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Capital Deployment and Exchange in Volunteer Tourism

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Abstract

This paper draws upon Bourdieusian literature to examine how capitals are exchanged between stakeholders in volunteer tourism settings. Through exploratory interviews at schools in Cambodia and Kenya, we identify how volunteers and hosts cognise objectified cultural value for volunteer schools. However, due to the financial hardship associated with volunteer projects, the findings illustrate how a negotiated understanding is reached for Western volunteers' economic value. This study applies an interactionist perspective to examine how social interaction and cognition precede Bourdieu's structural capital exchanges. We argue that meaning development significantly influences capital exchange and, thus, by applying the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's practice theory with Blumer's symbolic interactionism we consolidate two previously un-synthesised concepts and contribute a new avenue for sociological research.

Keywords

Volunteer tourism, Bourdieu, cultural capital, economic necessity, habitus, symbolic interactionism

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry of the 21st century is experiencing the expansion and increased prominence of volunteer tourism (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). International volunteer tourism involves the travel of tourists who hope to employ their skills and resources for the alleviation of poverty (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Mostafanezhad, 2013). While significant consideration has been given to the advocacy (Gray & Campbell, 2007; Butcher & Smith, 2010) and cautionary (Guttentag, 2009; Smith & Font, 2014) aspects of volunteer tourism, studies are now extending beyond this dichotomous debate to provide adaptancy and theoretical research, which may alleviate social issues, while promoting volunteer tourism's positive influences (McGehee, 2014; Taplin, Dredge & Scherrer, 2014; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). Therefore, despite theories of practice being largely neglected within tourism research (Çakmak, Lie & McCabe, 2018; Lee & Scott, 2017), Bourdieu's sociological work can provide the theoretical foundation to explore contention, struggle and capital exchange within touristic locations (Warren & Dinnie, 2018).

To this end, this paper contributes to our understanding of the volunteer tourism sector with the synthesised sociological application of Bourdieu's practice theory with Blumer's symbolic interactionism. Bourdieu's theoretical approach examines how personal resources (capitals) are exchanged between individuals based on their embodied characteristics and values (habitus), and the environment in which they are embedded (the field). Blumer's interactionism is applied as a philosophical perspective that perceives all understanding and knowledge to be constructed through interaction between individuals and their environment. Concerned with the perpetual criticism that Bourdieu is more interested in examining habit and unconscious action than cognition and agency (Aarseth, Layton & Nielsen, 2016; Margolis, 1999; Wimalasena & Marks, 2019), this consolidated approach aims to establish a framework which first explores how stakeholders in the volunteer community cognise the value and meaning for their environment through interaction and subsequently, the capital exchange which occurs between parties based on this meaning development. This insight offers a new avenue for research in anthropology, phenomenology and microsociology whose methods of inquiry aim to explore human interaction and experience from bottom-up social experiences (Fine, 1993).

Based on interviews with volunteer tourists and host project managers at volunteer schools in Cambodia and Kenya, we draw upon Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) concepts of habitus, field and capital to examine how culture and monetary resources are exchanged within host communities. With evidence of asymmetrical and contentious relationships between volunteer tourists and hosts (Carpenter, 2015; Guttentag, 2009; Terry, 2014; Thompson, Curran & O'Gorman, 2017), it is increasingly important to comprehend how volunteers deploy their Western-accrued skills in the communities they aim to benefit. Particularly at volunteer schools, affluent volunteers are constantly interacting with disadvantaged and vulnerable children who have little power over curricular activities (Bargeman, Richards & Govers, 2018; Bernstein & Woosnam, 2019; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017) and therefore, it is necessary to examine the classroom influence afforded to volunteers in exchange for their contributions to the school. Further, by providing analyses of the capitals that are exchanged within a complex and dynamic sector of the tourism industry, we answer the call for studies of meaning development and symbolic interactionism within volunteer tourism literature (Thompson et al., 2017; Wearing, McDonald & Ponting, 2005).

2. VOLUNTEER TOURISM

The expansion of volunteer tourism into a 'mass niche' has led to growing pains as unsustainable commercialisation can result in volunteer disruption and the cultural cannibalism of host communities (Bargeman et al., 2018; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Conran, 2011; Guttentag, 2009; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; McGehee, 2014; Terry, 2014). Competition for volunteers encourages spurious marketing campaigns (Bernstein & Woosnam, 2019; Smith & Font, 2014), meaning volunteer tourists travel with utopian and unreal expectations that their resources can unilaterally ameliorate impoverished communities (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Smith & Font, 2014). This has engendered neo-colonial criticisms of racialised encounters where Western volunteers travel as the 'giver' of aid to the subordinated 'receiver' of colonial assistance (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Hammersley, 2014; Henry, 2019; Palacios, 2010; Sin, 2009).

However, advocates of volunteer tourism suggest that while it may be imperfect, volunteer work can prevent the social disruption and environmental degradation associated with mass touristic behaviour (Butcher & Smith, 2010; Gray & Campbell, 2007). The volunteer receives cultural and social value from their experience, which can displace entrenched Westernised perceptions of the Global South (Coghlan & Weiler, 2018; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing & Neil, 2012; McGehee & Santos, 2005; McGehee, 2012; Wearing & Neil, 2000). Further, the importance of volunteer monetary provision for the future development of projects cannot be understated, as volunteer fees can help with the purchase of basic project supplies (Bargeman et al., 2018; Bernstein & Woosnam, 2019), which ensures long-term prosocial and community goals can be achieved (Prince & Ioannides, 2017; Steele, Dredge & Scherrer, 2017).

Based on these contributions to volunteer tourism, rather than inductively examining whether volunteer tourism is inherently positive or negative, we are inspired by McGehee (2014) and Taplin et al. (2014) who call for adaptancy research to improve host community dynamics. Research in volunteer tourism must be theoretically driven in order to capture and ground the unique essence of host communities in sociological, psychological and anthropological understanding (McGehee, 2012, 2014; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). **Table 1** illustrates how theoretical research has been driven by unilateral methods aiming to explore the dynamics of a singular stakeholder group, with particular consideration for the volunteer tourist and, to a lesser extent, 'the voluntoured' local community. As such, limited consideration has been given to examining the relational dynamics of volunteers and hosts collectively within the same research design in order to discover collective solutions (McGehee, 2012; Wearing & McGehee, 2013; Zahra & McGehee, 2013).

Therefore, this paper examines volunteer-host exchanges through the sociological and theoretical lens of Bourdieu and symbolic interactionism to discover how both volunteers and host project managers cognise their role within the volunteer project, and how this collectively influences their deployment of capitals and the overall relational dynamics in the host community.

Table 1. Theoretical perspective in volunteer tourism research

Theoretical Perspectives	Findings	Author(s)
Authenticity, aesthetics, and intimacy	Volunteers consume poverty and express emphatic emotions. They also desire love, affection, and intimacy from beneficiaries.	Conran, 2011; Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; Mostafanezhad, 2013.
Experiential and transformative learning and change	Some research has suggested volunteer tourism produces critically aware individuals, while other studies encourage volunteers to be more self-aware and reflexive of their conduct.	Coghlan, 2015; Coghlan & Weiler, 2018; Hammersley, 2014; Lyons et al., 2012; McGehee & Santos, 2005; McGehee, 2012.
Monitoring, evaluation, and power dynamics	Host organisations struggle to control and monitor the work conducted by volunteers despite these practices having potential benefits to the community.	Steele et al., 2017; Taplin et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2017.
Neo-colonial theoretical perspectives	Neo-colonial perspectives provide critical discussion of the white middle-class volunteer travelling as the heroic giver and provider of aid.	Henry, 2019; Palacios, 2010; Tomazos & Butler, 2010.
Theories of exchange, particularly social exchange theory	With consideration for indigenous communities, authors assert that locals recognise the potential benefits associated with volunteer tourism, but also, that those less affected can have negative feelings.	Bargeman et al., 2018; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; McGehee, 2012; Zahra & McGehee, 2013.
Theories of marketing towards the volunteer tourist	Marketing theories are applied to examine the commercialisation of the industry, recommending transparency and realistic advertising.	Nyahunzvi, 2013; Smith & Font, 2014.
Theories of motivation, looking at push and pull factors for volunteers	Motivational analyses have found volunteer tourists to be influenced by an array of factors, most prominent being: Altruism, cultural exchange, personal growth, socialising, and adventure,	Brown, 2005; Chen & Chen, 2011; Lo & Lee, 2011; Pan, 2012; Sin, 2009.

3. BOURDIEU AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Despite Bourdieu's theory of practice being applied sparingly within tourism research relative to other fields (Çakmak, Lie & McCabe, 2018; Lee & Scott, 2017), research has extended to a variety of social contexts (see **Table 2**). Bourdieusian concepts have been effective at studying tourists' behaviour and strategy in new social environments (Garner, 2017; Lee, Scott & Packer, 2014) and how locals are influenced by touristic development (Çakmak, Lie & McCabe, 2018; Çakmak, Lie & Selwyn, 2018; Liang & Chan, 2018; Warren & Dinnie, 2018). However, with concern that Bourdieu's practice theory does not epistemologically consider how meaning is developed at an individual level among participants (Aarseth et al., 2016), this paper contributes by synthesising Bourdieu's theory of practice with Blumer's symbolic interactionism. The application of symbolic interaction to Bourdieu's practice theory means this paper can explore how stakeholders' experiences are influenced by their social interactions within volunteer tourism communities (Wearing et al., 2005).

Table 2. Bourdieu in Tourism Research

Author(s)	Tourism study context	Findings
Çakmak et al., 2018; Çakmak et al., 2018	Informal entrepreneurs in Thailand tourism industry	Informal entrepreneurs must mobilise and utilise connections with other stakeholders to improve their social position.
Garner, 2017	Tour guides in London BBC studio	By exhibiting cultural skills the tour guide can establish their own individualised status, but struggles to exchange this recognition into tangible benefits.
Liang & Chan, 2018	Local tourism development in Zhuhai, China	Locals and practitioners are subject to the changing conditions put forward by governmentally-driven tourism development.
Lee & Scott, 2017	African American destination choice	African American tourists often make destination choices based on concerns for racism.
Lee et al., 2014	Culinary tourists	Tourists who possess dispositions for certain culinary options are likely to carry those preferences when on holiday.
Pappalepore et al., 2014	Tourists in creative urban areas	Tourists value authentic and non-staged encounters in order to learn and experience personal development.
Stringfellow et al., 2013	Culinary tourism sector	Prestigious culinary chefs must be distinctive and avoid mundane popular entertainment to maintain their symbolic status.
Warren & Dinnie, 2018	Cultural intermediates in Toronto, Canada	Place marketers have the power to influence how people perceive the tourism setting but they must also strive to maintain their own legitimacy.

Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capitals, while often selectively applied as tools for empirical discovery, are co-constructed and interdependent of each other (Wacquant, 2018). The habitus is the ingrained dispositions, embodied competencies, values and perceptions of individuals which influence what people, social groups and events an individual orientates towards and how they conduct themselves (Everett, 2002). Each event, industry or social environment with interconnected individuals is deemed a market for interaction and competition, or what Bourdieu refers to as 'the field' (Everett, 2002). Embedded within each field are dominant and subordinated individuals, segregated by the composition and the amount of capitals they possess (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu (1986) conceptualises three primary capitals: Economic, cultural and social which can be leveraged, exchanged, invested and converted in a struggle to acquire the most appropriate capitals that are highly regarded in an individual's respective field (Warren & Dinnie, 2018).

Economic capital is the financial assets and monetary resources available to an individual (Çakmak, Lie & Selwyn, 2018) and allows those rich in economic capital to save and invest (Atkinson, 2013; Crawford & McKee, 2018). Bourdieu (1986) divides cultural capital into three forms: Embodied, objectified and institutionalised. Embodied cultural capital is all skills, dispositions and values that are internalised within the habitus; objectified cultural capital is tangible objects that have a prestigious value beyond their monetary cost; and, institutionalised cultural capital is academic achievements and qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Finally, social capital acts as an intermediary as Bourdieu (1984) suggests an individual must possess friendships, connections and social networks in order to convert their capitals. When a form of capital receives recognition or status, Bourdieu (1986) asserts that the individual or the item has achieved symbolic capital, as it is now recognised as legitimate and prestigious (Silva, 2016).

The overall composition and accumulation of capital is mostly shared by actors in the same social position (Adams, 2006) and, therefore, acts as an unconscious expression of difference (Bourdieu, 1984; Lee et al., 2014; Pappalepore, Maitland & Smith, 2014). An individual's habitus and their associated capital only has value in a field where those skills or values are recognised as legitimate and, therefore, when moving to a different social environment, individuals with symbolic status may find their capitals to be poorly suited for their new context (Bourdieu, 1984). For those deficient in all forms of capital, a Bourdieusian perspective argues that, regardless of social environment, their dispositions and values will be based upon monetary survival and economic necessity, restricting their choices to what is objectively possible (Atkinson, 2013; Bourdieu, 1984; Cooper, 2008; Crawford & McKee, 2018). In contrast, those who have established economic, cultural and social status do not have to be concerned with common day-to-day pressures as they live life free from financial constraints (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu (1984) suggests that conforming to these social hierarchies is not a deliberate attempt at coherence, but that actors naturally succumb to the dispositions of the habitus as they "have internalised, through a protracted and multisided process of conditioning, the objective chances they face. They know how to 'read' the future that fits them, which is made for them and for which they are made" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 130).

However, it is at this point that microsociological tourism research becomes incompatible with a Bourdieusian approach as Bourdieu's epistemological stance perceives individual relationships and interaction to have limited influence on stakeholders'

understanding of their environment (Aarseth et al., 2016; Margolis, 1999). Rather than focussing on the individual and how they learn and build knowledge about their surroundings, Bourdieu's emphasis is on how actions, emotions and senses are intuitive and habitual (Adams, 2006; Silva, 2016; Wimalasena & Marks, 2019). Therefore, for Bourdieu, individuals' personal circumstances and social situation determines which actions and behaviours are possible (Aarseth et al., 2016; Silva, 2016; Wimalasena & Marks, 2019). This is a concern for tourism studies wishing to examine conscious stakeholders interacting and discovering meaning in a new social environment for the first time (Wearing et al., 2005).

Therefore, symbolic interactionism as a philosophical perspective offers an avenue to research how individuals construct meaning at an individual level through their interactions and communications (Azarian, 2017; Denzin, 1992). Symbolic interactionism derives from three premises established by Blumer (1986, p. 2): First, "human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them"; for example, consumers purchase items based on their personal value for that commodity (Flint, 2006). Second, "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has"; and, third, "meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process" (Blumer, 1986, p. 2). These second and third premises demonstrate that symbolic interactionism is concerned with how individuals build their understanding based on their interaction with an item or person, and that this is subject to constant change based on their subsequent interactions (Flint, 2006). The second and third premise is what differentiates symbolic interactionism from Bourdieusian perspectives as Bourdieu suggests that people's meaning and understanding for things is stable and predetermined based on their personal circumstances and social conditions (Wacquant, 2016; Wimalasena & Marks, 2019).

While advocates of Bourdieu have suggested that a Bourdieusian framework can analyse agency and social interaction (Adams, 2006; Everett, 2002; Wacquant, 2016), as a theoretical lens the objective structure will never be flexible enough for phenomenological research (Lizardo, 2004) and is incompatible with studies of reflexive agency and the process of cognition (Margolis, 1999). Therefore, symbolic interactionism provides an epistemic platform to analyse the acquisition of knowledge through interaction, meaning a Bourdieusian analysis can examine how the meaning and value for capitals is constructed at an individual level within the volunteer field (Blumer, 1986). Moreover, Bourdieu's (1984) concepts also contribute to symbolic interactionism, which is criticised for being immune to the influence of material forces (Wacquant, 2016); too concerned with the micro-analytic (Bourdieu, 1984); and reliant upon inductive exploration, which is heavily influenced by researcher bias and opinion (Fine, 1993). Denzin (1992) asserts that the lack of a priori consideration for the parameters of research means that interactionist studies can find value in an infinite number of personalised scenarios and while "this messiness may accurately reflect the entanglements of organisational life, [interactionism] requires neatening up to develop robust theory" (Bechky, 2011, p. 1162-1163). Therefore, this article contributes to Blumer's work in sociology with the application of Bourdieu's practice theory, which establishes a theoretical framework to set the parameters of meaning development within economic, cultural and social capital and, accordingly, this paper examines these capital exchanges within volunteer host communities.

4. STUDY DESCRIPTION

4.1 Contextual setting

Nairobi, Kenya and Western Cambodia were purposively chosen as research sites based on a preliminary study that analysed 1150 online reviews of volunteer projects with a directed content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Codes were established a priori, and were derived from Callanan and Thomas's (2005) conceptual framework of volunteer projects. The a priori structure prescribed analysing projects' regulation for minimum length of volunteer stay, the skills required by volunteers in order to assist and the level of assistance to local beneficiaries. Based on this analysis, it was possible to categorise volunteer projects on a spectrum from shallow, semi-volunteer vacation-based enterprises to deeper, altruistic projects that have meaningful benefits to local communities (Callanan & Thomas, 2005).

We wished to avoid vacation-based volunteer tourism as these projects would not meet the research aim of analysing volunteers and project managers whose motivation it was to utilise their capitals for altruistic causes (Brown, 2005). Therefore, based on the directed content analysis, many potential locations such as Morocco, South Africa, and Thailand were disregarded for having a high proportion of shallow volunteer projects. The content analysis derived from Callanan and Thomas (2005) found Western Cambodia and Nairobi, Kenya, to have a high total number of projects, and the highest proportion of deep projects. The choice of these two locations, through a purposive sampling approach, meant that discovering prospective volunteer sites that would meet the aim of the research was made easier.

Volunteer tourism in Kenya has largely gone un-researched, but is a prevalent site for volunteer-led schooling due to a century of colonial disempowerment, followed by decades of corrupt governmental expenditure leading to impoverished communities with poor public services (Lepp, 2008). The volunteer projects in our Kenyan sample had facilities that were basic, with three of the schools having to rely on temporary building structures that were not weatherproof. The schools were surrounded by slums and, therefore, the struggle for food and basic survival often superseded local people's concern for educational facilities. As such, all projects in our sample provided (or wished to implement) a feeding programme to encourage attendance rather than have children work at home to find food. For this research, Kenyan projects were visited in July 2017. All visited projects were non-fee-paying public schools. Upon analysis of the findings, the research team decided that greater insight could be achieved from a second round of data collection. As a result, Cambodian schools were visited in June 2018.

The structure of Cambodian education was slightly different to the structure at Kenyan volunteer schools as the volunteer system ran supplementary to state-funded education, with classes having an emphasis on English. Western Cambodia was a rural location compared to the capital city fieldwork site of Nairobi, Kenya. However, both communities were attempting to combat similar problems as pupils were often discouraged from attending school because their parents wished for them to be at home and working. While children in Nairobi would walk to school, the wider rural catchment area and the voluntary nature of volunteer schooling in Cambodia meant that hosts were also aiming to provide transportation in addition to feeding programmes to encourage attendance. The focus on English teaching was in the hope of children having access to jobs in the larger touristic locations of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. While academic attention has been given to Cambodia as a site for volunteer tourism (Carpenter, 2015), throughout the literature, little consideration is focussed purely on volunteer schools as a separate category of volunteer tourism.

4.2 Methods

This study sought to explore volunteer-host interaction and capital exchange within volunteer schools. To achieve this aim, a qualitative approach was adapted. According to Coghlan (2015), qualitative methods uncover the meanings associated with phenomena in the host community environment, resulting in rich data with thick descriptions to illustrate the complex social dynamics within volunteer tourism. Thus, this study is based on data gathered through semi-structured interviews with 22 volunteers and 17 host project managers across five schools in Nairobi, Kenya and five schools in Western Cambodia. The individual schools were chosen after a web search looking for any volunteer schools that aimed to provide meaningful benefits to local communities (Callanan & Thomas, 2005) and that were located within travelling distance from the researcher's base location. Twenty-four total emails were sent asking whether the project would be happy to have a researcher visit and interview stakeholders that were present. Five responses were received from Kenyan hosts and five from Cambodian hosts. All projects that responded were visited and participants were interviewed.

Table 3 provides condensed detail for the participants and the projects included within the sample. Project E(K) was set up by Alistair, a Western manager, who had moved to Nairobi permanently. The other four Kenyan projects were established and run by local people, native to Nairobi. Of the Cambodian projects only two were established and run by local people (Project F(C) and I(C)). Projects G(C), H(C), and J(C) were primarily run by Western hosts living in Cambodia permanently. All schools met the same criteria of attempting to provide meaningful benefits to local communities, and there were no significant differences in the schools' goals or their operations.

Table 3. Participants

Kenyan Projects	Participants	Role	Gender	Age
A(K)	Mark	Host	**M**	
	Leah	Host and headteacher	**F**	
	Mina	Volunteer	**F**	**18**
	Tess	Volunteer	**F**	**19**
	Olivia	Volunteer	**F**	**21**
B(K)	Adamu	Host	**M**	
	Caroline	Host and headteacher	**F**	
	Colin	Volunteer	**M**	**46**
C(K)	Anthony	Host	**M**	
	Grace	Volunteer	**F**	**28**
	David	Volunteer	**M**	**36**
D(K)	Noah	Host and headteacher	**M**	
	Isaac	Host	**M**	
	Amelia	Volunteer	**F**	**23**

	Steven	Volunteer	**M**	**23**
E(K)	Alistair	Host	**M**	
	Ollie	Volunteer	**M**	**19**
	Charlie	Volunteer	**M**	**19**
Cambodian Projects	**Participants**	**Role**	**Gender**	**Age**
F(C)	Chea	Host and headteacher	**M**	
	Sarah	Volunteer	**F**	**26**
G(C)	Zoe	Host	**F**	
	Jasmine	Volunteer	**F**	**24**
	Antonia	Volunteer	**F**	**22**
	Lorena	Volunteer	**F**	**22**
H(C)	Andrew	Host	**M**	
	Emma	Host	**F**	
	Steph	Host	**F**	
	Josie	Volunteer	**F**	**20**
	Max	Volunteer	**M**	**24**
	Claire	Volunteer	**F**	**31**
	Jack	Volunteer	**M**	**30**
I(C)	Kosal	Host	**M**	
	Sok	Host and headteacher	**M**	
	Mitchel	Volunteer	**M**	**54**
	Adele	Volunteer	**F**	**51**
	Charlotte	Volunteer	**F**	**33**
J(C)	Matthew	Host	**M**	
	Bopha	Host	**F**	
	Tiffany	Volunteer	**F**	**21**

All volunteer participants were Western, and were travelling from Europe, Australia or North America. There was almost an equal sample of male (n=19) and female (n=20) participants and, while data were not collected for host managers' age, volunteers ranged from the ages of 18 to 54. The majority of participants were engaged with teaching activities such as English, art and sport where they would either plan lessons and teach for a few hours a day or sit in classrooms and assist a teacher in their role. At times the volunteers were not needed for teaching activities and assisted with painting of classrooms or developing the school's social media presence. Only Colin at Project B(K) and Jack at Project H(C) were not primarily involved with education at the school as both were skilled manual labourers and were offering assistance with plumbing and carpentry.

Interviews were mostly collected at the volunteer projects either at breaks during the day or after classes had ended. Occasionally interviews were conducted en route to the project due to the convenience of having a host manager or volunteer in a one-to-one setting when travelling via tuk-tuk or car. Volunteers were often just arriving or departing from projects

during the researcher's time in the field, but all participants who had been at the school for at least three days and had time to experience the project were asked to participate; and, all selected participants gave permission to be part of the study. Due to the sensitive nature of research in volunteer communities (Conran, 2011; Thompson et al., 2017), pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality. All participants were fluent in English either due to it being their native language or the school having an emphasis on English speaking and teaching, so translation never presented itself as an issue. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 45 minutes and three hours. Often, the interviews would stop and recommence later in the day if a participant had a commitment to attend and, due to the length of interviews, multiple visits to projects were required before all participants had been interviewed. Each participant took part in a single interview meaning, in total, 39 interviews were conducted with 17 hosts and 22 volunteers.

Employing an abductive approach, volunteers and host managers were initially asked about what meanings they have for the project. Further questions were derived from a Bourdieusian perspective of capital exchange, questioning what personal value participants had received from the project and what they had provided to the volunteer school. Probing questioned the value of any monetary exchanges and the social relationships and networks that had mediated the relationship or changed the community dynamics. Finally, interviews ended with unstructured questions, which were flexible and not determined by existing theoretical understanding (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Member checking took place where host project managers were offered the opportunity to discuss the initial findings of the researcher's interviews, providing them with the opportunity to discuss whether they agreed with the interviewer's perceptions and analyses (Zahra & McGehee, 2013).

Due to time constraints and the short-term manoeuvrability of volunteer tourists it was not possible to sufficiently analyse the data in time to conduct member checking with volunteer participants. However, the primary motive of host validity checking acts to prevent the dominance of volunteer-centric studies, which do not consider the perceptions of indigenous people and communities (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). While there were no points of disparity between the findings and hosts' perceptions of the findings, verification ensures the credibility of qualitative research (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). Interview data were transcribed and thematic analysis was employed to organise the raw data under coded headings, based on their related characteristics (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further rounds of coding and parallel engagement with theoretical literature ensured thematic understanding was derived from empirical data, while also being guided by a Bourdieusian theoretical lens (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Abductive analysis allowed the researcher to heuristically examine breakdowns where the empirical data differed from extant literature (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Three themes were found to be prominent within the data: cognising cultural capital, economic necessity and negotiated capital exchange.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Cognising cultural capital

Participants discussed how schools and education play a valuable role in reducing impoverishment. As a result, volunteer schools possessed a prestigious value within the community and were imbued with objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, the theme of cognising cultural capital encapsulates how both host project managers and volunteers recognise the school as being a valuable cultural entity.

The volunteers regularly acknowledged how their interactions with beneficiaries made them realise how much value schools had to local children who wanted to learn and receive education: "It really makes you think, y'know? Like my kids, they hate school, but when I get back I'm gonna make sure they know how lucky they are, because you take it for granted back home" (Charlotte, volunteer at project I(C)). "The children are so eager to learn and grow, and for so many, all they lack is the school and the classroom" (Tiffany, volunteer at project J(C)).

These interactions with eager and impoverished children accentuate the objectified cultural capital of volunteer schools, as volunteers commented on how they had seen the benefits education had provided to beneficiaries first-hand:

> I have been here one month, and I can see the change. For example, there was a child in year five, and he was never writing because he didn't understand, and he was always quiet, but now it's amazing, he can speak.
> *Jasmine, volunteer at project G(C)*

Hosts also posited that schools offered a potential route of poverty for local children. Indeed, Chea discussed how he was attempting to share his personal value for education with others:

> We tell the parents, the parents of the children that the only way you can help yourself is through education. If you know more of this, your future will be better. But if you just go to work for somebody, you will get food maybe, but it cannot help you in the future. You can work, and you can barely survive, it will not help your future. But they do not always listen, and they leave, and they earn money, but they live in poverty, they never get the good life.
> *Chea, host and headteacher at project F(C)*

Moreover, host project managers also reflected on the poor conditions of the surrounding environment and how the school's facilities were valuable not only for education, but that they provided a safe place that children could go and be looked after:

> We face many challenges, we are here to make small changes, us, we are here to change these children, we could leave them on the street, maybe they would die, but now many of them come to school, they get food, they work, they then go to secondary school.
> *Leah, host and headteacher at project A(K)*

> Y'know, there are children, they are from [the slum nearby], these kids are not going to school because their parents, they do not want them to, they do not care about them, but we accepted them to come and get education here.
> *Caroline, host and headteacher at project B(K)*

Primarily, these accounts illustrate how stakeholders perceive the volunteer school as a location that can offer assistance to eager and impoverished children. Thus, both hosts and volunteers are actively constructing the objectified cultural value of the school as they reflect on how the volunteer project is a culturally valuable pillar of the local community. Narratives

illustrate how participants acknowledge that schools can act as an alleviator of poverty through education and social mobility or by offering a safe place for children to attend and receive food.

5.2 Economic necessity

The theme of economic necessity illustrates how volunteer schools are institutions that lack funds. Previous research has examined buildings that hold significant economic capital, which signals an affluent area rich in capital (Bridge, 2006). However, a lack of monetary resources means choices are restricted, and a priority is placed upon economic survival strategies (Atkinson, 2013; Bourdieu, 1984; Cooper, 2008). As such, participants voice the struggles associated with volunteer schools being deficient in economic capital:

> We struggle a lot … because for us food, rent, everything that we buy comes from the volunteers. Some teachers are wanting to take me to the chief because I have not paid them. I have a case there now. It's a problem, it's stress, it's stressing me. We have a lot of challenges.
> *Leah, host and headteacher at project A(K)*

> [My funders] were very fast at paying rent, but now, I am paying rent from what I can get from the school. This month I have not paid rent because they promised but have not paid, I told the landlord to be patient because I have never been late and he will just have to wait. I will have to raise money.
> *Noah, host and headteacher at project D(K)*

Echoing Leah and Noah, every host manager interviewed for this study noted how their work at the project was subject to fluctuating economic capital, and informants regularly stated that they would spend significant amounts of time worrying about money and how they would pay for the school's economic necessities such as rent, food, and staff salaries. These pressures and uncertainties associated with deficient economic capital mean that long-term planning is uncertain (Atkinson, 2013; Cooper, 2008). Indeed, despite the objectified cultural value host managers expressed for the school, they were restricted by a lack of funds. Matthew illustrates this by discussing how his school was reliant upon every bit of economic capital it could obtain:

> We can show, in the project that we run, and there is money that comes in, we also know what we spend, and we know what the school spends, and we always know that the school spends more than it gets so we subsidise the school. So, if you give a donation to our school, absolutely every cent of it goes to the school. And if you offer to volunteer and go to the school 100% of your money goes to the school, never mind 25% of it, every bloody penny goes down there because they spend money, and more than they get. So we have services that we charge for that, which fills this gap.
> *Matthew, host at project J(C)*

Volunteers also discussed the deficiency of economic capital within the community, and how the levels of impoverishment had exceeded their expectations:

> I mean, before I came I was told it's supposed to be free at public school, but the teachers say here that they find ways of charging kids for this, that and the other, so it's a challenge for them … [Project H(C)] gives them stuff so they can actually go to government school, like pens to write with and stuff. But yeah, if they can't afford it they're not allowed to go to government school.
> *Josie, volunteer at project H(C)*

> I've travelled quite a bit, I mean, for my age anyway, but none of that prepared me for Kenya. Usually you rock up, and you can tell instantly it's poor, but not quite the same as this place … You realise when there are people dying on the streets, helping out at a school isn't going to change the world here.
> *Ollie, volunteer at project E(K)*

The narratives of this theme illustrate how stakeholders react to the deficient economic capital associated with volunteer schools. Hosts discussed how they are faced with fear and worry about the future of projects due to the lack of funds available to pay for basic necessities. Through interaction with these struggles, volunteers noted how increased economic capital investment is required for schools to deliver benefits for local beneficiaries.

5.3 Negotiated capital exchange

Based on the previous two themes where stakeholders illustrated the objectified cultural capital of the school and their understanding for economic capital deficiency, it was possible to examine the negotiated capital exchange as a subsequent theme. This theme represents how both hosts and volunteers reach a level of shared understanding based on their meaning developments and, accordingly, volunteers' economic capital is promoted above their embodied cultural skills and work contribution.

Due to their perceptions of economic necessity, and their interaction with affluent volunteers, hosts acknowledged that they perceived volunteers as a source of economic capital and were reliant upon their monetary investment:

> There is no help for us from government or any private companies. So contribution from volunteers does cover their expenses but is, also, the only income to pay for the school … We have to find a way to make the volunteer contribution cover all the school expenses, so that's rent for land, transport, books, electricity.
> *Zoe, host at project G(C)*

> The project we run at the moment is completely funded by what the volunteers bring or what the supporters bring because where else will we get it from? … Initially we wanted to not be reliant upon volunteers but I think it would be a naïve person who said that the money wasn't a motivation for projects. We have this school and it's costing $2600 dollars a month to run, so you can't get away from the idea that the money is important, it's there, it's needed. Where are we going to get it from? You can't be embarrassed about money.
> *Matthew, host at project J(C)*

Volunteer Colin discussed how he arrived at the school with the ambition to work and assist by employing his carpentry skills but, due to the lack of economic capital at the project, volunteers' greatest contributions stem from donations and fundraising activities:

> Back when, I was just gonna do a few odd-jobs, see how I could help out, see what I could do, being a joiner and that. But when I met Caroline I said, "this school needs some help." … I had a chat with Caroline, invested a bit of cash, bought the basics, and just got started.
> *Colin, volunteer at project B(K)*

> [The children], come with the tuk-tuk. This one (pointing). The one we came in. It's a little bit… not a little bit, it's very dangerous because it is a little tuk tuk for a lot of children. They fit like 30 children … They sometimes travel 20km in the tuk-tuk. And it is our most important project of the school because we want to change that. We are working for fundraising and thinking about buying for the school a mini-van to be more secure for the children.
> *Lorena, volunteer at project G(C)*

All volunteers sampled for this research were contributing economic capital, with 19 of 22 volunteers paying direct fees in order to volunteer. Moreover, over half of the volunteers (n=12) (including those not paying fees) were contributing economic capital through donations, raising money or grouping together with other volunteers to help assist with the day-to-day functioning of the school. Therefore, this behaviour illustrates that volunteers perceive economic capital contributions to be necessary in order to have a role in poverty alleviation. When volunteers were questioned concerning their ability to contribute beyond their economic exchanges, they echoed findings from volunteer literature that their embodied teaching skill seemed to be inconsequential to the project (Bargeman et al., 2018; Guttentag, 2009; Hammersley, 2014):

> I'm hardly like the ideal volunteer for the school because I've not got much teaching experience. But I mean, Claire is a teacher and she doesn't really do much more in class than we do … We all pay the same money, so I think that's the main thing clearly and has the most benefit. But when you have volunteers like Jack it's not really comparable. Has Steph told you about Jack? Basically he fundraised the whole of this plumbing project himself and has now come out here to build it. So as a volunteer he is perfect I guess; contributing money and making this place better for the future.
> *Max, volunteer at H(C)*

The recognition by Max that a fully trained teacher (Claire) had the same positive impact as himself illustrates how economic capital investment is more important than volunteers' embodied cultural capital and their associated contribution in the classroom. This is reinforced when Max mentioned Jack (who was a volunteer contributing significant amounts of money and investing in the project), as Max discussed how Jack is the 'ideal volunteer' because of his economic exchange.

Further, Mark a host at project A(K) comments on Mina, a volunteer who was a disruptive influence on the project by turning up sporadically and complaining, but Mark concedes: "She has done well, with money. I mean, in terms of money there is no question about it … She bought a lot of uniforms for the school so no one complains about her approach, she has done very well." This exemplifies how volunteers who conduct fundraising activities or provide donations are not criticised due to their important status as economic capital contributors. Kosal's narrative exemplifies how some hosts seemed happy to have a less-disciplined teaching environment in exchange for economic resources:

> We sometimes have the volunteers to come and they go hip-hop or party at night. Because sometimes some of the younger volunteers they come and they're like, "oh, I cannot come, oh, I am sick, I am sorry Kosal." Sometime this is bad, if the tuk-tuk driver, he goes to the hostel and there is no volunteer, and he phones me, and says "there is no volunteer," … But we take everybody … and they help us, and pay $400, and then maybe they can tell their friends back in UK also.
> *Kosal, host at project I(C)*

Therefore, the negotiated capital exchange is an established theme from the data that recognises the shared understanding hosts and volunteers reach regarding the other. Through their experiences at the project, volunteers understood their role as contributors of economic capital. The provision of fees and donations served as an investment to develop the educational capacity of the school and, thus, the exchange of economic capital afforded the volunteers a poverty-alleviating role at the project. Further, hosts also negotiated their understanding for the volunteer as a source of economic capital who could improve and add value to the volunteer school. As a result, shared understanding is reached for what constitutes the 'ideal volunteer' and, accordingly, the capitals that are valuable within the host community field, together with those perceived as inconsequential.

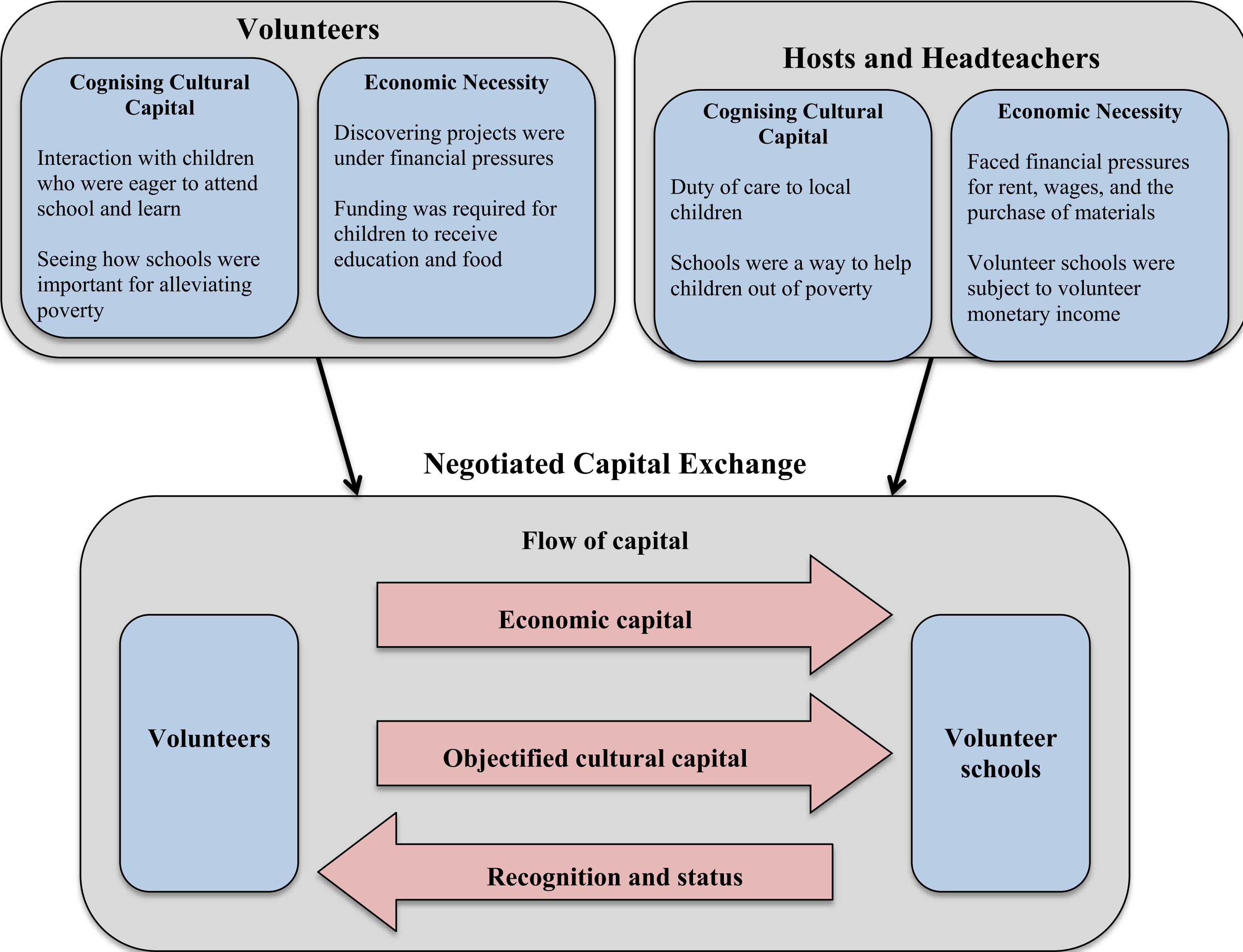
6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we approached Bourdieusian capital exchanges from the perspective of symbolic interactionism to understand how stakeholders build meaning for the community, and how this understanding influences the exchange of capitals. First, Figure 1 illustrates how volunteers and host project managers understand schools to be valuable for assisting impoverished children who they see as eager and in need of aid. Scholars have noted how perceiving and experiencing this poverty alleviation is of particular importance to the volunteer tourist (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Mostafanezhad, 2013; Sin, 2009). Therefore, this accentuates the objectified cultural capital of the school, as schools are perceived as locations central to poverty alleviation of impoverished children. Second, Figure 1 presents participants' acknowledgment of financial hardship, where hosts commented on the economic realities of maintaining the project and the pressures they faced, while volunteers discussed how they felt despair at the lack of economic capital available for volunteer schools.

The theme of negotiated capital exchange illustrates how incoming volunteers valued their capitals and, accordingly, how they could deploy them for the benefit of the community. Our findings show how, due to the economic necessity of projects, volunteers became aware that their work and embodied teaching skills were inconsequential (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Hammersley, 2014) and, instead, many of the volunteers including Colin, Lorena, and Mina deployed their economic capital by fundraising for and purchasing stationery, uniforms,

building materials and transport, which illustrates an economic exchange (Fig. 1). This movement of resources indirectly contributes to the objectified cultural value of the school, as economic capital improves the educational capacity of the project and its ability to alleviate poverty (Fig. 1). Mark and Kosal's discussion illustrates how volunteers are recognised for their economic contributions and are awarded a special status within the community (Fig. 1) which, also, means volunteers are free from criticism and are given a license for disruptive conduct, demonstrating the issues facing volunteer projects in the Global South (Guttentag, 2009; Terry, 2014). Finally, while previous research in volunteer tourism has expressed the importance of strong/weak ties, social connections and networking relationships in volunteer-host dynamics (Hammersley, 2014; Zahra & McGehee, 2013), despite probing participants about the value of interpersonal relationships and communication, informants suggested social capital had limited influence on their exchanges.

Figure 1. Meaning development and capital exchange framework



There was little evidence of individuals being powerless and unconsciously accepting their fate due to a habitus consumed by deficient economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Crawford & McKee, 2018), as hosts were never incapacitated due to anxiety about their perpetual lack of monetary income (Atkinson, 2013). Instead, stakeholder narratives suggest that a desire for poverty alleviation and perceiving objectified cultural value for schools was not exclusive to those rich in economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Rather, host managers maintained their value for schools and their duty of care to local children while relying on fees, donations and fundraising from volunteers. These findings illustrate the importance of consolidating Bourdieu's theory of practice with an interactionist perspective for the study of volunteer communities as it was only through examining the micro-interactions between participants and discovering stakeholders' meanings for volunteer schools that the underlying reasons behind capital exchanges could be understood.

This has practical implications for the management of volunteer projects and the relationships and exchanges within volunteer schools. Restrained by economic conditions, hosts had to accommodate for volunteers regardless of their ability to conduct consequential work and whether they had a disruptive influence. However, all volunteers in this study discussed how they understood the school to have a cultural value and wished to improve the educational capacity of schools. Therefore, to reconcile these two positions, we echo Smith and Font (2014) that a reformulation of volunteer tourism marketing is required across the sector. While cultural changes are often slow, there should be pressure upon advertisers to realistically portray volunteers' capacity to assist (Bernstein & Woosnam, 2019; Smith & Font, 2014). Marketing should focus less on volunteers being poverty-alleviating teachers and, instead, promote the significant value that fees, donations and fundraising can have. Likewise, there should be an emphasis placed on the education of prospective volunteers through media outlets to prevent assumptions about volunteers' competency to provide teaching assistance, while still promoting how volunteers can have influence through economic provisions.

The fact that volunteer tourists often engaged in further fundraising and additional donations in addition to initial participatory fees is a novel finding from this particular study but, also, illustrates how schools were faced with economic necessity for the purchase of even the most essential educational materials. For many schools, the organisational model meant they were 100% reliant upon volunteer contributions to run the project, leading to unsustainable income and dependency upon volunteers. While research has called for bottom-up control over volunteer projects in order to empower local communities (Steele et al., 2017; Taplin et al., 2014), many (n=6) of the projects in our sample were locally run by native project managers and teachers, and yet faced disempowerment due to a lack economic capital and reliance upon Western funding. Literature has commented on the need for less dependency on unsustainable volunteer labour and contributions (Guttentag, 2009; Terry, 2014), but there are concerns that a sustainable project can become 'too affluent,' which turns off authenticity-seeking volunteer tourists (Bargeman et al., 2018). Thus, while volunteer economic capital may be essential for large-scale improvements to the facilities at volunteer schools, there is a lack of understanding for how projects can diversify their income and become more sustainable and self-sufficient in order to manage their day-to-day financial pressures. Especially given the opportunity this could have for empowering hosts to take control of their own projects, this requires further research.

Finally, these findings also illustrate the importance of interactionism to comprehend how stakeholders cognise meaning and understanding for their environment and respective capitals. Due to the prominence of social movement within tourism research, whereby individuals are immersed in unfamiliar contexts (Lee et al., 2014), we argue that interactionist research can analyse how travellers cognise and understand their social environment before examining the capital exchanges that occur (Azarian, 2017). Rather than relying upon research that examines behaviour as habitual and constrained by objective conditions (Bourdieu, 1984), we have illustrated how an interactionist approach provides greater understanding for how meaning development influences tourists' relationships and behaviour and can provide the theoretical foundation for further tourism research. Future studies may wish to apply this consolidated perspective for a more nuanced understanding for the reasoning behind capital deployment, while also offering an appropriate theoretical lens for analysis of subjective structure and cognitive development within microsociology and phenomenology (Aarseth et al., 2016; Lizardo, 2004; Margolis, 1999). Particularly due to the emotionally-charged interactions associated with volunteer communities (Lo & Lee, 2011; Mostafanezhad, 2013; Sin, 2009), there is further scope for research to examine how volunteers and hosts interpret their environment. Greater understanding for meaning development and cognition could help foster shared understanding among stakeholders and contribute to the growing area of adaptancy research in volunteer tourism studies (Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

Within this research design, there was no opportunity to conduct member checks with volunteer tourists, nor was it always possible to understand the deeper meaning behind participants' experiences over the long-term. As such, scholars have found ethnographic methods to be effective in volunteer tourism research (Mostafanezhad, 2013; Palacios, 2010; Thompson et al., 2017). While this study has contributed with interviews of both hosts and volunteers to explore community dynamics as a whole, narratives from the prospective beneficiaries of volunteer tourism remain limited and future studies should make consideration for this key stakeholder (McGehee & Andereck, 2009). Moreover, as this is a qualitative study, the results cannot be considered statistically representative of the entire population, nor all volunteer communities (Gobo, 2004). Indeed, the purposive sampling technique undertaken for this research aimed to identify a specific category of volunteer tourism with research of deep projects and, specifically, volunteer schools. While the findings may not be representative of shallow, vacation-based volunteer tourism, the relational dynamics and social exchanges examined within this study share similar characteristics to various deep-volunteering projects globally (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). As such, structural components of the volunteer-host relationship and capital exchange may be generalizable to other contexts (Gobo, 2004). While this investigation found no differences between the two fieldwork locations of Cambodia and Kenya, future studies may choose to collect data from a wide variety of community and tourist environments to provide greater understanding for how meaning and cognition influence capital exchange in a range of touristic sectors.

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