so the fit is natural, just as the link between social capital and the components of social movement theory—resource mobilization, networks, and self-efficacy—begs for the incorporation of social capital into the model. These initial propositions should help to continue the dialogue and discussion surrounding volunteer tourism, resulting in the continued formation of a holistic theoretical framework for volunteer tourism. **A**

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