

Alice in WWOOFerLand:

Exploring
Symbiotic Worlds
Beyond Tourism



dissertation by

Adrian Deville

Submitted to the Graduate School
University of Technology, Sydney
in fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

29th August 2011

Certification of Originality

I, Adrian Deville, certify that the work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree at any other institution. This work is my original work, while all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature: Production Note:
Signature removed prior to publication.

Date: 29th August 2011

Inspirations

Is it wicked to take a pleasure in spring and other seasonal changes? To put it more precisely, is it politically reprehensible, while we are all groaning, or at any rate ought to be groaning, under the shackles of the capitalist system, to point out that life is frequently more worth living because of a blackbird's song, a yellow elm tree in October, or some other natural phenomenon which does not cost money and does not have what the editors of left-wing newspapers call a class angle? There is not doubt that many people think so.

George Orwell, 1946

"The ultimate end to a growth economy is the same as an analogous growth: cancer. But for national economies, the victims are nature, soils, forests, people, water, and quality of life. There is one, and only one solution, and we have almost no time to try it. We must turn all our resources to repairing the natural world, and train all our young people to help. They want to; we need to give them this last chance to create forests, soils, clean waters, clean energies, secure communities, stable regions, and to know how to do it from hands-on experience".

Bill Mollison (co-founder of Permaculture)

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

Aldo Leopold 1949

"When I get home, I shall write a book about this place. If I... If I ever do get home"

Alice (in Wonderland).

Acknowledgments

Gina did not know *exactly* what we were in for when this project began, or more precisely, when she agreed to take part in it. Now we know. Not only have we survived it, we have emerged stronger, better, happier. My profound thanks to you for everything you have put in and put on hold.

The time taken to make this thesis is almost exactly the same as the age of my son Mani. The preparation of this work underpins his construction of me as his father, and my construction of him as my son. My attempts to be a good father hopefully explain why this work took so long to produce. Thanks buddy.

To my mother and father, who have endured some big events in this time, I am sorry I could not be more available to you more often. Thank you so much for your ever patient understanding and perpetual encouragement. Let's sit down for a chat and some jazz.

To all the friends and family I have hardly seen since about 2005, let's catch up.

Thanks Sam☆ and Rowena 'I' for reminding me that it's "only a PhD".

Thanks to my supervisor, Stephen Wearing, who enthusiastically embraced my early ideas, uncertainties and doubts, generally told me I was on the right track and gently shepherded me to the line with some confidence.

Thanks to my co-supervisor Alan Law, who listened to my early formulations and met me courageously again at the end with a mighty good bunch of advice.

Thanks also Matt McDonald who was able to find so many little errors when I foolishly thought it was all done.

To all the WWOOFers and hosts I have met along the way, thanks for your contributions, specific and general, guarded and candid. I hope I have been able to represent your views.

To all at WWOOF Australia and WWOOF New Zealand, I also wish to thank you for your openness, honesty and encouragement. In particular, thanks to those in the office of WWOOF Australia that provided me with data, encouragement and kindness. Without your support and permission, this would not have occurred. I hope that you find something useful (that you did not already know) in all of these words.

Table of Contents

Inspirations	v
Acknowledgments	vii
Table of Contents	ix
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures	xiv
Abstract	xvii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1 OVERVIEW	1
1.1 What is WWOOFing?	1
1.2 Key Sectors	3
1.3 Guiding Question	4
1.4 Key Questions and Approach	8
2 POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH	12
2.1 Tourism and Leisure Studies	12
2.2 Sustainable Agriculture and the Organic Movement	13
2.3 Community Based Sustainable Development	14
2.4 WWOOF, WWOOFers, Hosts and Future Travellers	15
3 INFLUENCES AND ASSUMPTIONS.....	16
CHAPTER 2: WWOOFING IN AUSTRALIA	21
1 INTRODUCTION	21
2 ORIGINS AND SPREAD OF WWOOF	21
3 WWOOF IN AUSTRALIA.....	25
3.1 Overview of the WWOOFing Experience	26
3.2 WWOOF Operation and Management.....	29
3.3 Relationship to the Organic Movement	31
3.4 Tourism and the Evolution of WWOOF	31
4 PERSPECTIVES ON WWOOFING	35
4.1 Accounts of WWOOFing by WWOOF Australia	37
4.2 Popular Accounts of WWOOFing.....	38
4.3 Accounts by or about WWOOFers.....	40
4.4 Accounts by or about hosts.....	43
5 ACADEMIC ACCOUNTS OF WWOOFING	45
5.1 Published work	46
5.2 Unpublished work	52

6	LIMITS OF EXISTING ACCOUNTS OF WWOOFING	54
7	SUMMARY	56
CHAPTER 3: WWOOFING AS TOURISM		59
1	INTRODUCTION	59
2	WHAT IS TOURISM?	59
3	TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT	62
4	TYPES OF TOURISM AND TOURISTS	66
4.1	Conventional Mass Tourism.....	66
4.2	Alternative Tourism.....	67
4.3	New Tourism, Postmodern Tourism.....	75
5	KEY CONCEPTS OF TOURISM.....	79
5.1	Tourist Motivation	81
5.2	Tourism as an Experience	89
5.3	Outcomes of Tourism Experiences	97
6	A BASIS FOR CONCEPTUALISING WWOOFING?	100
7	CONCLUSION.....	104
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODOLOGY		107
1	INTRODUCTION	107
2	APPROACHING THE SUBJECT	108
2.1	Researching Social Phenomena Using Qualitative Methods.....	113
2.2	Philosophical Issues in Qualitative Research.....	115
2.3	Negotiating Positivism and Relativism	116
2.4	Constructivism	119
3	A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH.....	122
3.1	Grounded Theory Practices	123
3.2	Doing Grounded Theory	124
3.3	Issues in the Practice of Grounded Theory	126
3.4	Constructivist Grounded Theory	132
4	APPROACHING THE FIELD: RESEARCH METHODS USED	136
4.1	Generative Research Questions	138
4.2	Research Methods Used	139
5	SUMMARY OF RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODS	151
CHAPTER 5: HOSTING.....		155
1	INTRODUCTION	155
	Survey Sample and Limitations	156
2	PROFILE OF SURVEYED WWOOF HOSTS.....	157
2.1	Key Demographic Insights.....	157

2.2	Key Psychographic Insights.....	160
2.3	Host Properties and Focus of Activities.....	161
3	PROFILE OF HOSTS VISITED AND INTERVIEWED	167
4	MOTIVES FOR HOSTING.....	171
4.1	Reasons for Being a Host.....	172
4.2	Other Indicators of Host Motives.....	180
5	HOSTING EXPERIENCES.....	182
5.1	Degree of Hosting Experience	183
5.2	Duration of Visits	184
5.3	Cultural Diversity	185
5.4	What WWOOFers Seek.....	186
5.5	The Character of the Hosting Experience	189
5.6	Costs of Hosting	201
6	OUTCOMES OF HOSTING.....	203
6.1	Types of Benefits Derived from WWOOFers.....	204
6.2	Significance of WWOOFer Help.....	210
6.3	Most Significant Outcome of WWOOF Hosting.....	213
7	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	217
	CHAPTER 6: WWOOFING	221
1	INTRODUCTION.....	221
	Survey Sample and Limitations.....	222
2	PROFILE OF SURVEYED WWOOFERS	223
2.1	Key Demographic Insights.....	223
2.2	Key Psychographic Insights.....	229
3	PROFILE OF WWOOFERS INTERVIEWED	234
4	MOTIVES FOR WWOOFING	236
4.1	Becoming a WWOOFer	238
4.2	Additional Perspectives on WWOOFer Motives	243
4.3	Character and ‘Structure’ of WWOOFer Motivations.....	248
5	WWOOFING EXPERIENCES	262
5.1	Degree of Experience.....	262
5.2	Character and ‘Structure’ of WWOOFing Experiences.....	264
5.3	Assessment of the WWOOFing Experience	284
6	OUTCOMES OF WWOOFING	286
6.1	Gains of WWOOFing.....	286
6.2	Significant Aspects of the Experience.....	288
6.3	Changes to WWOOFers’ Lives.....	296

7	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	300
CHAPTER 7: TOURISTS IN WWOOFERLAND		305
1	INTRODUCTION	305
2	WHAT WWOOFING AND HOSTING IS 'ALL ABOUT'	310
2.1	WWOOFing, Tourism and Engagement.....	314
2.2	WWOOFing Work, Leisure Time and Tourism	321
2.3	WWOOFing and the Liminal/Ludic Wonderland	324
3	THE ZONE OF ENGAGEMENT	326
3.1	Through the Looking Glass: entering the zone.....	328
3.2	In the Looking Glass: being in the zone	335
3.3	Should I Stay or Should I Go?.....	359
4	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	369
CHAPTER 8: REFLECTIONS		373
1	INTRODUCTION	373
2	NATURE OF THE PHENOMENON	376
3	A MACRO VIEW: WWOOFING AS TOURISM	378
4	HOSTS AND WWOOFERS CREATING AN EXPERIENCE	383
5	A MICRO VIEW: WHAT HAPPENS IN WWOOFERLAND	386
6	WHAT THE WWOOFING PHENOMENON IS ABOUT	389
7	POWER, AUTHENTICITY AND SUSTAINABILITY	394
7.1	Authenticity	394
7.2	Power	395
7.3	Sustainability	396
8	A CONTRIBUTION AND AN OPENING.....	400
BIBLIOGRAPHY		405

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: List of National WWOOF Organisations as at 2007, 2009 & 2011	24
Table 2: Google Search on the term “WWOOFing”	36
Table 3: The Evolution of Development Theory	63
Table 4: Four Qualitative Research Styles	116
Table 5: Positivist and Constructivist Approaches to Research	121
Table 6: Strategies for Qualitative Sampling.....	144
Table 7: Hosts & WWOOFer Survey Response Rates, May & Nov 2006	150
Table 8: Demographic Profile of WWOOF Hosts (as at 2006)	158
Table 9: WWOOFer Accommodation	165
Table 10: Hosts Involved in Research	168
Table 11: Reasons for Being a Host.....	173
Table 12: Hosting Trend.....	184
Table 13: Most Significant Outcomes of Hosting (53%)	214
Table 14: Overall Significance of Hosting Experience to Hosts.....	216
Table 15: Demographic Profile of WWOOFers (as at 2006) (n = 188)	224
Table 16: Surveyed WWOOFers Countries of Origin.....	225
Table 17: National Groupings in terms of WWOOFing & Travel in Australia	226
Table 18: Time Occupied at Home	228
Table 19: Time Spent Travelling by WWOOFers.....	231
Table 20: Key Differences between Backpackers and WWOOFers.....	233
Table 21: WWOOFers Interviewed in Research	235
Table 22: Discovering WWOOFing.....	239
Table 23: WWOOFers’ Top 10 Reasons for Joining WWOOF.....	240
Table 24: Significant Aspects of WWOOFing Experience (grouped)	288
Table 25: Modes of Authenticity	316
Table 26: Paraphrased Views of Participants on Tourism and WWOOFing.....	320

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Annual Membership of WWOOF Australia, 1982-2010	26
Figure 2: WWOOFing in Relation to Types of Alternative Tourism.....	68
Figure 3: Framework for Organising and Conceptualising Research Data	80
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework for Data Arrangement and Analysis.....	153
Figure 5: Representativeness of Sample by State: WWOOFers (May 2006) and Hosts (July 2004 & May 2006).....	156
Figure 6: Age Distribution of WWOOF Hosts (n=318).....	159
Figure 7: Membership of Community of Groups	161
Figure 8: Spatial Distribution of Respondent WWOOF Hosts (May 2006).....	162
Figure 9: Focus of Property Related Activities	163
Figure 10: Types of Work Done by WWOOFers	166
Figure 11: Reasons for Hosting	174
Figure 12: Attributes of Good WWOOFers	181
Figure 13: WWOOFer Selection Criteria.....	182
Figure 14: Host Estimate of Origins of 95% of WWOOFers in Australia.....	185
Figure 15: What Hosts Think WWOOFers Seek	187
Figure 16: Types of Benefits Derived from WWOOFers	204
Figure 17: Comparison of WWOOFer and Host Residential Context	227
Figure 18: Community Group Involvement	229
Figure 19: WWOOFer Time Spent Travelling	231
Figure 20: Relative Importance of Travel Foci of WWOOFers	233
Figure 21: Importance of Host Attributes to WWOOFers	245
Figure 22: Distribution of Surveyed WWOOFers (May 2006).....	246
Figure 23: The 'Structure' of WWOOFer Motivations	249
Figure 24: Character and 'Structure' of WWOOFing Experiences.....	265
Figure 25: Outcomes of WWOOFing	287
Figure 26: WWOOFer (and Host) Perceptions of Benefits to Hosts	295
Figure 27: Life Changing Outcomes of WWOOFing and the Path of Transformation	298
Figure 28: Tourism as Leisure Away from Work and Home	306
Figure 29: 'New' Tourism, 'Post' Tourism and the Shadow of 'Old' Tourism	308
Figure 30: WWOOFing, Leisure, Tourism and the Non-Touristic	309
Figure 31: What Hosting and WWOOFing are About.....	311
Figure 32: The 'Ideal WWOOFer'	313
Figure 33: Views of Research Participants on WWOOFing as Tourism	319

Figure 34: Location of the Zone of Engagement	326
Figure 35: Process of/for Engagement	327
Figure 36: Conditions/Attributes of/for Engagement	327
Figure 37: Processes and Qualities of the Exchange	329
Figure 38: Direct Reciprocity (from Molm 2010)	349
Figure 39: Indirect Reciprocity (from Molm 2010)	350
Figure 40: Structure of the WWOOF Exchange	355
Figure 41: Processes, Conditions and Outcomes	358
Figure 42: The Johari Window & the Transformation of Cultural Capital	364
Figure 43: Micro and Macro-Social Dimensions of WWOOFing and Tourism	390
Figure 44: WWOOFing as Sustainability Tourism	396
Figure 45: WWOOFing and Tourism	399

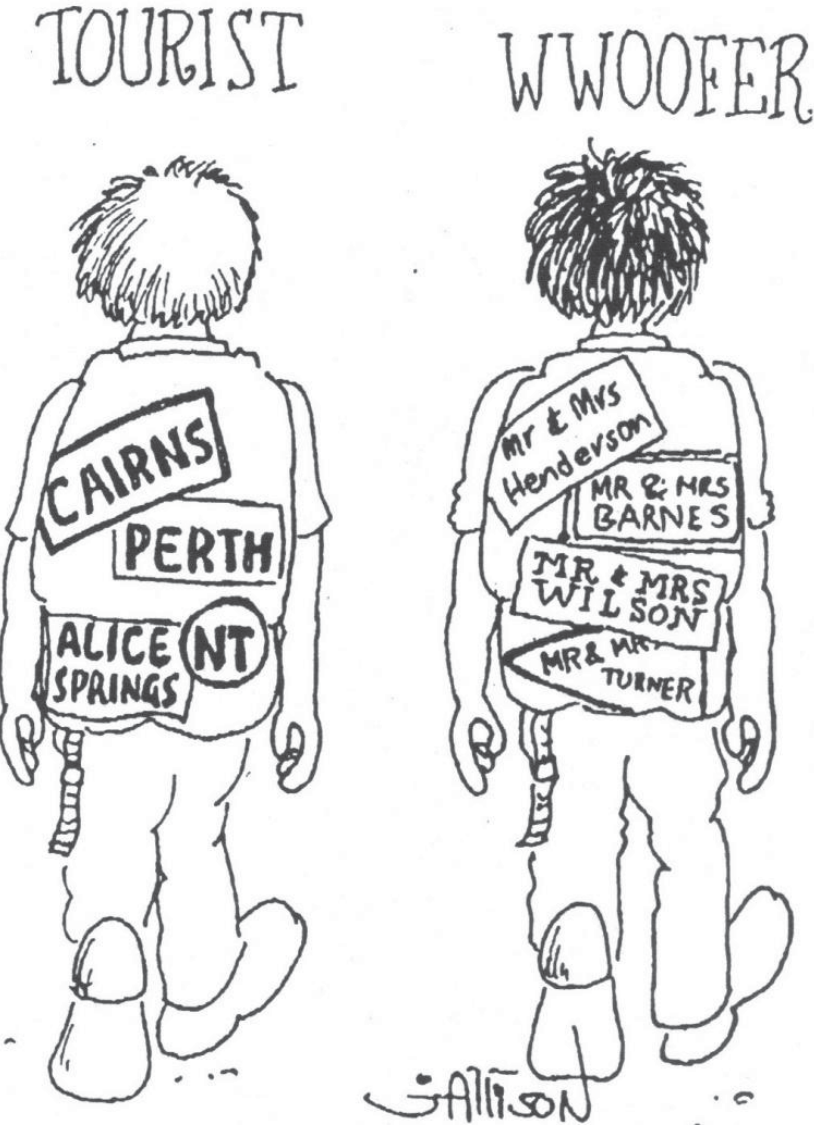
Abstract

'Willing Workers on Organic Farms' (WWOOFing) emerged in the UK in the early 1970s as a means of supporting the organic farming movement and fostering knowledge about its practices, but since that time has steadily become closely entwined with practices of independent global travelling. Current membership is heavily dominated by long term budget travellers and very limited existing research has largely portrayed WWOOFing in terms of farm tourism or the differentiation of more general trends among experience seeking backpackers in search of more 'authentic', more intimate encounters with other cultures. While there is certainly utility in such approaches to comprehending WWOOFing, this study endeavours to situate WWOOFing in a more thorough exploration of perspectives of participants.

Using surveys, interviews and participant observation of hosts and WWOOFers in Australia, a wide range of data is brought together and interpreted by means of a constructivist grounded theory approach to knowledge generation. The overall aim of this thesis is to understand *what WWOOFing is about*. By undertaking close analysis and interpretation of the perspectives of those involved, the subject of WWOOFing has been approached in conjunction with, rather than as a subset of the phenomenon of tourism in order to allow for the important perspective for some that WWOOFing is about *transcending* tourism: being based on interpersonal exchange and normative mechanisms of reciprocity, WWOOFing experiences are commonly perceived as characteristically different from those of 'tourism' experiences based upon fee-for-service forms of reciprocity. In terms of host-guest relations particularly, the structure of WWOOFing experiences and the primacy of 'sincerity' and 'existential authenticity' in WWOOFing encounters are shown to facilitate the creation and occupation of spaces that can directly generate mutually beneficial exchanges for all the selves involved, evoking MacCannell's ideal 'Neo-Nomads' of tourism in the postmodern era, crossing cultural boundaries as welcome(d) "imaginative travellers".

This study finds that though WWOOFing is now largely the domain of 'tourists', it is also ultimately and paradoxically it's 'exact opposite' which appears as a reflected, mirror image of it. WWOOFing has always operated 'beyond the looking glass', outside of tourism, while yet being attractive to tourists and opening up to them and embracing them as they seek a range of things, including for some, conscious 'refuge' from a touristic world. In exploring the ways in which WWOOFing acts to facilitate

transcendence of 'tourism', and while acknowledging there is a degree of liminal amorphousness between tourism and non-tourism, this study contributes to an ontological reframing of tourism. In doing so, it brings into consideration novel insights into the relationship between power, authenticity and sustainability in the tourism context, with significant implications for understandings of 'best practice' sustainable tourism.



"WWOOFers versus Tourists" (Pollard 1996)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1 OVERVIEW

Increasing numbers of people travelling for leisure spend some of their time 'WWOOFing'. A small proportion engage in WWOOFing as a principal mode of travel. While there is very little consideration of this phenomenon in studies of tourism, there is little doubt that it is now concurrent with contemporary forms of independent tourism, particularly 'backpacking'.

1.1 What is WWOOFing?

WWOOFing is the act of engaging in 4-6 hours of work per day on the property of member 'hosts' on a range of tasks, in exchange for food and accommodation. Host properties conform to varying degrees with criteria established by a national (or regional) Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF) organisation, generally by "being involved in organics in some way" such as by "growing or producing organic products" (WWOOF Australia 2008). The term 'organics' indicates chemical-free or 'natural' forms of agriculture and WWOOF's core aims and values derive from involvement in and support of the broader and now fast growing movement concerned with organic food or fibre production.

Organic agricultural techniques have been championed by many in response to the well understood connection between 'conventional' chemical and fossil fuel dependent agriculture systems and land and water degradation, ecosystem disruption and resource overuse, not to mention the potential for human and non-human disease caused by chemical ingestion. Thus the key international representative body for organic producers, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), sees its goal as increasing "the sustainability of agricultural systems through organic farming, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, protecting the rights of farmers and increasing the safety of the food supply for future generations" (IFOAM 2008).

The idea of WWOOFing began in the UK in the early 1970s as a means for bringing about work exchanges for urban dwellers wanting to immerse themselves in rural landscapes and learn organic techniques. It allowed them to try out alternative and rural lifestyles before committing themselves to full time life changes (Coppard 2006; Green 1980; Pollard n.d.; Vansittart 2002; Ward 1995) and helped to promote the nascent organic movement. Today, opportunities to WWOOF have expanded hugely,

spreading to many parts of the world (see Chapter 2), with WWOOFing now being a very popular activity among international travellers, especially 'backpackers' in Australia and New Zealand.

Given fairly loose criteria for host membership, there is some variation in interpretation and in the implementation of WWOOF's values at both host property and lifestyle levels. In Australia at least, some hosts are not directly engaged in organic production activities much, or at all, but are sometimes taken to qualify through a general espousal of an 'organic' lifestyle, or through involvement in land management for the purpose of 'Landcare' or ecological restoration. Host properties include commercial farms, land sharing and 'intentional communities' (Bagadzinski 2002), health and lifestyle retreats, bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) and other small-scale tourism establishments, community gardens and suburban homes (Cosgrove 2000; WWOOF Australia 2009). In one instance a yacht is listed as a host property.¹

WWOOFing is highly inclusive, being open to all ages and nationalities. Joining is a simple, inexpensive process, with very few formal rules of engagement. The actual WWOOFing exchange at the specific or 'micro-level', is left to individual members to arrange directly. There are no commitments other than those made at this time which can be and are frequently reviewed and revised according to individuals' needs or desires.

Given the interpersonal interaction at the heart of the WWOOFing experience, the act of WWOOFing is more than the minimum work exchange. It involves social and cultural exchanges and sometimes personal connections and relationships are made that appear to go well beyond general tourist-host relations. WWOOFing for many also entails learning about techniques of production, property management, alternative lifestyles, the people that host them, and in some cases as this research has found, WWOOFers often learn something about themselves. Through personal experience and discussions with WWOOFers and hosts, 'authentic', 'non-tourist', and 'purposeful' are frequently used terms to describe WWOOFing experiences that are readily identified as part of the appeal of this activity.

WWOOF had its origins and aims in 1970's grass roots 'back to the land' networking and the promotion of more sustainable forms of agriculture. Over time, as an activity

¹ The host spends about half his time as a WWOOFer travelling in Australia and writing about WWOOFing and the other half of the year hosting WWOOFers on the boat.

increasingly undertaken or performed by international budget travellers, WWOOFing has seemingly shifted relative to its core organic values and goals. It offers travellers an inexpensive means of connecting with local people and seeing their local places, while at the same time being fed and housed and thus saving money, particularly helpful for long term or low budget travellers, regardless of their other personal value or interest orientations.

Even so, those using the WWOOF mechanism as part of their travels – over 90% of which are international visitors - eventually come into contact with the core values and aims of WWOOF and its hosts, primarily producing and consuming organic produce, but also living more sustainable lifestyles generally (Jamieson 2007; Larson 2000; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; McIntosh and Campbell 2001; Platz 2003; Vansittart 2002; WWOOF Australia 2009). WWOOFing can therefore be pictured as a conduit through which participants may be exposed to various philosophies and practices in their own way connected with organic agriculture. It is this point of intersection between two growing sectors that forms the focal point for this exploratory study - contemporary travellers and contemporary sustainable production practitioners and advocates.²

1.2 Key Sectors

There are now in Australia around 2,000 registered host properties, bringing an array of people into contact with the roughly 16,000 WWOOFers that currently annually join (or re-join) WWOOF. This point of intersection does not contain massive numbers of people in comparison with tourism generally, but there have been significant growth trends since 1990. Between 1994 and 2004, WWOOFer membership increased by 725%, a significantly higher rate of increase than general tourist traffic to Australia during the same period. This strongly suggests WWOOFing should have significance at some level in our consideration of the differentiation of contemporary forms or modes of tourism, as well as consideration of contemporary foci of tourist interest.

Simultaneously, the organic food sector has been growing at a rapid rate globally for some time and is increasingly becoming a mainstream part of the food sector (Biological Farmers of Australia 2010; Clarke 2004; Dimitri and Greene 2000; IFOAM 2008; Lockie, Lyons et al. 2002; OFA 2006; Organic Monitor 2003; Willer and Yussefi 2004). It is now reportedly practiced in over 150 countries, with total land area under

² WWOOF hosts are here taken to be representatives of this 'group', with a critical awareness that hosts vary considerably in their organic principles, knowledge and practices (see Chapter 5).

organic production area tripling between 2000 and 2006 (Biological Farmers of Australia 2006).

Global organic produce sales doubled between 2003 and 2008 to \$50.9 billion (Organic Trade Association 2011). Worldwide demand for organic primary produce continues to increase and the industry is estimated to be expanding at the rate of 20% per year (Austrade 2005; Dimitri and Greene 2000). Some reports indicate that supply cannot meet demand for some produce³ and ongoing “healthy growth rates” in this sector are predicted (IFOAM 2008).

In Australia, growth in the sector has been steadily increasing over the last 20 years according to its peak body, the Organic Federation of Australia (OFA), and market analysts forecast current annual growth rates of between 10-30% in Australia. Organic retail sales grew over 50% between 2008-10 in Australia (Biological Farmers of Australia 2010), while in Asia and North America, the rate of annual growth was between 20-45%, with product demand frequently outstripping supply (OFA 2006).

Very strong growth indicators in these two sectors may in some way be connected, but these statistics do not reveal anything of the strength of feeling that is also readily uncovered among WWOOFing participants. It is around the convergence of these factors together that this research has been framed.

1.3 Guiding Question

The key question that has guided this research is *what is this WWOOFing phenomenon about?* It is the aim of this thesis to provide a well constructed answer to this very large question, but several starting points are now briefly picked up in this introductory chapter to orient the reader to the subject and its handling.

The growing desire to have experiences, including WWOOFing, could be viewed in the context of the booming ‘experience economy’ (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The increased availability of average disposable incomes (and/or expanded credit markets), the shift from Fordist mass production to more specialised forms of production and a general increase in the consumption of services, have created within the larger global economy, an increasing proportion of total consumption accounted for by the consumption of experiences. As well as offering opportunities for inherent pleasure and

³ Austrade cites a 10-15% global supply lag (Austrade 2005).

self-development (or self-actualisation in Maslow's terms), experiences are a consumer product offering opportunity for identity development or enhancement. Particular choices of experience not only demonstrate a degree of status though disposable income available, but demonstrate individuality through distinctive 'lifestyle' taste, contributing to the accumulation of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; O'Dell and Billing 2005; Ryan, Trauer et al. 2003; Singh 2004).

Experience consumption has gained a strong 'market foothold' in the world of tourism, itself a highly complex human activity that continues to be difficult to clearly define. Detailed consideration of the many perspectives on tourism is offered in Chapter 3, but a convergence of tourism with generalised experience consumption is demonstrated amply by a recent campaign, based on empirical market research, in which Australia has promoted itself as a magnet for *experience seekers*. The industry body Tourism Australia (2006) produced a research based pamphlet in which contemporary tourists are quoted saying: "The most important aspect is understanding – seeing what others do, seeing other lives and having experiences", or "We don't want to feel like a tourist. We want to settle in". As noted by Franklin (2003a, p.86), there is a new concern with 'contact', the "properly touristic" being effectively expressed in Japanese tourism brochures as participation "with their own skins". More than passively 'gazing' at objects of difference (Rojek and Urry 1997), tourists now want to "get their hands on the world and do things with it" (Franklin 2003a) and to experience it in bodily ways (Crouch 2007).

Connected to experiencing, many tourism service providers claim to be able to facilitate 'real' experiences, arranging for encounters and contact with people in local communities, addressing the apparently undiminishing hunger of some to enter the 'back stage' of tourism regions (MacCannell 1976; Rojek and Urry 1997). While WWOOFing certainly brings such aims about, the question of the 'authenticity' of experiences, people or places is difficult to determine, not only because the judgement of authenticity is ultimately a subjective matter ("all cultures are inauthentic and contrived" (Rojek and Urry 1997)), but globalisation generally and increasing mobility specifically all continue the constant process of (re)making culture (Meethan 2001). A playful subversion of signs of the 'real' thing are increasingly pervasive elements of postmodernity and such playfulness with 'virtual' realities is "increasingly a normative expectation" (Franklin 2003a, p9) that undermines the idea of 'the authentic'. In addition, boundaries between the touristic and the everyday are increasingly blurred to the point that some have claimed that the era of 'post-tourism' has perhaps arrived

(Urry 2002).⁴ For these sorts of reasons, there are those who doubt that the search for authentic difference as found in other (particularly pre-modern) cultures (as primarily associated with MacCannell (1976)) is an adequate foundational concept for the analysis of tourism (Franklin 2003a; Jack and Phipps 2005; Meethan 2001). Instead, authenticity is more like something attributed by individuals to the world 'out there', and thus is a socially constructed concept with a connotation that is not given but 'negotiable' (Cohen 1988) and personal.

Many WWOOFers and the WWOOF organisation insist that WWOOFing provides the opportunity for people to access and experience 'real' people in real places, sharing in the doing of their everyday things. Perhaps therefore, WWOOFing indicates the beginning of the predicted 'end of tourism', given the everyday and the touristic do indeed seem to have fused in this context. Despite, or perhaps because of this, WWOOFing occurs in a unique space, in a realm structurally removed from what might be called industrial tourism (Leiper 2004), where the exchanges that occur are not monetary in nature and where the interactive experience is mutually created through the endeavours of individual people. In this respect, the interest in WWOOFing may also be paralleled by related interests in volunteering generally and volunteer tourism (discussed in later chapters). In common with these practices, notions of tourism as the consumption of experiences with (or of) 'otherness' by means of the 'tourist gaze' or other forms of sensory consumption, may have limited applicability, challenging the consideration of WWOOFing as a form of tourism. Consumption implies one entity consuming another, which at the extreme, makes the tourist a type of cannibal (MacCannell 1992), ultimately (paying to) consume its host. More moderate perspectives on tourism accept that tourism inevitably makes some impact on communities, hoping that through 'best practice' planning and management, cultural, social or environmental losses absorbed by a community are at least adequately compensated for by much needed income (Brown 2000; Reid 2003). This study shows that WWOOFers make contributions that can assist hosts in various ways, some of which have indirect economic value. But importantly as will be demonstrated, power relations between hosts and WWOOFers are very different in character, with the possibility of one consuming the other being extremely limited given the relationship represents something more akin to symbiosis.

⁴ Fieffer's (1985) idea of the 'post-tourist' is explored by Urry (2002) who has speculated that tourism may disappear as a category of life as we all become tourists or the object of someone else's tourist gaze. Global culture incorporates multiple gazes which leads towards the end of tourism in the more general 'economy of signs'. Anywhere can become a niche location says Urry, and "within the swirling contours of the emergent global order", there are countless mobilities and home and away is blurred (Urry 2002).

A variety of concepts central to the field of tourism studies are partially useful as constructs for thinking about WWOOFing as an experience and as an increasingly significant travel choice. Yet it is not clear why WWOOFing has begun to grow so rapidly in recent times and nor do there seem to be complete concepts available that are sufficiently developed to account for it. Similarly, definitions of ecotourism, sustainable tourism, special interest tourism, cultural tourism, volunteer tourism and numerous other tourism 'forms' capture elements of WWOOFing and coincide with various motives and behaviours of WWOOFers. Yet such theoretical perspectives do not adequately define or account for WWOOFing and crucially, it remains unclear whether it is a form of so-called 'alternative tourism', or an alternative to tourism.

For these sorts of reasons, the somewhat cryptic WWOOFing *phenomenon* has been considered worthy of study in the context of tourism. Franklin (2003a) suggests there is need for empirical work with tourists to hear what they think about what it is they are doing. Research should document a "passionate and personal set of experiences, transitions, understandings and additions to the way people construct a sense of self" (p15).

The term 'phenomenon' has been chosen to describe WWOOFing since it means:

thing that appears or is perceived, esp thing, the cause of which is in question; (Philos) that of which a sense of the mind directly takes note, immediate object of perception; remarkable person, thing or occurrence (Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1987).

Having personally experienced WWOOFing and having later noticed its dramatic uptake, the key driving question for this research is *What is the WWOOFing phenomenon about? Or in a more vernacular form, What's going on with WWOOFing?*

Preliminary consideration led to the tentative idea that by entering the WWOOFing space for a time, tourists can cease being tourists, stepping into a different role more closely resembling that of a *person* in the everyday lives of ordinary people. This would produce implications for the 'selves' that operate in this particular (tourism related) exchange. The 'us and them' barriers so distinctive in the 'conventional' roles of tourists and hosts become less relevant, or even dissolve, which if demonstrated, should produce significant theoretical interest. Through WWOOFing, the opportunity might exist to avoid the 'taint' of commoditized relations that seem to be so bound up with the

distinct roles of tourist and host, or consumer and producer. Or to put this inversely, to have more *sincere* experiences (Taylor 2001), which depend on mutual, interactive, co-creation by the individuals involved, which are not judged by benchmarks suited to the standards of paying customers. This temporary transformation is analogous with that which occurs when ‘consumers’ returning from a shopping centre to resume their role as ‘citizens’. The decommodified experiential space in which WWOOFing occurs certainly has a unique character, which when combined with its focus on organic production, sustainable living and ecological restoration, reasonably amounts to a case for considering WWOOFing to be a unique type of “decommodified ecotourism” (Nimmo 2001a).

This speculative notion that WWOOFing affords the opportunity for *tourists* to cease being *tourists* for a time is an interesting and probably important one when we consider that the tourism industry itself claims to grasp the idea that there is virtue in not ‘feeling like a tourist’ (Tourism Australia 2006). Yet, perhaps because WWOOFing is not an activity that generates significant economic benefits for participants (or an industry), there has been no detailed attention given to the existence and character of the WWOOFing experience, nor to the implications of this phenomenon for our understanding of contemporary tourism, tourists and hosts and their interactions.

1.4 Key Questions and Approach

There are therefore many uncertainties and questions concerning WWOOFing and its relationship with tourism that make it fertile ground for exploratory research. As very little was previously known about WWOOFing, it seemed justified to take a broad initial approach to the subject, and to progressively narrow consideration down to the most ‘significant’ aspects as they emerged. Despite the foregoing theoretical speculations, rather than develop or borrow a specific theoretical framework to direct the research and seek evidence in the field to support the theory, there has been an attempt to work inductively within the social world of WWOOFers and hosts, to develop theory in light of findings made there. This is particularly important given the strong interest in the interactions between hosts and WWOOFers and the role that plays in shaping their experiences.

The research therefore broadly adopts the methods of ‘grounded theory’ (Charmaz 2003; Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1998), which is suited to the exploration of little understood social phenomena

and to the generation of theory about it. This provides for an iterative yet systematic approach to the exploration of areas of interest allowing for “a broad but rigorous analytical sweep, that allows for multiple problematics to arise, with the concomitant potential to explore each to its fullest conclusion” (Wearing 1998a). The resulting ‘theory’ is not considered eternally valid or highly generalizable, but substantive and tentative, as explained in detail in Chapter 4.

As indicated, there are always questions built on personal curiosity that generate an initial research interest in any topic. Unfortunately however, very little existing data was available with which to answer the very broadly formulated guiding question. So this research has been a process of actively participating and intervening within the WWOOFing phenomenon in Australia to generate and interpret information that would enlarge the opportunity to pursue it.

Naturally, such a broad question quickly breaks into many sub-questions, attached to hunches and partial theories that emerge as the researcher begins on a ‘path of discovery’. An attempt has been made during the research process to keep these at bay in order to pursue the topic ‘bottom-up’, in keeping with the tenets of grounded theory. But for the purposes of this introductory chapter, both to provide a sense of the possible breadth of the topic under investigation and to write reflexively for the benefit of the reader, it is worth stating the many questions that at some point in the process grew out from under the key research question.

What is the nature of this phenomenon and why is it growing so rapidly at present?
What is the nature of the WWOOFing experience for both WWOOFers and WWOOF hosts?

Beyond this core focus were numerous interconnected questions: *To what extent is WWOOFing used by travellers for extrinsic and intrinsic reasons? What are these reasons? How important are pragmatic reasons relating to budgets and visas? How significant to travellers is the flexibility offered by the WWOOF concept? How significant are the original aims of WWOOF, namely learning about sustainable lifestyles, organic production, alternative communities and farm life?*

Does WWOOFing represent one of many recently differentiated touristic forms? If so, what type is it? Is it a form of ‘alternative tourism’? What is its connection to rural

tourism, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism, ecotourism, community tourism, volunteer tourism, cultural tourism or pro-poor tourism?

Is WWOOFing part of all these forms of tourism, an adjunct to tourism, or is WWOOFing an alternative to tourism itself, or part of de-differentiation processes between the once distinct spheres of tourism and the everyday? Can WWOOFing be considered a form of tourism if it occurs outside of an 'industry' and commodity exchange framework?

What is produced and consumed in the WWOOF exchange and what is the basis for relations between tourist and host? What is the significance of the exchange of labour (and not money) to the experience in the context of a commoditized world and how significant is the 'de-commodified' aspect of WWOOFing to its character and its growing popularity?

Given that work is involved in WWOOFing, what impact does the phenomenon of WWOOFing have on the work versus leisure distinction, or the 'self' and 'other' distinction that is central to much tourism theory? Is WWOOFing connected to volunteer tourism, or to volunteering generally? Is it problematic to ask whether WWOOFing suggests the emergence, along with various types of 'volunteer tourism', of a 'symbiotic' (or even synergistic) relationship between tourist and host ('organisms'), rather than a 'parasitic' or even 'cannibalistic' one?

What role do and could travellers as WWOOFers play in assisting in the promotion of and the transition to more sustainable forms of primary production and consumption and to the broader sustainable land management and restoration efforts of local landholders and communities? Or, what are the implications of the WWOOFing concept or model for developing our ideas and practices concerning tourism related community development?

Finally, given these many interconnected questions, what is the significance of the recent spread and rapid uptake of WWOOFing for our understanding of contemporary tourism and why has that, as well as the activity of WWOOFing itself, been almost completely overlooked in the world of tourism studies to date?

This research has set out to commence an exploration of this multi-dimensional phenomenon by examining it from the varied perspectives of WWOOFers and hosts.

As stated, in order to bury preconception as much as possible and allow participants to generate the 'data' needed to build theory about it, the guiding question has deliberately been framed broadly.

Chapter 2 describes the origins of WWOOF, to give some sense of its purpose and to be able to chart the moment where it began to change shape and size and spread. It also outlines what has previously been written about WWOOFing, highlighting the point at which WWOOF Australia grew towards, was opened up to, or perhaps was 'appropriated' by, an ever expanding tourism sector. Chapter 2 articulates some of the management issues and pressures and tensions that exist for WWOOF Australia as the popularity of WWOOFing expands, and notes the emergence of an 'offspring' alternative traveller exchange mechanism that appears in many respects to have become a 'competitor' within the contemporary backpacker scene.

This consideration of WWOOF's origins and contemporary character is then merged with an effort in Chapter 3 to explore the idea of WWOOFing as tourism. It addresses the question of what tourism is, examines various types of tourism and looks at key concepts of tourism, to establish the utility and limits of existing literature in providing an appropriate conceptual basis for understanding the WWOOFing phenomenon.

Having established the need for further empirical research into WWOOFing, Chapter 4 sets out the research framework and methodology used. It begins with a reflexive look at the impetus for the research and addresses the overall approach to the research, including exploration of key philosophical issues in approaching such a topic. It argues for the adoption of mixed research methods, setting out details of the methods used, and concludes by explaining the conceptual framework that emerged during the research process which guided the organisation of data and structured the presentation of research findings in this thesis.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide detailed consideration of the data collected in this research, respectively reporting on the backgrounds, motives, experiences and outcomes of WWOOFing for hosts and WWOOFers in Australia. These chapters are both descriptive and analytical, with most conceptual synthesis reserved for Chapter 7, which looks in detail at the interactive interface where engagement between hosts and WWOOFers occurs. A *zone of engagement* has been conceptualised as the crucial platform upon which the WWOOF exchange occurs and is an integral element in the analysis of what occurs in the WWOOFing phenomenon at the micro-social level.

Understanding this zone and its workings assists in drawing the research findings into the broader macro-sociological context in which this phenomenon occurs. In progressively analysing and building towards an understanding of WWOOFing in this way, Chapter 8 finally captures the modest theoretical contribution made by this research in terms of conceptualisation of relations between power, authenticity and sustainability in tourism.

2 POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research will potentially have practical and theoretical significance to the academic study of tourism and leisure, but also to various stakeholders, including the WWOOF organisation and WWOOFers, future travellers and tourists, the organic movement and those concerned with the use of tourism as an instrument of development at grassroots, local community levels through various forms of community based (eco)tourism.

2.1 Tourism and Leisure Studies

A review in Chapters 2 and 3 of what has been written about WWOOFing and some of the broader literature and conceptual frameworks within the multi-faceted field of tourism and leisure studies, aims to contextualise the phenomenon of WWOOFing, in the process demonstrating that there is much room for further exploration. In the absence of further research, it might be tempting to conceptualise WWOOFing as a very small and specialised segment of the tourism 'industry', and thus to explain the absence of much focused attention among researchers to date by noting its limited relevance to more significant research priorities. It certainly shares much with farm tourism and many other well described (alternative) tourism forms, but it remains little known within the general body of literature and is difficult to categorise in terms of known tourism types or volunteerism more broadly.

Without further research, one could speculate about what WWOOFing symbolises or is symptomatic of; what it indicates about the shape of contemporary travelling or the future of travelling; what it means for tourism theory and for those seeking to explore pathways to ecologically sustainable development. As it will be demonstrated, there are important reasons why WWOOFing has been left unanalysed, which has obscured and limited existing conceptualisations of WWOOFing. It does appear to be significant that WWOOFing provides a direct pathway for tourists to the 'back stage' regions of a

community - in and by avoiding the cash exchange nexus outside the commoditized relations of the tourism 'industry' - while delivering a range of benefits directly to willing hosts.

Given a range of possible explanations, the intent has been to produce an account that starts with few assumptions about WWOOFers in relation to tourism, to lead to a well founded and well developed understanding. This has been attempted by working with hosts and WWOOFers to determine how they 'use' WWOOFing in their lives. The present study has yielded a vast body of data, some of which has been used to interpretively build concepts of theoretical significance to the field of tourism and leisure studies.

2.2 Sustainable Agriculture and the Organic Movement

The sustainable agriculture and organic movement as a whole should benefit from the presentation of empirical information concerning the range of benefits and costs to WWOOF hosts associated with their host role. In particular, this research provides insight into the degree and significance of WWOOFer contributions in supporting the development and maintenance of organic primary production systems in Australia. While such production systems currently represent a minor segment of overall global primary production and many WWOOF hosts are not commercially focused, there are several factors likely to make this very useful information.

As the statistics reported earlier suggest, demand for organic primary produce continues to increase and is now "considered anything but a niche" product (Willer and Yussefi 2004). Australia itself is the largest grower of organic produce in the world, with growth in organic trade "heavily influenced by the increasing demand for organic food and fibre products in Europe, Asia (especially Japan) and Northern America" (Willer and Yussefi 2004). This trend, along with green consumerism more generally appears unlikely to abate as consumer consciousness grows about connections between food, human health and planetary health (Biological Farmers of Australia 2010; Holden 2000; Lockie, Lyons et al. 2002; Oskamp 2000).

At the same time, the need for more sustainable agricultural practices in Australia has been acknowledged for some time (Commonwealth Government of Australia 1992), even by conservative farming organisations (National Farmers' Federation 1998), and globally, particularly taking into account the lives and livelihoods of impoverished rural

communities (Madeley 2002; Shiva 2009). It is in the interests of the Australian organic agriculture sector and more broadly those concerned with environmental protection and community based sustainable development to understand the nature and significance of the work and varying roles played by WWOOFers. At the farm or national level, making a transition to more sustainable agricultural practices, increasingly via the adoption of organic techniques, is likely to involve a greater degree of labour intensive practices. Thus there is the view by some that WWOOFers may (already or increasingly) act as a useful substitute in many situations for synthetic chemicals (WWOOF NZ, pers.comm.; Moscardo 2008; Pollard unpub), obviously crucial to the goal of increasing the number of viable organic producers (Maxey 2006).

The research also explores learning opportunities arising through WWOOFing, including in relation to organic primary production and sustainable land management practices. Other potential outcomes are discussed by a range of writers in Chapter 2, while actual reported outcomes arising from WWOOFing experiences are discussed in Chapter 6. Via increased awareness, understanding and empathy for organic growers, there is evidence of the likelihood of increasing future market preference for organic produce among WWOOFers and there have been some cases of WWOOFers establishing their own organic enterprises following their experiences. In both these ways, WWOOFing appears to offer potential for expanding the sustainable/organic agricultural production sector.

2.3 Community Based Sustainable Development

Beyond seeking to better understand and describe the phenomenon and the nature of the WWOOFing experience in the context of travel, a broader hope of the researcher (beyond this thesis) is to consider what the WWOOFing phenomenon and model may offer in terms of assisting, 'growing' or facilitating sustainable (generally rural) community development (Herbert-Cheshire 2000). For those focused practically and theoretically on the use of tourism as an instrument of development at grassroots, local community levels through community based tourism (see Chapter 3), there should also be some relevance in this research which begins the process of opening up such questions as *how could the WWOOF 'model' as used by contemporary travellers, be utilised or expanded to consider and support broader 'earth repair' and sustainable community development contexts?*⁵ Such development, as is found in the WWOOF

⁵ By 'earth repair' it is meant the types of work associated with habitat restoration, degraded landscape reclamation and general reversal of human generated, ecologically negative impacts. Sustainable

model, is assumed to be directed by and in accordance with the intentions of local communities (notwithstanding difficulties with representation and power distribution) and is from this perspective, appropriate to the needs of such communities.

The WWOOF model, given its 'grass roots' or bottom up assistance basis, may provide scope for recasting the possible role of tourism, particularly in relation to rural community development programs generally, both in developed and less developed contexts.⁶ Understanding WWOOFer experiences brought about by the WWOOF model/mechanism offers potential for reconsideration of the ways in which in tourism may contribute to the improvement of the lives of the rural poor in developing countries. That is, it would establish a rationale for the extension of this inquiry in the future, into the context of the provision of community development focused assistance in developing communities given the World Tourism Organisation's call for the UN to use tourism in the 'war on poverty' (WTO 2005). As such it should also be of interest to those engaged in the field of volunteer tourism.

2.4 WWOOF, WWOOFers, Hosts and Future Travellers

It must be acknowledged that WWOOF hosting is not suited to all people at all times and that there have been some quite negative experiences reported for both parties at times. But when conducted in the appropriate spirit at an appropriate time, WWOOFers on the whole appear to be able to make a positive contribution to the many and varied hosts seeking assistance in their efforts to live and improve their lives, livelihoods and properties. With this in mind, this research may stimulate tourists of the future to experience the mutual benefits that are possible through this experience and thus expand the repertoire of tourism possibilities that can contribute to the global effort to exist more sustainably.

Current WWOOF hosts should also find this research to be of general and some practical significance, while current or potential organic producers, whether individuals or communities more broadly defined, may also benefit from the insights it generates.

Finally, given the limited information previously available about the scale and the character of WWOOFing in Australia, it is hoped that WWOOF Australia will benefit

community development refers to the social and economic development of communities within the ecological limits of local environments.

⁶ This possibility has been raised also by Moscardo (2008) in relation to her challenge to our consideration of the term 'sustainable tourism'.

directly from the knowledge contributions resulting from this study. In particular, the research should provide:

- useful demographic and psychographic data about its constituent members; and,
- a beneficial theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the interactive encounters between hosts and WWOOFers and the factors supporting successful WWOOFing experiences.

Combined, these research products should assist WWOOF Australia (and other WWOOF organisations) with ongoing management into the future.

3 INFLUENCES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The assertion that WWOOFing is a phenomenon worthy of investigation had its origins in the author's personal experience as both a formal and informal WWOOFer during travel experiences in Australia, South East Asia (Photo 1), India and Nepal between 1996-1998.

Photo 1: Methods of Irrigation (Host Farm, Malaysia, ca 1997).



Apart from assessing these and other WWOOFers' experiences as very positive, discovery of the large growth in *quantity* of WWOOFing activity during the 1990s in Australia and New Zealand produced suspicion that it was becoming a social

phenomenon of relevance to tourism studies. It must be noted that the subject was not approached without some emotional attachment and interest in decoding the significance of personal WWOOFing and travelling experiences.

This has motivated the effort to develop contemporary theory where it was thought that none yet adequately existed, but also to contribute to tourism studies in the context of concern about a world in need of solutions to environmental and humanitarian problems. Like most research, it was generated and informed by insights based on personal experiences and formulated as a research topic guided and perhaps limited by a series of interconnected beliefs or assumptions, including:

1. That many tourists, either 'escaping' or 'seeking' something, are relatively privileged people who yearn to experience 'difference' *and* familiarity, but are increasingly frustrated by homogeneity of many tourist destinations, both 'mainstream' and 'alternative'.
2. That the assertion of such people of the 'right to roam'⁷ is unlikely to wane in the context of increasing mobility and connectedness associated with globalisation processes (notwithstanding a lengthy period of fear of instability and insecurity 'abroad').
3. That the creation of traditional 'new frontiers' of tourism development (i.e. new spaces, new cultures) can only be a short term fix to the 'problem' of limited supply of novelty.
4. That there is need or scope for privileged people to direct their energies and resources in such a way as to support people struggling to make a living and addressing degraded environments, which if appropriately directed and 'harnessed' in a sustainable manner, could possibly satisfy much demand also for 'experiencing' people and places of difference.
5. That there will be an increasing demand by people to learn practical skills suited to more sustainable forms of production and consumption, as global consciousness about the connection between environmental degradation and quality of life expands and dependence on oil for food production becomes more untenable.
6. That there are a growing number of people seeking to exist and participate in the world 'outside' of relations based on a monetary exchange, either temporarily, part-time or permanently, and that there are people who find that some experiences are

⁷ "In the North, holiday time is legislated and compensated for, making travel a right as opposed to a privilege in the mind of most consumers. From a sustainability perspective, feeding these holiday fantasies is a costly business" (Johnston 2003).

enhanced and even more valuable through such freedom from connection to monetary exchange.

7. That money and technology are very important instruments for addressing some of the problems and needs of people and the planet, but when access to and benefits from these is heavily distorted and they are systematically used to serve primarily private interests, other solution oriented and appropriate strategies may be needed, including appropriately devised and implemented tourism types.⁸
8. That an equitable, just and sustainable global order, which is the articulated overriding goal of the people of this planet via the 2015 UN Millennium Goals, is unlikely to be reached by a simplistic process of continued deregulated global economic growth and 'free market' policies. There are natural (physical) and social limits to this growth, and this process, which in the main does not account for environmental and social 'externalities', creates as many problems as it does 'solutions'.⁹
9. That increasing global market integration and economic growth based on the commodification of natural resources is directly related to increasing local and global ecological disintegration, which will sooner or later, necessitate significant shifts in our expectations of appropriate levels of personal material affluence that can be achieved or sustained globally.¹⁰
10. That people can and indeed have designed and implemented significantly more sustainable forms of human settlement and modes of production and consumption which meet the needs of people in the context of their local environments or 'bioregions'.

In stating these influences and assumptions, the researcher recognises the significance of ensuring that such views or biases drive and reflexively frame the research rather than unduly colour the conduct and findings of the research. The issue of reflexivity and objectivity are discussed further in Chapter 4.

⁸ Connectedness to money lenders or donors and to manufacturers and technicians often creates insoluble dependencies - hence the need to 'write off' debt in poor countries or to continually repurchase seeds in the case of genetically modified agricultural seed. There is continued need to address longer term 'externalities' such as finding new sources of employment for those displaced by technologies or to conduct environmental repair works associated with short term narrowly focused 'solutions'.

⁹ This has led the development of a set of "genuine progress indicators" that take into account all costs having considered both the quality and distribution of economic growth in looking at the benefits associated with a growth dependent global economy (for example (Venetoulis and Cobb 2004) and <<http://www.gpionline.net/NSsite/gpidetail.htm>>.

¹⁰ See for example the perspective of Trainer (1985; 1989) or others who have written about the notion of 'affluenza' (de Graaf, Wann et al. 2001; Hamilton 2009).

Finally, this research is proposed to commence an exploration of the actual character and the *potential* of the WWOOFing concept and phenomenon, to make a contribution to reducing problems. It commences an exploration of what the WWOOFing model might offer in its current or an expanded form, as a contribution to the facilitation of sustainable forms of development through tourism, to increasing global sustainability at multiple local levels.

CHAPTER 2: WWOOFING IN AUSTRALIA

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter depicts the origins, nature and evolution of WWOOFing in Australia to the present day. It documents the spread of WWOOF globally and characterises the scale of the WWOOFing phenomenon in Australia. It provides a detailed review of the writings to date on this subject and establishes the diverse character of existing thinking about it, as well as the limits of knowledge about it in empirical terms prior to this research. Finally, this chapter lays a foundation for a more detailed analysis of WWOOFing in connection with tourism in Chapter 3.

2 ORIGINS AND SPREAD OF WWOOF

In reconstructing the genesis of the original WWOOF organisation in the UK, its founder Sue Coppard (2006, p89) emphasised that it was created by “enthusiastic city bound would-be farmers” who typified the broader ‘return to nature’ movement in the early 1970s. She recalls that she, like others she knew, pined for the countryside but had no rural friends and no means of accessing a more natural country life without making a total and committed lifestyle change. While considering ways that urban people might find avenues for immersing themselves in the country, and having learned about the organic philosophy while helping on *Resurgence* magazine,¹ she reasoned organic farmers would be likely to want to use willing but unskilled urban labourers. In pursuit of this idea, she was put in touch with the vice-principal of a Steiner education centre called Emerson College by the editor of the *Soil Association Journal*. She and others offered to organise a weekend work exchange on the 80 hectare organic farm connected with the college. Initially sceptical, farm managers were persuaded by the Vice-Principle to allow a trial weekend exchange on the basis of “free room and board in exchange for a few hours work each day” (Vansittart 2002). Coppard then advertised for interested people in the London *Time Out* magazine, which generated fifteen enquiries. Three engaged in the first trial exchange weekend “clearing brambles and unblocking ditches, listening to birds, watching the sunset, and chatting with the students at meal times”. They enjoyed themselves greatly (Coppard 2006) and the farmers were also apparently able to make good use of the extra

¹ The aim of *Resurgence* magazine is to promote ecological sustainability, social justice and spiritual values. < <http://www.resurgence.org/>>, accessed July 2009.

assistance and so repeated the exchange (Green 1980). It grew in popularity, and through word of mouth the idea expanded to more farms.

The *Soil Association* editor then ran an article entitled 'Coppard's Land Army' which in turn brought increased interest from would-be 'WWOOFers' and expanded the number of host farmers interested in getting help on their land. Other alternative media exposure followed and the weekend exchanges continued, bringing more people into contact and propelling the idea forward and outward (Coppard 2006). Thus the concept grew and began to appeal to urban people with little experience, but who aspired to live the ideals of country life. The nascent organisation also aimed to promote organic practices through the exchange of people interested in learning from others by creating an exchange network. Through this mechanism, they were now able to experience and learn various organic techniques first hand and could "know what to expect" by WWOOFing without the necessity of a "total commitment of setting up their own holdings" (Vansittart 2002).

The idea also gave birth to broader communication linkages between city and country (Green 1980), with city people connected to organic food producers and producers with voluntary labour and potential customers (Vansittart 2002). As well as serving these quite useful and practical purposes, the concept was also deemed successful because people greatly enjoyed their experiences as "organic folk everywhere" are generally "interesting, lovely and fun people" (Coppard 2006).

The concept began to be known by the name *Working Weekends on Organic Farms* (WWOOF) and after eighteen months, managing the arrangements between relevant parties had grown into a large administrative task. In its initial form, the members would receive a newsletter every 2 months, listing and describing places in the UK needing help each weekend and the type of work to be done. Members could then make bookings through the regional organiser of the relevant district. This allowed for a decentralised and simplified organisational structure for a group of volunteers (Green 1980), who would ensure that "too many would-be workers arriving at the one doorstep" was avoided. For those members who had satisfactorily completed at least two weekends booked through the WWOOF organisers and demonstrated their reliability to hosts, a more detailed "fix-it-yourself" listing was made available for the UK and Ireland, allowing suitable WWOOFers to make their own arrangements with hosts (Green 1980).

Along with a newsletter, the growing WWOOF network had begun to act as a vehicle for the promotion and spread of knowledge about organic practices through the exchange of like-minded but dispersed people interested in learning from others (i.e. a community of interest) (Coppard 2006; Green 1980). Over time, WWOOF began also to be seen as able to help organic production to grow, since organic farming is generally labour intensive due to its methods and the common shortage of capital among its practitioners (Pollard unpub). Crucially, for the majority who are small scale practitioners, labour can be a large expense which is rarely needed on a permanent basis, according to Pollard.

The WWOOF scheme has been characterized as a success from its modest beginnings relative to its aims, and this success led to its spread in an organic fashion (Coppard 2006; Green 1980; Pollard unpub; Vansittart 2002; Ward 1995). It was nurtured by many personnel over a number of years in the UK and the availability of the exchange itself was extended beyond weekends in response to indications that there was growing interest in longer stays. Thus maintaining the acronym, it became known as *Willing Workers on Organic Farms*.

From these origins, the concept migrated to a range of other countries. WWOOF New Zealand was the second organisation to be created in 1974, the result of individual travellers who had themselves WWOOFed in the UK in the 1970s. It however, adopted another variation on the WWOOF name: *Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms*.² This pattern of establishment of national WWOOF organisations continued, often with the assistance of WWOOF UK, but “tailored to suit local needs” (Coppard 2006). WWOOF USA started in 1979 and by 1980 WWOOF had also appeared in Norway, Ireland and France.

WWOOF UK continued to promote the organic movement and organic education domestically through the 1980s, through for example, the publication and low cost sale of a specialized organic sector directory (Coppard 2006).

Lionel Pollard, an organic farmer in Victoria, read an account of the emergence of WWOOF in the UK in a 1980 edition of the Tasmanian Organic Farming Society periodical *Organic Grower*. The article concluded with a challenge for someone to set up such a network in Australia. Inspired by what he read, he told the society that he

² Note that this is a commonly used title, which avoids the potentially politically contentious word ‘worker’ in its title.

was prepared to get WWOOF started in Australia, which he and his wife Valerie did that year.

WWOOF Canada began in 1984, WWOOF Germany in 1988 and many other national networks have followed since that time (see Table 1). Between 2007 and 2011 alone, the number of national WWOOF organisations grew by over 76% from 29 to 51.

Table 1: List of National WWOOF Organisations as at 2007, 2009 & 2011³

2007		2009	2011
Australia	Italy	Argentina	Bangladesh
Austria	Japan	Belize	Guatemala
Bulgaria	Korea	Brazil	Hungary
Canada	Mexico	Cameroon	Lithuania
China	Nepal	Chile	Moldavia
Costa Rica	New Zealand	Ecuador	Thailand
Czech Rep.	Slovenia	Ireland	Venezuela
Denmark	Spain	Kazakhstan	
Estonia	Sweden	Philippines	
France	Switzerland	Poland	
Germany	Turkey	Portugal	
Ghana	Uganda	Romania	
Hawaii	UK	Sierra Leone	
India	USA	Spain	
Israel		Taiwan	
Annual Total	29	44	51

Source: WWOOF International Website (accessed 2007, 2009, 2011)

<<http://www.wwoofinternational.org/index.php>>

In addition to these countries with national WWOOF organisations, there are numerous other nations involved that do not currently have local resources to establish and operate national organisations. There is therefore also a *List of Independent Hosts* produced and maintained by the international WWOOF Association on their behalf. As affiliations of hosts independently listed have grown and become resourced, they have been organised under a national host body. Between January 2007 and August 2009, the number of independently listed hosts grew by 24% from 260 to 323, distributed across 60 nations (see Appendix 2 for details). As of August 2009, there were 104

³ It is hoped that this form of presentation gives an indication of the recent and continued rapid spread of WWOOF.

nationally and independently listed WWOOFing nations, meaning that one can now WWOOF in about half of the world's nation states.

During these years national groups maintained contact with each other through exchange of newsletters and visits, but rapid additions of member nations led to agreement in 2005 that the International WWOOF Association act as an umbrella organisation for the many national organisations (Coppard 2006).

While national WWOOF organisations (and independent hosts) operate along similar lines, there are differing fee structures and rule variations that reflect the national context and differing emphases in terms of principles and management. For example, Pollard (founder of WWOOF Australia) has stated that the European groups in particular have a high level of membership participation and “tend to cater for people wishing to learn about organic growing”, reflecting closely the intent of the original WWOOF group in the UK. However the Canadian, Australian and New Zealand organisations began to cater towards and promote WWOOFing among overseas tourists “seeking cultural exchange” (Pollard n.d.).

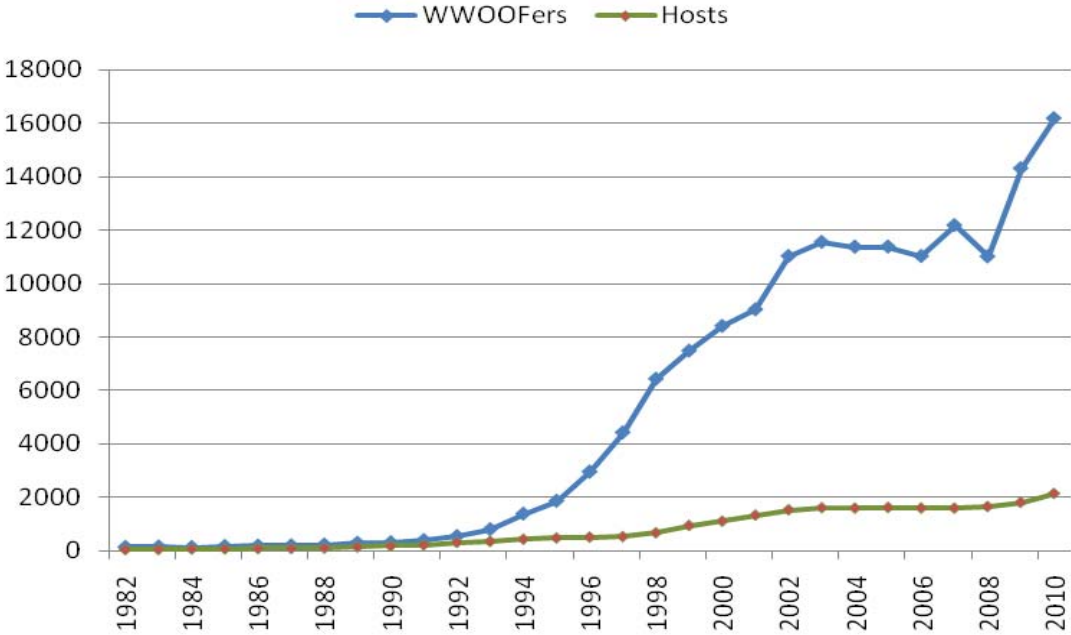
Today, tourists are overwhelmingly the major constituent WWOOFer members, certainly in Australia. Before trying to unpack the many complexities associated with the WWOOFing and tourism relationship, it is necessary to focus upon the growth, scale and nature of WWOOFing in Australia today.

3 WWOOF IN AUSTRALIA

Figure 1 documents the changes in membership of hosts and WWOOFers since its creation in the early 1980s. Over an initial ten year period, there was a slow but steady increase overall, but in the following ten year period between 1994 and 2004, WWOOFer membership increased by 725% (a significantly higher rate of increase than general tourist traffic during the same period).⁴ Reasons for this dramatic rate of growth are not clear, but along with key demographic and psychographic unknowns, are pursued in Chapter 6.

⁴ These numbers are based on an assessment of International Visitor Statistics. McIntosh and Bonneman (2006) noted a 153% increase in WWOOFers between 1993-2003 in New Zealand, while Chinn (2008) observed a 540% increase in WWOOFer membership in the U.S. between 2003-2008.

Figure 1: Annual Membership of WWOOF Australia, 1982-2010



3.1 Overview of the WWOOFing Experience

Through their membership, WWOOFers are entitled to make contact with hosts to make a mutually agreed and voluntary arrangement for the exchange of specified types of work for food and accommodation with the host. Hosts, either in directory listings or during initial contact, may specify a minimum time period to ensure that the gain to them is worth the effort of providing food and accommodation and organising appropriate work for their guests. They may also specify a maximum stay to ensure that they can resume their more ‘private’ lives at an agreed time.

The usual arrangement advocated by WWOOF is half a day of work per day, as directed by the WWOOF host, in exchange for all meals and accommodation. However, in practice, all arrangements vary and are highly flexible.

WWOOFing work “may be gardening, weeding, planting trees, environmental works, feeding animals; the work is as varied as the farms themselves” (WWOOF Australia 2004). Through personal experience and observation additional work activities include harvesting, seed saving, pruning, bush regeneration, construction, creative projects, food preparation and various other household related activities. Occasionally activities

tangentially related to these could include child and animal minding and house-sitting, as needed.

Flexibility also characterises interpretations by hosts of the types of properties and activities associated with the WWOOF name. WWOOF states that 'organic' does not necessarily mean certified organic (i.e. through an independent certifying body) but refers more to the adoption of organic practices and philosophy. Thus organic farming is practiced to varying degrees by hosts and there is significant variability in its interpretation as it applies to their activities. Drawing on a range of sources (McIntosh and Campbell 2001; Nimmo 2001a; WWOOF Australia 2004; WWOOF New Zealand 2004), it is known that hosts include individuals, families and communities of farmers, gardeners, 'Landcarers'⁵, suburban householders, Permaculturalists⁶, Biodynamic growers⁷, spiritualists of various kinds, and others. Some hosts are very limited in terms of amounts of primary produce they actually grow on site, but identify themselves *in some way* with the ideals of the organic movement. In common, as intended by the organisation, hosts are committed to sustainable land management practices, with the requirement of adherence to 'organic principles' regardless of the scale of production⁸. Thus some might be more focused on natural environmental restoration than primary production, or do so at different times of the year. Some are concerned only with a limited amount of production for the family or community. Others still might be attempting to live as close to self-sufficiency as possible, while at the other end of the spectrum there are successful, efficient, commercially focused and certified organic growers that engage WWOOFers alongside paid employees.

Many hosts profess to being environmentally concerned people whose interest in the WWOOF concept is to facilitate greater involvement and awareness in environmental understanding and to achieve practical measures or meet ongoing tasks with the assistance of extra hands (McIntosh and Campbell 2001).

⁵ People associated with the Landcare movement as it is known in Australia, which advocates repair of degraded natural environments to their former natural condition through a variety of techniques, including human assisted natural regeneration.

⁶ Permaculture (derived from *permanent agriculture*) is a term coined by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in the 1970s encompassing "the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. It is also the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems" (Lawton 2005).

⁷ A component of the organic movement that utilises specific techniques derived from anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner.

⁸ Again, there are some significant 'grey areas' when the focus of hosts at a given time might be on native vegetation restoration and management and the use of some of the more benign chemical techniques which are expedient in the management of significant weed infestations.

Whilst there are significant opportunities for interested WWOOFers to learn from hosts, some hosts state in the WWOOF directories that they themselves are at an early stage in their development of an organic property and are willing to learn from experienced WWOOFers. Others offer learning to “students of lifestyle”, suggesting a degree of experience and confidence in their own pedagogical abilities.

Some hosts are quite specific about their requirements and actively screen prospective WWOOFers, while others are very open and ‘experimental’. Some hosts accept WWOOFers year round, while others are more seasonal or occasional. Some hosts are interested in the cultural exchange and company provided through their involvement with WWOOF, while others emphasise the practical help component. In all, WWOOF hosts are diverse with wide ranging interests and a combination of many of the above variables is common at any one site.

From a WWOOFer’s perspective, the exchange service is particularly well suited to travellers who might wish to experience farm life, different cultures and to be involved in or learn about organic production and sustainable land management practices. Though WWOOFers are most commonly international visitors, there are domestic and local members. Some of these are ‘semi-professional’ or ‘serious’ WWOOFers who may spend long periods of time at individual host properties. Eldridge (in Maycock 2008, p284) observed that WWOOFing suits three main types: “shoestring-budget travellers”, “organic agriculture enthusiasts” and “corporate types with fantasies of escaping the urban jungle and reconnecting with a slowed-down life”. Farrer (1999) suggested that though urban life is where the action is, it “can wear thin after a couple of decades”, which is where WWOOF steps in as:

a cheap but reward-rich way to experience alternative ways of life, views of the world and to swap cold, fluorescent lighting for warm, vitamin D-filled sunshine.

The opportunity to remove oneself from the ‘beaten track’ of more typical forms of tourism as well, has long been emphasised by WWOOF itself, as has the opportunity to learn from practicing organic producers and to engage in ‘authentic’⁹ cultural exchange:

You can visit and exchange your ideas and culture while working for food and accommodation... Exchange is the key word... This can be flexible... If you only see your

⁹ The WWOOF Australia slogan is: “a unique name, a unique experience! Discover the REAL Australia.”

host as free food and accommodation, that is NOT in the true spirit of WWOOF... You decide what you want from your experience. Do you want to visit only serious organic farmers or travel to exciting destinations? Do you want a combination of both?... Also consider going off the tourist track and visiting the hinterland areas where you will see many beautiful sights most tourists don't get to see (WWOOF Australia 2009).

Cultural and work exchange are key interactive aspects of the experience, but as this suggests, other characteristics might also be identified as part of the appeal of the activity. Certainly the development of personal relationships among hosts and WWOOFers is common, given the interaction at the heart of the experience and preliminary consideration suggests that these micro-social aspects are likely to have influenced the phenomenal development of WWOOFing (both quantitatively and qualitatively), with implications for theories of tourism and leisure.

3.2 WWOOF Operation and Management

Lionel and Valerie Pollard nurtured, maintained, encouraged, experimented with and developed the Australian WWOOF system from its beginnings in 1982, until about 1997 when they handed it over to the present administration of Garry Ainsworth and others. The Pollards remained involved in WWOOF related affairs until 1999.

At present WWOOF Australia operates as an organisation employing five people part time in updating publishing and distributing its member directory of hosts in Australia, as well as maintaining the directory, a website and electronic forum, and managing various associated administrative issues.

The WWOOF Directory is currently published in paperback form twice a year, providing contact details, a description of individual properties or communities, the type of work to be done and the accommodation and meal situation there. WWOOFers browse options, choose a suitable place and contact hosts to arrange a mutually suitable time to visit. The choice may be based on individual preferences related to geography (proximity to a particular travel route); philosophy and practices (such as biodynamic farming); cultural factors (many hosts speak other languages) and so on. Ideally WWOOFers "live and work with the host families in the same way as relatives and friends do when they visit" (WWOOF Australia 2004). The very affordable annual membership fee for WWOOFers of \$60 (or \$70 for a double) includes the provision of a minimum level of insurance cover, in the event that they are injured at a host property.

This exchange operates on a large amount of self-reliance, mutual good will and trust between WWOOFers and hosts, and there have of course been those who have attempted to exploit the system in one way or another. In an attempt to help to ensure a satisfying and safe experience for members, WWOOF provides various mechanisms to regulate the system to a degree. An online bulletin board provides a forum where WWOOFers can post positive experiences of hosts, offering the opportunity for other potential WWOOFers to feel assured of host credentials in advance. In the case of negative experiences, WWOOFers are encouraged to report to WWOOF who investigate claims internally, perhaps matching them to any similar claims made by others to ensure the veracity of claims and to avoid taking action on the basis of unsubstantiated accusation. With sufficient evidence, WWOOF removes inappropriate hosts, thus progressively reducing undesirable hosts from the system in the hope of protecting future WWOOFers and maintaining the integrity of the WWOOF name (WWOOF Australia, pers. comm. 2006).

WWOOF provides a “WWOOFer Alert” to hosts when they receive reliable reports of WWOOFers behaving in ways that significantly break the code of reciprocity and good will. Transgressions generally consist of serious actions such as stealing, offensive behaviour or violence. A WWOOFer alert is posted to hosts to warn them to turn away the named or described WWOOFer.

WWOOF Australia is run as a not for profit organisation, with surplus returned to hosts in the form of grants to enable them to carry out conservation and reforestation projects, which WWOOF emphasises are often on lands that would otherwise be ineligible for government grants (Cosgrove 2000). WWOOF also points out that using WWOOFers to assist in the work comes also at no cost to domestic taxpayers.

WWOOF meets the standards of the National Council for Volunteering and as it operates on the basis of a voluntary work situation, it emphasises that no jobs are lost to domestic workers because of WWOOFing. The Australian Department of Immigration has been satisfied that this is the case, allowing most WWOOFers in Australia to WWOOF on a regular Tourist Visa.¹⁰

¹⁰ This is not the case however in New Zealand which has had to take a different path in this regard, as WWOOFing officially requires a different type of visa than a Tourist Visa. In Australia, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has accepted that WWOOFing by those on a tourist visa does not contradict work and immigration laws provided that WWOOFing is not their primary purpose of visit.

3.3 Relationship to the Organic Movement

As previously noted, WWOOF began to be seen as an opportunity to assist the organic movement as a whole to grow. According to its Australian founder, this was because it was able to provide “a link between those who have a job to be done, and those willing to do it in exchange for the experience” (Pollard unpub).

Nevertheless, Pollard stresses that WWOOF labour is not, and should not be seen as cheap or free labour. It certainly takes time and effort to organise people and to provide their meals and accommodation. The labour can be arduous, repetitive or menial, particularly weeding which is a significant component in organic systems. But as later discussed, this work can take on a range of meanings and significance for different WWOOFers, depending on circumstances, motives and attitudes. In addition, Pollard (and others) point out, that there is much WWOOF work that is unusual, sometimes creative and for many, an enjoyable and richly rewarding experience.

Importantly, the extent to which individual hosts benefit from the work inputs of WWOOFers is a key issue for our understanding of the WWOOFing phenomenon, while the extent to which WWOOFers have contributed to the growth of the organic movement more broadly, as speculated by Pollard and others, is relatively unknown and therefore an important point addressed by this research.

3.4 Tourism and the Evolution of WWOOF

The dramatic membership increases described above need to be explained in terms of WWOOF's history. To Pollard (n.d.), it was clear when people began to ask about WWOOFing - ‘why only on weekends?’ - that there already existed a “preference among many for WWOOFing for an extended period”. It was probably here, through the extension of WWOOFing opportunities beyond weekends, that the now indelible connection between WWOOFing and tourism can be said to have emerged. Members could enjoy the benefits of a somewhat tourism-like activity in WWOOFing, though tourism was not primary in its conception (WWOOF Australia 2004). Since WWOOFing began in Australia it has attracted participants from other countries who were not primarily interested in organics *per se*. This contrasts with WWOOFing in Europe, which in the late 1990s, functioned more closely to the original purpose of ‘learning about organics’ according to Pollard (1998):

There is no doubt that in Ireland, England and Germany the WWOOF scheme is 'purer' than it is here. WWOOF was started to give people a chance to learn about organic growing by doing it! In those countries it still operates very much with that aim in mind... In Australia, we have broadened our scope to allow WWOOFers to learn more about the host country as well.

This broadening dispensed with the initial 'proving period' or screening required of WWOOFers and this less rigorous approach to membership in accepting people "merely on their desire to go WWOOFing", was justified on the basis of exposing more people "to organic approaches and alternative thinking", so that more visitors "go home at least with some seeds of change in their minds" (Pollard 1993, pp82-3). In the early to mid 1990s, WWOOF Australia consciously "opened up to the backpackers" (Pollard 1998, p72), partly through marketing WWOOF to the backpacker market and the use of (travel) agents to sell WWOOF memberships. Connected with this, WWOOF sought to expand the host base through the development of a separate but related Australian Cultural Exchange (ACE) list that included non-organic hosts (Devlin 1998). Pollard described the ACE list as a 'new venture' that would further broaden and consolidate the sorts of educative outcomes for backpackers being achieved through WWOOFing.¹¹

Since the mid-1990s, WWOOF Australia was marketed and memberships sometimes 'packaged' as part of travel arrangements as a means of improving English language skills, especially in the case of Japanese and South Korean tourists to Australia. Through such marketing, WWOOF "became attractive to a wider range of nationalities" than had previously been the case. For example, growth in Japanese WWOOFers was found to have occurred in 1996-7 (Pollard 1997a) and then by 1998 there were significantly increasing numbers of South Koreans participating in WWOOF (Pollard 1998)¹². Moreover, between 1997-1998 the steepest increase in WWOOFer membership in absolute terms occurred (representing a 31% relative increase), while the ratio of WWOOFers to hosts in Australia also jumped to its highest to date at 10:1 (it has now fallen back to about 8:1).

These moves indicate that deliberate steps were taken by WWOOF in this period which, apart from seemingly progressing a particular ideological agenda (i.e. the

¹¹ The ACE list was discontinued after only a few years, largely because it significantly overlapped with the same hosts already listed in the regular organic list (Garry Ainsworth, pers. Comm. 2009).

¹² Indeed, a number of hosts complained at the time that WWOOFers from these countries held unrealistic expectations of their hosts (Pollard 1998).

importance of 'organics'), brought WWOOF very much into the territory of a tourism operator.¹³ The effect of these efforts naturally had various supply and demand related impacts on members. For example, increasing the number (and proportion) of tourists using WWOOF might alter the expectations of the experience among the overall pool of WWOOFers. Indeed, many hosts have expressed concern that WWOOFers sourced from the realms of the tourist market are more likely to want a touristic experience and to seek a 'cheap holiday'. For WWOOFers, increased competition in securing a host place can be an issue, while some hosts, particularly those in popular locations, have occasionally been overwhelmed by the volume of contacts made.

Criteria for inclusion of hosts is a perpetual management challenge for WWOOF administrators, as is finding the right balance between the interests of expanding the WWOOF network and retaining loyalty to its original 'organic' ideals. There seem to be various 'tribes' of WWOOF hosts differentiated along permutations of ideological lines such as commercial/non-commercial, certified/uncertified, small/large scale, rural/urban, organic/biodynamic, and so on. WWOOF appears to be regularly evaluating the desires of its members in seeking to strike a balance between the interests and principles of 'hard core' organic growers seeking meaningful WWOOFer help, while including and encouraging those less central to the original organic intent of the organisation, thus risking disappointment among some proportion of WWOOFers in finding limited host interest in organics.

It was found also that a number of longer term hosts perceived that the increase in new host membership in the past decade or so had led to a decline in the viability of their own involvement, since, despite increased WWOOFer membership, the numbers of WWOOFers they attract in the 'free market' WWOOFing scheme had suffered in response to increased 'competition' from other hosts. In fact, Pollard specifically advised hosts complaining of reduced WWOOFer numbers to 'revamp' their description in the WWOOF book to "make it more attractive to people" (Pollard 1997b). This in turn may have fueled an increase in the number of hosts that take a more competitive, entrepreneurial approach to attracting WWOOFers. Indeed, one can observe attraction techniques among hosts now ranging from the use of more 'alluring' descriptions in the WWOOF book that detail tangential attractions associated with their properties

¹³ Note that in New Zealand a different approach appears to have been taken. The WWOOF concept is not based on a business model that seeks expansion *per se*, and in 2005 the administrators said there was neither the means nor intention to promote WWOOF NZ in the broader world beyond its traditional connections through the organic movement and alternative publications such as *Earth Garden*, which regularly features stories about WWOOFing experiences (WWOOF NZ pers comm 2005).

(landscapes, wildlife, domestic animals, access to National Parks or beaches etc), the increased use of the WWOOF bulletin board to advertise for 'WWOOFers needed now', through to the use of near commercial tourism scale websites that offer images, descriptive spiels and enquiries pages for increasingly 'in-the-moment' potential WWOOFers. With this shift to more touristic 'marketing' styles, there is an observable (but un-analyzed) shift in related language as well, with the term 'booking a place' perhaps beginning to supplant 'arranging an exchange' in WWOOFing parlance.

There is little doubt that the Australian WWOOF organisation has indeed come to cater more "for the growing army of overseas tourists" keen to have cultural exchange experiences, as Pollard has suggested. In Australia by 2006, about 92% of WWOOFers were visitors from other countries, while in New Zealand it has been estimated to be between 93-95% (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; Nimmo 2001a). The proportion of present day WWOOFers using WWOOF Australia membership specifically to achieve the learning focused outcomes of the original network centred on organic growing is an unknown partly driving this research. However, based on interviews, surveys and discussions with key informants, it can be suggested that the relative proportion of such WWOOFers has been declining for some time, relative to the proportion of those with more a pragmatic, experience-oriented rationale for WWOOFing. It does seem likely that 'tourists' have steadily made use of the inexpensive and non-exclusive WWOOF membership to enhance, complement or possibly even seek to escape from regular tourist related activities or itineraries. Given the tendency of many¹⁴ backpacker tourists to seek affordable experiences 'off the beaten track' (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Bennett 2007; O'Dell and Billing 2005; Pollard 1998; Pryor 1997; Riley 1988; Welk 2004) and to want to have close encounters with people from another culture and exotic wildlife and landscapes (Brown and Lehto 2005; Craik 1997; Howard 2007; Huxley 2004; McIntosh and Zahra 2007; Nimmo 2001a; Reisinger and Turner 2003; Wearing and Neil 2000) in combination with the global spread of WWOOFing opportunities (Maycock 2008), it is little surprise that WWOOFing and tourism have become closely entwined.

In addition to categorising WWOOFing as a form of 'cultural tourism', it has also been described by some outside of the tourism academy as the quintessential form of sustainable and/or responsible tourism (Fenton Huie n.d.; Pollard n.d.). It requires significantly reduced built tourism infrastructure and is concerned with helping farmers

¹⁴ But not all (Cohen 2004a; Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003).

produce more sustainable produce by virtue of the practices and activities involved on host farms. More broadly its uptake has been considered to represent a growing interest in green consumerism and more altruistic, ethical, low impact, or sustainable forms of tourism (Clarke 2004; Doherty 1997; Hughes and Stitt 2008; Idelbrook 2007; Maycock 2008; Pollard n.d.; Trainor 2008). Some have suggested it can be considered a form of adventure travel (Anon. 2003; Fenton Huie n.d.) given the inherent unknowns involved.

In addition, in April 2001 a 'competitor' exchange network appeared within Australia created by an ex-WWOOFer in response to perceived inadequacies connected to the 'antiquated' pre-internet framework operated by WWOOF. Help-X (<<http://www.helpx.net/>>) operates on very similar lines as WWOOF, though with a significantly wider host criteria than organic farms. Any sort of help can be sourced by hosts through this medium and it also utilizes Web 2.0/peer-to-peer capabilities to create a fully online, interactive host listing service, the details of which are accessible and readily changeable (with changing life circumstances) by its host members, rather than by a group of administrators every 6 months in the case of the printed WWOOF book. This service is growing in popularity with budget travellers and many WWOOF hosts are also known to list on this service.

There are thus a variety of good reasons for considering the relationship between tourism and WWOOFing (and emerging exchanges) to be both well established but little understood. The task of in the next chapter is therefore to explore literature in the broader field of tourism and leisure studies in an effort to locate WWOOFing in relation to tourism and leisure theory.

Before undertaking this exploration however, this chapter will conclude by examining the existing literature that deals specifically with WWOOFing to complete the picture already commenced.

4 PERSPECTIVES ON WWOOFING

A significant amount has been said about WWOOFing in Australia and elsewhere in the world, much of which is found in the popular media, such as the internet,

newspapers and magazines.¹⁵ To put this into perspective, a general *Google* search for the term “WOOOFing” and a range of other *potentially* related tourism terms was conducted in July 2009. Results of this search are shown in Table 2 below, compared against the same search term using *Google Scholar*, to determine the amount of scholarly literature known to exist on the same topic.

This table indicates that for the number of returned items found by (A) *Google*, more has been written about “WOOOFing” than many well known areas of tourism studies interest such as “alternative tourism”, “farm tourism” or “volunteer tourism”.

The results from (B) the *Google Scholar* search however indicate a different ranking for these terms, strongly suggesting (subject to the limitations imposed by the assumptions underpinning this method) that scholarly interest in “WOOOFing” is significantly less than a general interest, and, compared to the ratio of general/scholarly interest in other selected tourism-related terms, is significantly less in relative terms. This search supports the claim for increased scholarly attention to be paid to the WOOOFing phenomenon, also providing context for the following consideration of what has been written about WOOOFing from six sometimes overlapping sources and/or perspectives.

Table 2: Google Search on the term “WOOOFing”¹⁶

Search Term	Google (A)	Google Scholar (B)	Ratio (A:B)
WOOOFing	72500	21	3452
alternative tourism	68100	2660	26
pro poor tourism	42900	1090	39
educational tourism	42400	709	60
farm tourism	38100	1490	26
special interest tourism	28400	1400	20
volunteer tourism	17300	320	54

It must be acknowledged that there are numerous anonymous or otherwise incompletely referenced articles in this discussion which is the result of their acquisition

¹⁵ Note that in October 2010 over 650 video postings including the term “WOOOF” were found on YouTube alone.

¹⁶ Note that the shorter search term “WOOOF” naturally ranked significantly higher still, ahead of “responsible tourism”, “voluntourism” and “community tourism”

from the WWOOF archives, often as second and third hand photocopies without detailed referencing. It should also be stated that all accounts of WWOOFing discussed below are limited to those written in English.

4.1 Accounts of WWOOFing by WWOOF Australia

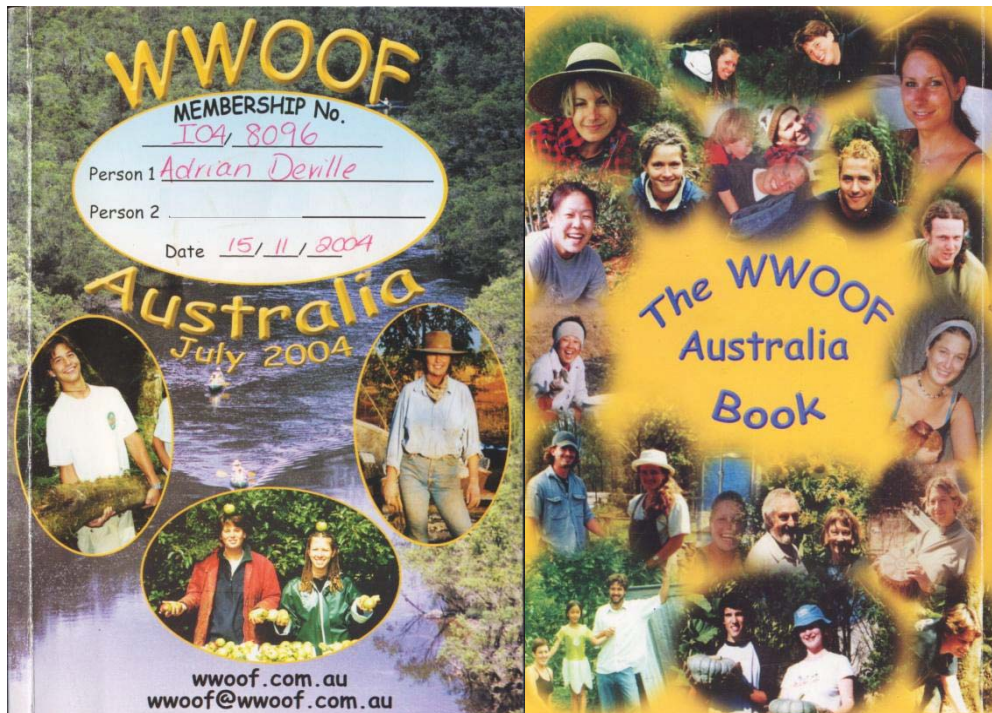
The perspective of the Australian WWOOF organisation itself is best represented by statements in their book and website. WWOOF is clearly aware that its audience is mostly likely to be a tourist of some description, given the frequent emphasis on “getting off the tourist track” and “seeing many beautiful sights most tourists don’t get to see!” (WWOOF Australia 2009). But combining travel with a particular interest in some aspect of organic farming or sustainable living on the land suggests that WWOOF Australia regards itself as a hybrid entity, a situation which has been and is the cause of considerable and ongoing management tensions as described earlier.

Many published articles have appeared over many years authored by representatives of the WWOOF organisation, most commonly in ‘alternative lifestyle’ magazines. Pollard in particular has been a regular contributor to the available narrative that documents the history and ‘evolution’ of WWOOF locally and globally, though others have also touched on this theme (Clarke 2004; Coppard 2006; Doherty 1997; Green 1980; Maycock 2008; Pollard 1998; Pollard n.d.; Ward 1995). Pollard regularly prepared a column on WWOOFing in the alternative lifestyle magazine *Earth Garden*, where he has described, promoted and sometimes defended various changes introduced by the organisation and from without. One such article (Pollard 1996) features a cartoon (see inside cover) in which identical backpackers are shown with their packs covered in stickers/badges declaring places travelled to. One is marked ‘Tourist’, with ‘Cairns’, ‘Perth’, ‘Alice Springs’ etc emblazoned, while the other is marked ‘WWOOFer’, with ‘Mr and Mrs Henderson’, ‘Mr and Mrs Wilson’ etc. This accords with those statements in which WWOOFing is characterized as a mechanism for escaping the limitations of ordinary backpacking (cf Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Pearce 1990; Riley 1988) in allowing travellers to meet ‘real people’ in ‘real places’.

Long term WWOOF staffer Deb Schmetzer (n.d.) describes the many virtues of involvement in WWOOFing, including experiencing in some cases work consisting of ‘fun’ activities (eg constructing mosaic pathways) and accessing local attractions and events with hosts. WWOOF is framed as the perfect, inexpensive mechanism for trying

out or sampling various lifestyles that might already be of interest, or which are hitherto unknown. In short, this is a good example of 'infomercials' produced by WWOOF Australia.

Photo 2: Cover of WWOOF Australia Book (2004)



4.2 Popular Accounts of WWOOFing

Numerous accounts of WWOOFing deal with the subject in a general fashion for a wide audience, ranging from brief newspaper articles to more detailed coverage in magazine formats or 'special reports'. WWOOFing has been frequently discussed over a number of years in alternative 'lifestyle' magazines such as *Earth Garden*, *Grass Roots* and *Mother Earth News*, as well as more recently in magazines and guide books dedicated to long term budget travel.

WWOOFing has been described as an activity occurring largely at the 'periphery' of mainstream society, that is, removed from the urban 'core', thus representing an alternative to the 'cool' and detached ways of contemporary society (Anon. 1998; Anon. 2006; Farrer 1999; Larson 2000). It has therefore been described as a part of, but also in contrast to rural or farm tourism, and as hinted at already, it has been contrasted with tourism in general (Anon. 2006; Doherty 1997; Jerums 1996; Klein n.d.; Pollard 1996; Pollard 1999; Statham 2003; WWOOF Australia 2009). It has been considered a

form “sustainable farm tourism” (Amandolare 2009) and in some romanticized accounts, aims to “revive the personality of rural culture” (Larson 2000). Through the folksy and sometimes quirky ‘feel of WWOOFing’ reported by some authors¹⁷, a WWOOFer is permitted to ‘step back in time’ (Jerums 1996; Klein n.d.) amongst hosts with “a passion for old-school agriculture” and experience the ‘essence’ of the rural life of yesteryear (e.g. through the ‘vibrant villagers’ in the case of European WWOOFing) (Larson 2000; Platz 2003). However some authors also characterize the lifestyles of hosts and the motives of WWOOFers as highly contemporary and well thought out alternatives that run in parallel with and/or, work against the ills of modern urban existence (see below).

WWOOFing is sometimes seen as a ‘working holiday’ (Conway 1999; Jerums 1996), typically raising the question as to why people would choose to work while on holidays. Here, Conway finds that for people with particularly stressful jobs, where work related problems are sometimes difficult to relinquish, relaxation is achieved more readily by doing ‘useful’ activities (particularly those matched to the organic ideals of some WWOOFers), than by seeking a more traditional holiday that involves sitting still for any period of time.¹⁸

Some have emphasized the role and potential of WWOOFing in generating ‘new experiences’ for WWOOFers given the likelihood of their mostly urban origins. It therefore provides general experiential life learning opportunities (Jerums 1996; Pollard 1999; Stehlik 2002) and the potential for generating changes in life directions (Devlin 1998; Doherty 1997; Green 1980; Jamieson 2007; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006).

The relatively rapid uptake of WWOOFing (since the mid-1990s in Australia) has been considered to overlap with the growing interest in green consumerism, responsible tourism, low impact travel, altruistic tourism, and in more simple, frugal ways of living (Anon. 2006; Clarke 2004; Cosgrove 2000; Doherty 1997; Hughes and Stitt 2008; Idelbrook 2007; Jamieson 2007; Maxey 2006; Maycock 2008; Pollard 1999; Pollard n.d.; Singh 2002; Statham 2003; Trainor 2008; van Raders 1994; WWOOF Australia 2009).

¹⁷ Larson (2000), who WWOOFed in four locations in Spain, describes WWOOF as an international organisation of “earth-friendly agriculturists” and states that apart from the work for food and lodgings, “the intercultural understanding and agricultural know-how generated by WWOOF is sustenance for both the soul and the soil”.

¹⁸ This is a difficulty also observed by de Botton (2002).

Given its educative orientation, its role in assisting people and its frugality also in terms of tourism infrastructure, WWOOFing has also been described as the quintessential form of sustainable and/or responsible tourism (Fenton Huie n.d.; Pollard n.d.) and significantly, in the *Scientific American (Earth) Magazine*, as an exemplification of 'success' in fostering practical sustainability (Chinn 2008).

WWOOFing has been explicitly considered as an example of a successful 'energy exchange' (along with a range of others in the 'gift economy') in which hosts "communicate their needs to their visitors, who in turn provide what they can, resulting in a wonderful give-and take dynamic" (Hughes and Stitt 2008, p41). This situates the WWOOF exchange rather differently from the majority of economically driven, market-based or commoditized human relations, emphasizing that hosts are in a strong position in respect of meeting their own needs through hosting. It is perhaps partly because of the inherent unknowns and significant levels of interpersonal trust involved (Larson 2000) in this decommodified system of energy exchange that WWOOFing has also been described as a form of adventure travel (Anon. 2003; Fenton Huie n.d.).

Finally, WWOOFers have themselves been considered with passing curiosity by the granddaughter of an 'outback' WWOOF host in a teenage girl romance fiction novel (Faranda 2009), suggesting that their presence in Australia is beginning to be noted in a widening range of circles.

4.3 Accounts by or about WWOOFers

There have been a number of general reader descriptions of personal WWOOFing experiences in a range of locations by a variety of WWOOFers (Jamieson 2007; Jerums 1996; Klein n.d.; Larson 2000; Platz 2003; Vansittart 2002), including one specifically about a family of four WWOOFing and learning together (Gardner 1995). These descriptions from other vantage points reveal the various ways in which WWOOFers have commonly used or gained from WWOOFing.

WWOOFing has been used to achieve economical travel *per se* (Chinn 2008; Devlin 1998; Idelbrook 2007; Pollard n.d.), or to economically gain access to experiencing or achieving a range of other interests or purposes, for example, to improve a foreign language (Clarke 2004; Jerums 1996). WWOOFing provides access to experiences of the rural idyll (Jerums 1996; Vansittart 2002) and thus allows escape from or inversion of the experience of city living for a period (Farrer 1999).

WWOOFing allows one to learn about or be involved with organic or various 'alternative' lifestyles (Anon. 2006; Atkinson n.d.; Chinn 2008; Jamieson 2007; Maycock 2008; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; Schmetzer n.d.), or to learn about specific areas or regions (Doherty 1997). It assists in learning skills for organic growing (Anon. 2003; Anon. 2006; Chinn 2008; Clarke 2004; Devlin 1998; Doherty 1997; English 2007; Gardner 1995; Green 1980; Maycock 2008; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; Pollard n.d.; Vansittart 2002), such as 'Permaculture' (Pearsall n.d.) or other 'alternative', self sufficient and more sustainable forms of living (Atkinson n.d.; Farrer 1999). For example, Vansittart (2002) observes from experience in Canada that self-sufficiency is a trait that "runs deep in the organic community" and ponders the various sustainability focused approaches utilised by the hosts at their properties. She claims to learn something of the 'true cost' of sustainable food production and given industrialisation of agriculture and the sweeping and brutal effect of market efficiencies, passing on valuable knowledge about agricultural plant diversity and organic techniques for maintaining diversity is part of the purpose and value of WWOOFing. Moreover, she suggests that choosing to eat organic food "is a political choice, a social choice, a spiritual choice."

This spiritual dimension has been picked up by others in saying that WWOOFing facilitates a reconnection with or contribution to earth/nature and communities (Anon. 2003; Conway 1999; Jamieson 2007; Maycock 2008; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; Pollard 1999). Relatedly, there has been accounts of WWOOFing in regard to its therapeutic potential in rebuilding a widely damaged eco-psychological nexus (Conesa-Sevilla 2006).¹⁹

In addition, WWOOFing has also been used by some to have a 'reality check' in relation to pursuing a career in organic farming (English 2007; Maycock 2008; Rother 2009; Singh 2002)

As mentioned, from a traveler's perspective, WWOOFing provides the opportunity to travel 'off the beaten track' (Anon. 1998; Cosgrove 2000; Idelbrook 2007; Jamieson 2007; Jerums 1996; Pollard n.d.; Statham 2003; Trainor 2008; WWOOF Australia 2009), in search of and/or gaining 'real' cultural experiences (Anon. 1998; Devlin 1998;

¹⁹ Ecopsychology is a branch of psychology that seeks to synthesise ecology and psychology, or to apply ecological insights to the field of psychology. Advocates encourage more central consideration of humans' emotional connection (or lack of connection) with the earth in mental health.

Larson 2000; Maycock 2008; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; WWOOF Australia 2009), or experiences that are based in reality (Statham 2003; Vansittart 2002), which are therefore considered 'authentic', or described by some as 'sincere' (Anon. 1998; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, citing Taylor 2001). These expressions arise in part as a result of feeling 'at home' with the hosts and/or other WWOOFers (Conway 1999), as part of the family (Vansittart 2002), sometimes thus leading to the creation of personal connections (Platz 2003) and long term friendships (Conway 1999; Pearsall n.d.). Such a feeling of connection may depend on the enjoyment of others' and a sense of camaraderie with like minded people, which according to Conway (1999), can produce connections and friendships more readily than regular holiday experiences that operate in the 'private' sphere. Conway also describes someone using WWOOFing as a means of finding and accessing people living and working with a community spirit, a criteria in her investigation of places where she might 'belong'.

In contrast to searching for particular experiences or outcomes, WWOOFing has been described as a useful tool for those seeking to 'delay the real world' at post-school (i.e. 'gap-year') or other life decision points (Kinder 2005).²⁰

Relatedly, WWOOFing has been discussed as a means of stimulating or achieving personal discovery (Devlin 1998; Schmetzer n.d.), or personal development (Jamieson 2007; Maycock 2008; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006). In some cases personal transformations achieved through WWOOFing may be of world views rather than of overall life directions (Farrer 1999).

Some accounts of/by WWOOFers have emphasized the use of WWOOFing by those that are specifically interested in changing their lives (see for example Devlin 1998; Jamieson 2007; Navarre 1994; Statham 2003; Statham 2005). For example, one was motivated to WWOOF to avoid becoming "old, grey and cynical in an office" and to instead to reconnect with nature and "grow strong, fit and brown in the outdoors" (Farrer 1999).²¹ This motivation was apparently in turn triggered by the inspired awareness of an unemployed Sydney man that had WWOOFed initially "to learn some new skills and perhaps get a job" and in the process, began filling his resume and had

²⁰ It can be noted that there are echoes here of Cohen's (1972; 1973) description of 'drifters', the assessment of long term travelling road culture by Riley (1988) and of 'contemporary backpackers', as escaping from pressing life choices (Pearce 1990).

²¹ Note the overlap here with Pearce (1990) who had also identified among contemporary backpackers the tendency to pursue healthy outdoor activities.

many experiences that encouraged him to continue WWOOFing in Australia for a long period while circumventing negative effects commonly associated with unemployment.

Jamieson (2007) has written a detailed book about her lengthy experience of WWOOFing from the point of view of an independent, middle-aged city-based knowledge-worker seeking change from the routines of her life. Wanting to travel throughout New Zealand, she was also consciously wanting to “do her bit for the environment” by WWOOFing. Jamieson provides a very personal documentation of her encounters with forty WWOOF hosts over a period of two and a half years. While meeting a range of characters undertaking a range of practices, she concludes that many of the hosts can be regarded as forward thinking, “unsung heroes”, given their generally low impact lifestyles, their production of healthy foods that are not dangerous to the environment and sometimes their work in earth repair (i.e. landcare) and the preservation of crop/seed diversity. Through her experience, Jamieson learnt many specific skills and created contacts and relationships. Her book generates many reflections about her own life, including the various ways in which her experiences have changed her, or reaffirmed her resolve to live more sustainably.

A number of WWOOFers encountered during field work for this study had shifted from being WWOOFing travellers to near permanent residents on host properties, or had adopted more committed and regular ‘WWOOFing lifestyles’. Indeed, Statham (2003; 2005), a Queensland WWOOF host, is himself also a regular part time WWOOFer, now in his 70s, who travels Australia visiting WWOOF hosts, frequently writing columns about his WWOOFing travels. In a seniors’ magazine, Statham (2003) writes that WWOOFing has been mostly used by young backpackers because it’s been mainly promoted to them. He argues that more retirees “might want to get into it if they knew about it”, urging the readership to ‘get up and go’ WWOOFing and “discover the real Australia”. Indeed Schmetzer (n.d.) describes an emerging trend of more mature age people wanting to travel and to share their many already acquired skills with others and using WWOOF as a vehicle for doing so, also getting intimate experiences of unknown places (see for another example, Redwood 1998).

4.4 Accounts by or about hosts

The perspective of WWOOF hosts or observations about hosts for a general readership are also evident in a number of usually brief pieces in a range of media. Overall descriptions of personal hosting experiences by some of those who have also

been WWOOFers, commonly dwell on reasons for involvement, touching on the ways in which they have used or gained from WWOOFing (Cosgrove 2000; Statham 2003; Statham 2005; Stehlik 2002).

Some have emphasized the aspect of gaining useful help to establish more self-sufficient or sustainable lifestyles (Cosgrove 2000; Hughes and Stitt 2008; Idelbrook 2007; Maxey 2006; Pollard 1999), sometimes specifically in the case of 'intentional' communities (Davidson 1995). In addition to dealing within ongoing, regular property related workloads, some hosts find that hosting WWOOFers enervates or enables them to undertake projects that might otherwise never be done (Redwood 2005; Statham 2003). Hosts describe WWOOFer assistance with production related and/or environmental earth repair goals (Cosgrove 2000; Smithson 2009), and the WWOOFing network in Australia (and in some other countries) has been speculated to be an important pillar of the 'organic movement' and as an important part of existing alternative food networks (Coppard 2006; Doherty 1997; English 2007; Green 1980; Jamieson 2007; Keedle 2008; Maxey 2006; Maycock 2008; Pollard n.d.). In more specifically focused terms, WWOOFing has been considered key to commercial organic farm viability (Clarke 2004; Kowalski 1993; Maxey 2006; McIntosh and Campbell 2001; St George 2005), or to sustaining and expanding the organic food sector through the input of WWOOFer labour (Clarke 2004; English 2007; Keedle 2008; Maxey 2006).²²

One experienced host (Redwood 2005, p31) offers a range of tips for effective, productive hosting from the perspective that most farms "can't afford to be hosting helpers who don't help much" and that a good WWOOFer "is worth their weight in gold". The key is to "find a happy balance between getting serious help and allowing WWOOFers to learn things."

Host perspectives have been prepared on various other gains of hosting such as learning about cultures, social interaction, contributions of WWOOFers to the personal lives of hosts ranging from ongoing contact through to friendships and marriages (Anon. 1998; Cosgrove 2000; Kowalski 1993; Pearsall n.d.). Strong (2008) describes

²² Note that the contribution of WWOOFers is played down a bit more by its administrators on the basis that most hosts are very small scale players. Note also that there are some difficult balancing acts to achieve by WWOOF in respect of the requirements of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in relation to workers. There are therefore sometimes some conflicting descriptions of WWOOFers as tourists (that like to work and learn) and workers (who earn their keep) (see for example comments made by the WWOOF Australia founder in Doherty 1997).

the contribution of various WWOOFers to the socio-cultural sphere of his particular 'quadruple bottom line' approach to 'regenerative farming'.²³

The 'unique' and varied nature of WWOOF host properties and activities is commonly mentioned in accounts of WWOOFing experiences (Farrer 1999; Fenton Huie n.d.; Jamieson 2007; Klein n.d.; Pollard 1993; Vansittart 2002; WWOOF Australia 2009). Underscoring this host diversity, a long term host and WWOOFer from Queensland (himself renowned as a popular yacht based WWOOF host), describes the Northey Street City Farm, a Brisbane community garden and education centre that also functions as a popular urban WWOOF host (Statham 2005).

In spite of this diversity, hosts have also been frequently described as being united by a consciously simple, or frugal approach to life, developed as part of their awareness and understanding of the need for more sustainable ways to live (Anon. 2006; Cosgrove 2000; Doherty 1997; Hughes and Stitt 2008; Idelbrook 2007; Jamieson 2007; Maxey 2006; Pollard 1999; Pollard n.d.; Statham 2003; van Raders 1994; WWOOF Australia 2009).

5 ACADEMIC ACCOUNTS OF WWOOFING

Despite its rapid uptake amongst travellers to Australia since the mid 1990s, the global spread of WWOOFing over three decades and the significant amount of general media and online interest in the subject described above (see Table 2, p36), there has been limited academic work to date concerning this phenomenon.

Three published works discussed below are specifically about WWOOFing, while other scholarly accounts either make passing reference to WWOOFing or are unpublished postgraduate works. In the latter category, there are two Masters Dissertations, both focused on New Zealand, which contain some valuable information, insights and conjectures, one of which provides the basis for one of the published papers discussed below.

²³ A related anecdote here involves some Canadian WWOOFers - rock stars at home - who offered to play at a party at the farm in appreciation of the hosts' hospitality: "There were guitars, drums and exchanges of human experience. This is the sort of stuff that makes farming at Arcadia dynamic and enriching and in terms of holism, a further strengthening of the cultural sphere" (Strong 2008, p83).

A brief chronological outline now follows regarding the treatment to date, of the subject of WWOOFing in published journal articles, with more detailed consideration provided as appropriate in a later discussion.

5.1 Published work

In their research into the subject of its contribution to farm tourism in rural communities, McIntosh and Campbell (2001) found only passing reference to WWOOFing by earlier researchers (Fairburn 1994), where it was described as “essentially a tourism venture” established “to compensate for deficiencies in income”. It was also said to be an “educational friendship exchange type of tourism” (2001, p112). Thus they recognised that there had been no real attempt to understand the experiences of WWOOFers, nor motivations for hosting, and so considered WWOOFing to be a “neglected aspect of farm tourism in New Zealand”.

In response, they surveyed 67 WWOOF hosts in four main regions of the South Island to gain a better understanding of the management of WWOOF farms in connection with providing tourism opportunities, to determine the reasons for becoming a host, to provide a demographic profile of hosts and to evaluate the environmental values and attitudes held by hosts, which they argue underlie motivations or actions. A close overlap of demographic characteristics among regular farm hosts and WWOOF hosts are reported, as are similarly shared social and pragmatic reasons for becoming farm hosts. Not surprisingly the authors found an environmental ethic and shared knowledge of organic practices were considered to be essential differences between regular ‘farm tourism hosts’ and ‘WWOOF hosts’. As well as acknowledging the potential for WWOOF experiences to bring about a “heightened appreciation and care for the environment among WWOOF participants” and its ability to offer “a unique travel experience”, they conclude that “WWOOF hosts appear to be using tourism to enhance their farms and, in turn, the organic movement, while contributing unique experiences to farm tourism in NZ” (McIntosh and Campbell 2001, p125). the *nature* of these experiences was explored in this research to a limited degree only.

Ateljevic and Doorne set out to review the literature found on the phenomenon of the 'long-term, budget' traveller, which they argued has generally been conceptualized as “a distinctive form of escape from mainstream 'institutionalized' tourism flows” (2001, p169). Whilst this paper is focused on long term travellers generally rather than WWOOFers per se, the suggestion that these two identities appear to overlap

substantially raises some valuable insights. In contrast to much of the preceding work in this field, a range of motivations and 'consumer behaviours' are evident as they attempt to unpack the range of underlying values of 'backpackers' (in the context of New Zealand). They, identify two distinct groups at opposite ends of a continuum: 'traditional long-term travellers' and 'mainstream' backpackers. Differentiation is based on the distinction between "trips where you live with the citizens of the country" and "travelling to holiday spots" (quoting a respondent, p175). Representatives of the first group travel lightly and cheaply and often stay in specific places for long periods. This time frame is partly sought as a remedy to Western anomie/alienation, arising from constant exposure to the "pervasive values of an overarching capitalist system" (p185) perceived to homogenize global culture.²⁴

Naturally, long term travel itself contributes importantly to budget as a consideration in travel behaviour. In this context, the "richness of experience (cultural immersion, social relations, 'back to nature') is of primary importance." It is here that the authors suggest finding paid work and/or WWOOFing play a role in allowing these travellers to extend their travel time. WWOOF, described as a program "increasingly oriented towards a growing interest from these travellers", is thus combined with travel, assisting them also in their goal of avoiding the 'beaten track' of institutionalized tourism (in the language of Cohen 1972; 1973). Importantly (along with a selection of transport options), schemes such as WWOOF "facilitate the spontaneity they seek" as "freedom and flexibility are regarded as crucial for the whole experience" (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001, p175).

While considering a range of aspects of the WWOOFing scheme such as have already been mentioned by others, Stehlik (2002, p221) has additionally drawn attention to the basis of the exchange upon which it operates. Other than the administrative costs involved, he observes that, "the system runs entirely on goodwill and non-monetary exchange without anyone creaming off a profit or being exploited." However the focus of his article is the range of adult learning opportunities that the experience of WWOOFing and hosting can bring to all parties involved. He takes particular note of the role of 'learning from the unknown', and further notes that by WWOOFing, one is placed "into a completely new and unknown situation which can be one of the most powerful learning experiences if one is open to new things and willing to learn." As each host situation is unique, WWOOFers need a "willingness to engage and adapt to local customs and environments" which can bring about material and personal

²⁴ The existence of this group thus contradicts Riley (1988) who argued that alienation is no longer relevant to backpackers as they became more 'mainstream'.

enrichment for both WWOOFer and host (p224). Stehlik affirms the view that given the cultural exchanges, hosting WWOOFers broadens the horizons, particularly for hosts' children. It also allows hosts to see Australia through others' eyes and thus to challenge one's own assumptions about culture and ethnicity. He claims that the WWOOF experience builds social capital in various important ways:

- it promotes organic farming/gardening by supporting growers and encourages wider learning about it;
- it promotes volunteering which generally establishes support for the idea of working for non pecuniary benefits;
- it promotes cultural exchange thereby enhancing human understanding;
- it produces a network of like minded people and a functional information exchange;
- it acts a resource for those interested in sustainable agriculture and alternative lifestyles; and,
- it works as a vehicle for informal learning on a range of fronts.

In another review of the backpacker literature, Ateljevic and Doorne (2004) identify various works that have focused on the industrialisation of backpacking - its transformation from the original domain of Cohen's and Vogt's *drifters* and *wanderers*, through various entrepreneurial manoeuvres into its present shape as a well formed 'segment' of the tourism 'market' (see also Curtis 2005; Huxley 2004; O'Reilly 2006). In pursuit of this process, they note the paradoxical emergence of further differentiated backpacker niche products developed by (sometimes ex-backpacking) entrepreneurs in their "search to distance themselves from a 'suffocating' market environment", still engaging with the market, but on their own terms, in catering to those also wanting to step outside of their "consumer role". It is in this context that the review identifies the unpublished postgraduate work of Nimmo (2001a), which will be discussed in more detail below, with its focus on WWOOFing as a form of "decommodified ecotourism". The point to make briefly here, is that WWOOFing has been identified as part of a broader trend among some backpackers (noting the differentiation among backpackers themselves described earlier by Ateljevic and Doorne 2001), towards "rejection of the market driven paradigm" in favour of "more extended immersion experiences with landscape and culture" (Ateljevic and Doorne 2004, p71).

Based on the Masters thesis work of Bonneman (2003), a more detailed exploration of the WWOOFing experience was undertaken by McIntosh and Bonnemann (2006),

again in the context of southern New Zealand. They describe WWOOFing as a particular type of tourist farm stay experience that operates in four key dimensions. To a degree these confirm but explore in more depth, some of the stated perspectives of a variety of other observers (above and below), including:

- the rurality of the experience;
- the opportunity to learn about organics;
- the personal meaningfulness of the experience (an aspect explored by others such as Green 1980; Jamieson 2007; Maxey 2006; Pollard n.d.); and,
- the element of 'sincerity' in the experience.

The authors are aware of the possibility that not all WWOOFers have an interest in organics and that there is plenty of scope for example, for a mismatch of expectations between hosts and WWOOFers about the exchange, perhaps generating conflict. This and other useful insights are revisited in later parts of this thesis, but for now it can be noted that it analyses WWOOFing primarily from the perspective of a tourism experience, commencing from particular framing (as with McIntosh and Campbell 2001) of WWOOFing as an activity based farm tourism 'product'. This makes sense, given that one of the aims of their paper was to compare WWOOFing to conventional farm stays across a range of criteria and not surprisingly it found a number of significant differences. However, the difficulty with this approach, is the presumption that WWOOFers are primarily seeking to have a farmstay or farm tourism experience, which imposes a particular and possibly limited frame of reference on the analysis of the contemporary WWOOFing phenomenon. Despite the many differences the authors find between WWOOFing and commercial farmstays, they seem to maintain that WWOOFing is a variant of a farmstay experience.²⁵ While WWOOFing clearly has much to do with being on and being involved with farms, this does not capture the scope of motivations possible among WWOOFers, a number of whom may not fit in easily with the category of (farm) 'tourist'. Indeed, McIntosh and Bonneman themselves conclude that "WWOOFers may share more similar demographic characteristics with the profile of long-term budget travellers, than with the profile of commercial farm stay visitors" (2006, p.89).

²⁵ This perspective is underscored by Ollenburg (2006, p181) who's only passing reference to WWOOFing in a doctoral dissertation on *Farm Tourism in Australia* is in the context of active participation in farm activities, stating that the majority of those in which participation is allowed is WWOOF host farms, on account of insurance issues at the farms.

Maxey (2006) explores whether and how to “sustain sustainable agriculture”, focusing on uncovering and promoting the understandings of actors within ‘alternative food networks’ in the developed world, namely small-scale organic producer-suppliers in Canada and the UK. Maxey seeks to highlight important implications for policymakers and consumers, showing that to maintain economic viability, these network ‘actors’ frequently rely on a combination paid and/or voluntary labour, including that of WWOOFers. There is however, no further consideration of the value of WWOOFers to (especially commercially oriented) hosts that are part of so-called alternative food networks.

Maycock (2008) briefly outlines multiple dimensions of WWOOF, casting its growth and spread in the context of a general ‘greening’ resulting from growing awareness of both dependence on and disconnection from nature. Increasing popularity of farmers markets, community supported agriculture schemes (CSAs) and local food co-ops are part of a movement for the re-localisation of food (as above) and efforts to reconnect with the sources of food eaten (Lockie, Lyons et al. 2002). Maycock asserts that as many look to make local efforts to address global problems through modified consumption choices, there is also increased interest in attempting backyard food production, sometimes through involvement in local community gardens. The desire to return to and connect with the land as various crises associated with modern living become more apparent is not new, but most people “have forgotten (or, rather, never learned) the basic skills of agricultural living” and it is in this context along with others, that one might see a growing interest in WWOOF, as it connects “people wanting to try their hand at farming/growing with farms” (Maycock 2008, p284). Additionally, WWOOF is also expected by Maycock to grow as part of the general desire in an increasingly globalizing society to gain an educational and cultural exchange.

Starting with the assumption that many problems that exist with conventional forms of tourism as an instrument of economic development and with more community-based forms of tourism development, Moscardo (2008) argues that the theory and practice of the much discussed idea of ‘sustainable tourism development’ is still limited to a concern about “the continuity of tourism than ... the contribution of tourism to sustainable outcomes” (citing Coccossis, 1996 and Stabler, 1997). Following Wall (1997), Moscardo argues that the real question to be asked about tourism and sustainability is ‘whether and in what form might tourism contribute to sustainable development?’ To produce some innovative thinking about the field of sustainable tourism and regional development, Moscardo takes the view that there is need to

challenge assumptions and look at the existing situation from a different perspective. She therefore challenges us to consider that there is no such thing as sustainable tourism and to begin with the different idea that tourism might be properly viewed as potentially able to contribute to sustainable development in local ways. Tourism should be seen as a “potential resource for communities seeking sustainable development options” through “wider and more innovative types” of tourism development.²⁶ Thus tourists themselves “can be seen as more than just customers, they can also be seen as human resources for regional development”. Moscardo then identifies several instances in which innovative ‘alternative’ forms of tourism are already working in this way, specifically describing WWOOF hosting as “an example of the use of tourist volunteers to support local organic agriculture.”²⁷ Observing that the “initial establishment of organic agriculture can be challenging”, often associated with limited income during the transition period and thus low levels of productivity, she observes that “the ability to access low-cost labour can be an important benefit” in areas where labour intensive organic agriculture is an important benefit for regional areas. Significantly however, in terms of framing the contribution of the present research, the potential use of ‘volunteer tourists’ in “assistance with traditional economic activities has yet to be fully explored”.

Another recent New Zealand focused paper mentions WWOOFing in an exploration of the various dimensions of *responsible* tourism in New Zealand. Stanford (2008) argues that responsible tourism is not the exclusive domain of eco, green or other ‘niche’ forms of tourism, but should be applicable to all forms of tourism, including conventional mass tourism. The concept of being ‘responsible’ must be considered in relation to quadruple bottom line thinking, rather than simplistic progressions (such as *not green* to *totally green* cf Swarbrooke). The dimensions of responsible tourism considered by Stanford are *respect and awareness*, *reciprocity*, *local economic contributions* and *engagement* with landscapes and people. Stanford suggests that WWOOFers represent one

²⁶ There are also others that have sought to challenge the sustainable tourism development paradigm in order to transcend narrow development perspectives that seek ‘only’ to sustain environments for future generations and for the sustainability of the tourism ‘industry’. Potts and Harrill (2002, p55) argue that the tourism industry has “the potential to improve the world, not just sustain itself” and that their suggested proactive ‘travel ecology’ approach could provide “a form of tourism development that would encourage a more holistic form of community development”, one in which the needs of community are clearly articulated and placed before that of development proponents. This position discussed in Chapter 3, has some overlap with the concept of WWOOF in that it advocates ‘backyard activism’ or the ‘geography of everywhere’, though the recognition “that all landscapes, no matter how mundane, contribute to the community tourism product”.

²⁷ Note the conclusion about New Zealand WWOOF hosts who are using tourism to enhance their farms (McIntosh and Campbell 2001).

extreme in the case of the dimension of engagement, thus a “very responsible tourist might have a deep engagement with local people, perhaps working as a community volunteer or as a WWOOF (sic) (Willing Workers On Organic Farms)”. The other end of the spectrum within the engagement dimension is characterised by “a non-responsible tourist” that keeps themselves “distanced from any kind of engagement”. A middle ground is exemplified by the tourist that visits a local pub or café who has a “passing interest in the people they meet” (Stanford 2008, p270).

While much research appears to show that most tourists are keen to be more responsible, Stanford argues that most tourists find it challenging to know how to achieve this as “responsible tourist behaviour is complex and multi-faceted” (i.e. is not just about engagement) (2008, p270) and few tourists are likely to achieve large degrees of responsibility in each of these dimensions without locally suitable guidance. Interestingly however, the WWOOF model itself directly offers this form of local guidance in respect of appropriate types and levels of responsibility, at the level of individual hosts. While WWOOFing is used by Stanford to exemplify ‘very responsible tourism’ in terms of the dimension of engagement, it is notable that the WWOOF mechanism appears to also build in aspects of the other named dimensions of responsible tourism, namely, reciprocity and respect/awareness, which are at the heart of the WWOOF exchange, and of course labour, which can be readily seen as being a substitute form of economic benefit for participating hosts (however, these factors were not noted by Stanford).

5.2 Unpublished work

Nimmo (2001a) researched WWOOFing in New Zealand as the focus of her MA (Applied) in Social Science Research, preparing also a summary of her findings tailored for WWOOF NZ (2001b). While unpublished, this represents a useful study for the opportunity it provides to both build on and to depart from. Based on statistics collected from WWOOF and consideration of the behaviour of the majority of WWOOFers, Nimmo understandably frames her inquiry around the particular activities of backpackers. She describes the WWOOF organisation as “a unique tourism experience provider”, since the organisation and experience appear to run counter to the mainstream of tourism. It is virtually un-marketed, it occurs outside of the commercial realm and it involves working during the experience, which represents a particular challenge to the generally held notion that tourism is a type of human recreation or leisure activity, since the work performed held a range of meanings for

WWOOFers that were significantly linked to their travel motivations and experiences sought. Being based on a non-monetary exchange, with a focus on ecological outcomes in the form of either organic production and/or earth repair, leads Nimmo to cite Wearing's (Wearing and Neil 1997; Wearing and Wearing 1998b) notion of 'ideal ecotourism' in describing WWOOFing as a 'decommodified ecotourism experience'.

Her qualitative research includes attention to the various motivations of WWOOFers and finds that all participants shared one particular motivation in common, which was meeting and living with New Zealanders to learn about their culture. She also concludes, acknowledging the risk of oversimplification, that there are two different 'kinds' of WWOOFers. The first has a specific interest in environmental issues, driven by an apparent "political analysis" of and desire to escape modern industrial society, with deliberate intent to "seek out farms that pursue alternative lifestyles and employ organic farming techniques" (a perspective supported by Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Maycock 2008). The second type of WWOOFer more closely resembles 'mainstream' backpackers, given their primary emphasis on the pursuit of recreational activities or experiencing novelty. This group nevertheless distances themselves from backpackers and other tourists, who they regard as overly-hedonistic and unconcerned with other cultures in the conduct of their travels.

Many of the details of the motives and experience of WWOOFing are explored by Nimmo, and referred to in other sections of this thesis, such as the factors at play in the initial selection of farms, the amount and type of information in descriptions in the WWOOF book, the importance of positive and negative word of mouth ratings of hosts, access to other attractions, types of accommodation, convenience of transport options, the description of the work involved and so on. The importance to WWOOFers of a sense of structure and routine otherwise not provided during extended travel periods is considered, alongside the role of work in maintaining or enhancing a distinction between leisure time and work time. The idea of a sense of belonging and being valued through WWOOFing work is discussed and the work itself is said to give a focus and an alternative to mere "indulgence" (associated with ordinary tourism)²⁸. Physical work is also connected to (re)gaining or maintaining fitness, the learning of novel or the reinforcement of practical skills, a sense of achievement and ultimately, some degree of personal development for many WWOOFers. For some, work itself can be a

²⁸ Vansittart (2002) also reflects on a sense of belonging gained through WWOOFing and is fascinated by the fact that unlike an analogous rural bed and breakfast experience, the WWOOFer walks "right into the middle of a working farm-and-family dynamic".

purposeful activity, “reclaimed” from the category of drudgery as one “infused with meaning, creativity, and joy” (Nimmo 2001a, p157).

Nimmo notes that the value of the exchange “is framed in terms of reciprocity” and its evaluation is thus removed from consideration of the relative exchange value of a monetary exchange. Given the primary travel motivation of WWOOFers (according to her research), which is to “meet and live with members of another culture”, it was regarded as vital to WWOOFers that hosts made an effort to include them in day to day lives, and that the exchange was based on a “positive personal relationship”. Interestingly, about half of her respondents deliberately avoided commercial farms, as they perceived that this would open up the possibility of feelings of exploitation as ‘cheap labour’, undermining the perception of the reciprocal basis of the exchange.

Nimmo also concludes that most (i.e. ‘Type 2’) WWOOFers have significant leisure needs and seek a balance between work and opportunities to relax and have fun. She describes striking this balance as important and as a challenge for participants and WWOOF in running the network, since ultimately, its ‘customers’ (i.e. WWOOFers) must have their tourist motivations and values satisfied while the hosts (and their communities) must also gain from their involvement. As such, Nimmo (2001b) provides a considered characterisation of the ideal WWOOFer and the ideal host farm, for the benefit of WWOOF NZ in managing their decommodified ‘tourism service’.

6 LIMITS OF EXISTING ACCOUNTS OF WWOOFING

Existing scholarly research on the motivations of farmers becoming WWOOF hosts and backpackers WWOOFing in NZ provides a good starting point for the consideration of WWOOFing as a tourism phenomenon. Much useful material is generated by these authors and their research participants. Between them, available studies conclude that WWOOFing (in New Zealand):

- is a ‘neglected’ aspect of rural tourism studies, outlining motivations of farmers becoming WWOOF hosts while providing some insight into the costs and benefits for hosts in receiving WWOOFers;
- is a “fringe” or “niche tourism ‘product’” which represents an ‘ideal’ form of ‘decommodified ecotourism, attracting “tourists who wish to meet and live with members of host communities, and/or travel in a way which fits not only with

their budget, but also their own political/environmental values” (Nimmo 2001b); and,

- is a type of tourism experience characterised by ‘rurality’, learning opportunities, personal meaningfulness and ‘sincerity’.

Despite this research, WWOOFing remains in an ambiguous relationship with tourism and tourism generated community development. Given that tourism is an amorphous and dynamic phenomenon itself (see discussion below, Meethan 2001; Rojek and Urry 1997), this is perhaps not surprising and developing a final definition of this relationship is probably a difficult, or even futile endeavour.

However, a number of factors add up to the need to further pursue the subject of WWOOFing. These publications give no attention to the recent significant growth in ‘volunteer tourism’ generally, nor do they put into a global context the growth of the phenomenon of WWOOFing. Since these publications there has been continued and significant growing interest in WWOOFing by hosts and tourists.

Existing research is focused on the motivations of hosts and WWOOFers, but little attention is given to *outcomes* for WWOOF hosts or for WWOOFers arising from their involvement in WWOOF. That is, *to what extent and in what forms does involvement with WWOOF bring about benefits for hosts and at what costs? What sorts of personal outcomes are achieved by WWOOFers in terms of self-development or transformation of attitudes, beliefs or values?*

Neither do existing studies concern themselves with the behaviour of WWOOFers and hosts, which is different from their stated motivations (Ryan 1997b). A distinction can also be made between the inner and outer journeys of travellers, which can be regarded as ‘consciousness’ and ‘experience’ respectively (Graburn 2002). But *to what extent are these a product of interactions with hosts and what is the nature of the interaction between WWOOFers and hosts?* While the decommodified aspect of WWOOFing experience is identified by Nimmo, there is a need to dwell further on what this means to WWOOFers and hosts, how it shapes their experience, and what its value is to participants in the context of a range of theoretical positions on tourism and commodity relations between hosts and tourists.

The speculation that similar models to the WWOOF model could be established in more communities in the future to potentially assist them “to contribute to building community, and caring for the environment, both on a local and a global level” (Nimmo 2001b) forms a key motivation for moving the understanding of WWOOFing beyond what is provided by previous research. But to do this, WWOOFing should be more clearly understood in relation to the existing generation of WWOOFers in the context of their lives as tourists and as people, to potentially appraise the ‘demand’ for expanded WWOOFing related opportunities at a global level.

Finally, there is need to understand whether well intended, often unskilled WWOOFers can/do actually deliver positive outcomes to a greater range of people in need of assistance, again, through examination of the views of WWOOF hosts on the matter.

7 SUMMARY

This chapter has sketched the origins of the WWOOF organisation, its nature and its global spread before focusing more closely on the history, nature, philosophy, management and scale of WWOOFing in Australia. The chapter has also provided a review of literature concerning WWOOF which demonstrates that there are a range of approaches taken to the subject of WWOOFing, representing a variety of standpoints and emphases. It is a multi-faceted phenomenon and there is naturally much more to explore in the range of perspectives discussed, especially those that conceptualise WWOOFing in relation to tourism, as there can be little doubt that WWOOF is a tool used by a growing number of contemporary travellers. However, recalling its origins as a knowledge and help exchange specifically for the development of organic food production and that WWOOFing is growing in terms of numbers of hosts as well, it is important to give weight to perspectives that remind us that WWOOFing has a number of other attributes than those concerned with WWOOFing as a tourist experience. Hosts presumably have little in the way of interest in tourism and there is around WWOOFing a clear context of global interest (both new and renewed) in organic production, sustainable living and related social change and the skills needed to create this change on a broader scale (Chinn 2008; Clarke 2004; English 2007; Maycock 2008; Stehlik 2002).

While suggesting that we keep in mind the breadth of possible perspectives on WWOOFing, it is difficult to escape from the strong nexus between it and tourism in an

effort to understand what WWOOFing is all about. WWOOFing does provide a clear and flexible experiential pathway into the socio-cultural realm of hosts which is interactive and economical, but perhaps crucially for some, removed from the usual techniques for living and 'touring' that are almost entirely rooted in and determined by commodified or market based frames of reference (Anon. 1998; Bonneman 2003; Hughes and Stitt 2008; Nimmo 2001a; Pleumarom 2003; Pollard 1998; Rother 2009; van Raders 1994; Wang 2002; WWOOF Australia 2009). Fragments of the limited available scholarly literature (especially Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Ateljevic and Doorne 2004; Bonneman 2003; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; Nimmo 2001a) point to these aspects, in some cases hinting at a causality that may underlie the significant growth in WWOOFing. But it is fair to say that the area remains quite unexplored and that such connections remain unclear.

In the case of Australia, the country in which there is by far the largest volume of WWOOFing activity, there has been no focused scholarly attention on the subject. The rapid growth in WWOOFing since the mid 1990s however, should provoke interest among tourism scholars, planners and managers, particularly if there is something valuable in the notion of tourism as a metaphor of the social world (Dann 2002), or if being a tourist is adopting a stance or orientation to the world (Cohen 1979; Franklin 2003a; MacCannell 1976), shaping our understanding of our present in relation to (selected aspects of) our past. Or, if tourism is an activity through which we seek to grasp the authentic (Cohen 1988b; MacCannell 1976; Minca and Oakes 2006; Oakes 2006), and/or everyday (McCabe 2002) and/or extraordinary (Urry 2002) world of others, contributing to self understanding and identity formation/construction (McCabe 2002; Wearing 2002).

In short, there are many interesting theoretical formations within the tourism studies realm that might guide some thinking about WWOOFing, or, which the practice WWOOFing might provide opportunity to appraise. Having described the specific activity of WWOOFing as viewed by many from outside the discipline of tourism studies and the few from within who have addressed themselves to the subject, Chapter 3 will now enlarge the focus to attempt to provide a bigger picture consideration of tourism in an effort to locate WWOOFing in relation to it. From there it will be possible in Chapter 4 to outline the approach taken in getting to the new ground that this research has tried to break.

CHAPTER 3: WWOOFING AS TOURISM

1 INTRODUCTION

It has been suggested that though initially established by and for those interested in learning through experience about a range of activities associated with organic production and the wider 'organic' movement, WWOOFing has grown to become a global activity that has become very popular amongst long term, low budget traveller, or 'global nomad' (Cohen 1973; MacCannell 1976; Vogt 1976; Riley 1988; Pearce 1990; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Richards and Wilson 2004a). This is undoubtedly partly because membership is provided to any person without restriction, providing a very low cost mechanism for the generation of diverse, interactive cultural exchange experiences that many regard as more authentic than those facilitated by traditional forms of tourism.

Chapter 2 showed how the activity of WWOOFing by people travelling in Australia had gained the attention of various writers, who have included in some of their writings a focus on its relationship to tourism. This chapter now expands upon this relationship by considering a range of theoretical approaches to the study of tourism and their utility and limitations in accounting for the WWOOFing phenomenon. Thus, discussion begins with consideration of *what tourism is* and focuses upon various *types of tourism*. It explores a range of key concepts in tourism studies with relevance for thinking about WWOOFing as tourism, before attempting to sketch a conceptual basis for accounting for WWOOFing from within existing understandings provided by tourism studies.

In part, this chapter involves further assessment of approaches and conclusions offered in some of the key scholarly accounts of WWOOFing initially outlined in Chapter 2. This sets the scene for the chief task of this thesis, which is to weave together a robust account of the contemporary WWOOFing phenomenon in Australia, building on useful pre-existing elements and through innovation generated by exploration of a range of new data sources using methods described in Chapter 4.

2 WHAT IS TOURISM?

A simple question with a complex answer immediately arises: *What is tourism?* Tourism is a chaotic conception incorporating many disparate component elements and phenomena. "It embraces so many different notions that it is hardly useful as a

term of social science”, despite being so strongly and rapidly institutionalised in academia today (Rojek and Urry 1997). Problematically its meaning is commonly formulated against apparently ‘contrasting’ terms such as travel, day tripping, excursion, holidaying and exploration, but these can all be components of tourism experiences in themselves. Some effort has been put into addressing the questions *Does tourism really exist?* and *Can it be described given significant overlaps with so many other features of human activity?* Tourism appears to have a self-evident essence but remains a term “waiting to be deconstructed” (Rojek and Urry 1997, p1). Meethan (2001) suggests there is a consensus that “no one single approach can do justice to the variety of activities and the variety of forms that tourism takes”, which necessitates a theoretical and methodological eclecticism to its study. But, the existence of this diversity of approaches to the study of tourism makes it difficult knowing where to begin with any certainty or authority.

From ‘first principles’, tourism might be considered as **[1] an activity of individuals or groups** who visit and experience places other than their homes for varying lengths of time. Tourism is what tourists do (Leiper 2004), however the people involved in ‘hosting’ such visitors are also engaged in this activity and their place and space are crucial components of this activity.

Tourism activity has generally been conceived of as something that is done by people outside of their ‘normal’ lives and in engaging in tourism, occasionally, or as a ‘ritual’ (Graburn 2001), people become tourists (Franklin 2003a; Jafari 1987; Leiper 2004).

Tourism, undertaken by significant numbers of people on a regular basis is **[2] a social phenomenon**. This is particularly well exemplified by the package holiday and the idea of mass tourism, but applies also to individuals making their own travel arrangements. The economic dimensions associated with this phenomenon have given rise to the development of tourism as **[3] an industry**, made up of a collection of various individuals, organisations and other ‘agents’ that facilitate the perpetuation and expansion of this social and economic activity. Tourism has also therefore been cast as **[4] an instrument of development**, with significant connections to processes of modernisation as well as impacts on local economies, societies, cultures and environments both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ (Brown 2000; Meethan 2001; Wahab and Pigram 1997).

Tourism can also be conceived as **[5]** “the **product** of specific (economic, social, etc) activities, **[6]** a **force** creating a variety of localised costs and benefits, **[7]** an **element** affecting world economic and political processes, and as one of the many phenomena whose practice is conditioned by international capitalism” (Brown 2000). Relatedly, tourism might appropriately be conceptualised as part of **[8]** a **global process of commodification and consumption**, that is, ‘commoditisation’ that is “inherent in modern capitalism... involving flows of people, capital, images and cultures” (Meethan 2001). For some this inevitable commoditisation as industrialisation proceeds, entails some degree of trivialisation or inferiorisation of ‘other’ cultures through marketing in their preparation for consumption, while that and the development of suitable services for tourists, results in increasing homogenisation relative to global ‘difference’, which Rojek (1995, p4) described as “the levelling down of experience so that variety is replaced with uniformity”. It is thus strongly linked to economic and cultural globalisation, but some would argue instead that it promotes ‘difference’ through hybrid ‘glocalisation’ forms rather than homogenisation (Franklin 2003a; Meethan 2001). Yet critically for MacCannell (2001), wherever tourists are found, “there is an emergent culture of tourism made from fragments of the local cultures that tourism destroyed”, which such places are “desperate” to market as being distinct from other such similar but fragmented places.

Some have described tourism and the tourist as **(9)** a **metaphor of the social world** (Dann 2002; MacCannell 1976), with the tourist pictured as a “peak consumer” (Wang 2002), a person of significant privilege, perhaps wrought by the ‘luck’ of a legacy of (neo)colonialist power relations and modernist behaviours (Bennett 2008).

Beyond the commercial realms of tourism, it can be conceived of as **(10)** a **form of mobility** (Hall 2005) mostly distinct from commuting, but also from the movement of migrants, pilgrims and refugees, and as a **(11)** “**cultural practice and set of objects**” which is highly significant or emblematic within contemporary ‘Western’ societies organised around such mass mobility. Furthermore, tourism and culture now fully overlap and “cannot be kept apart” (Rojek and Urry 1997). Tourism can be considered as **(12)** an **ideological instrument** which frames “history, nature, and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs” by virtue of the totalising effect of the marking off of objects of modern touristic interest and consumption (MacCannell 1976; 1992).

Tourism analysts have approached these various entry points in different ways and from differing disciplinary perspectives (Jafari 1987; 1990; Leiper 2004). It is not proposed that this thesis attempt to suggest a correct approach to answering the question of what tourism is, but there is need to sift through the vast body of tourism theory to consider some of the most relevant concepts in understanding the nexus between WWOOFing and tourism in the contemporary world. For this purpose, the discussion below is grouped into four main sections: (1) 'tourism' and its relationship to 'development'; (2) types of tourism and tourists; (3) key concepts of tourism Together this provides (4) a basis for conceptualising the WWOOFing phenomenon in connection with tourism.

3 TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Numerous authors have emphasised the relationship between tourism and development, particularly economic and social development, but also sustainable development (de Kadt 1992). Often this relationship is described in highly positive terms, but there has been a well documented growing negative stance toward the effects of tourism on the integrity of local cultures and lifestyles and local and global environments as well (Boissevain 1996; Brown 2000; Cater 1987; Crandell 1987; Fagence 2003; Hong 1985; Mathieson and Wall 1982; Meethan 2001; Mieczkowski 1995; Weaver 1998). If WWOOFing is conceived as tourism, it is helpful to consider the sense in which it might also be theoretically posited to be in some relationship with 'development'. This is illustrated in Table 3 below.

Development "involves structural transformation that implies political, cultural, social and economic changes" (Telfer 2003). Tourism is one method used by various players to generate development. Since WWII there has been an evolution of development thought that in some respects underpins and mirrors different perspectives on tourism as a form of development. Table 3 shows a classification of development theories with each representing in part a reaction to critiques of the preceding one (Telfer 2003; Wall 1997).

Table 3: The Evolution of Development Theory

Theory/Framework	Comment
<i>Modernisation theory</i>	Societies can (and should) pass through various stages to reach a stage of high-mass consumption. Requires and produces constant economic and demographic growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Tourism can bring about a transformation from 'underdevelopment' to 'development' involving a 'trickle down' of wealth and opportunity.
<i>Dependency theory</i>	A critique of modernisation (theory) which involves recognising domination and 'locking in' effects (dependency) with limited dispersal of prosperity and exaggerated disparities within and between nations. Modernisation is largely 'neo-colonialist' construct built on ideas of a dominant 'centre' and a dependent 'periphery'. Underpins demand for alternative and 'appropriate' development.
<i>Economic neo-liberalism</i>	A reaction to strong state interventionism in development, favouring supply side macro-economics, free markets, privatising state enterprises and small government. Structural adjustment lending programs through international development banks commonly offered in return for policy change in 'receiving' countries. Era of nation states gives way to a global society, regional market economies and increased interdependence (i.e. globalisation). Relaxed laws for foreign investment in (tourism) development in lesser developed countries (LDCs) with implications for the protection of local control/ownership, cultures and environments.
<i>Alternative development</i>	Need to focus on basic local needs and environment, grass-roots participation, empowerment, and more 'sustainable' and appropriate forms of development that do not externalise/destroy local environments and traditions (which are often the very things that tourists have come to experience).

Adapted from Wall (1997) and Telfer (2003).

It can be suggested that complexity characterises the ongoing debate about the relationship between tourism and 'development', which is itself a "contested" notion, (see Wall 1997), as is sustainable development¹, while sustainable tourism, ecotourism

¹ For example, sustainable development is regarded by some as a threat to liberty, democracy and progress (DeWeese 2004) and by others as a watering down of real action for real sustainability (Beder 1993). The emergence of the sustainable development paradigm has been fostered as a means of addressing much of the typical environment versus economy arguments that have characterised development discussions. However, it remains difficult to see how the sustainable development concept will be played out. The principles of sustainable development are clearly being increasingly adopted by a

and alternative tourism (discussed below) have been critiqued from numerous angles (Wall 1997).

The degree to which tourism causes, symbolises or is symptomatic of cultural, social, environmental and of course, economic change is also complex. For example, some view tourism as one of many global agents of change which is neither wholly positive nor negative, but a part of contemporary life and here to stay (Brown 2000; Cohen 1995; Craik 1997; Meethan 2001; Mieczkowski 1995; Vanhove 1997). For those focusing on tourism as an industry rather than a human activity, it is readily seen as an instrument of development, for better or worse (Pleumarom 2003). Since all industries have some negative and some positive impacts, it is argued that it should be compared to other, often more harmful industries rather than be blamed for all the ills of the world (Brown 2000; Vanhove 1997).

Tourism can equally be viewed in relation to its humanistic qualities and the potential it has to create greater understanding, cooperation and peace and equality in the world² (Ap 1990; Ashley, Dilys et al. 2001; D'Amore 1988; Fennell and Przeclawski 2003; Global Exchange 2005; Higgins-Desbiolles 2003; Kelly 1997; Kottler 1997; Potts and Harrill 2002; Roe, Goodwin et al. 2004; Saglio 1979; Simpson 2004; Singh and Singh 2004; Singh 2002; Stoddart and Rogerson 2004; Turner, Miller et al. 2001; Wood and House 1991). Debate therefore becomes to some degree a matter of emphasis and the focus is diverted chiefly to questions about the nature of specific tourism developments, what Jafari (1990) termed the tourism 'adaptancy platform' for understanding, describing or planning tourism.

Creating positive tourism related development and reviving its "lost charm and vitality" (Singh, Timothy et al. 2003) therefore becomes a matter of sound planning and management, with the agreement and involvement of local communities as the main, direct beneficiaries (Becton 2006; Reid 2003). The contemporary emphasis now seen on 'community development', has further spawned the concepts of community based tourism (CBT) and pro-poor tourism (PPT), which share some aspects in common in

wide range of organisations and groups with varying degrees of sincerity and efficacy. However, some of its potential as an integrative paradigm that can resolve conflicting or competing concerns may have been 'appropriated' by mainstream big 'business as usual' operators, recast in the form of motherhood statements that do no more than provide a public relations face.

² Note the 3rd Global Summit on Peace through Tourism, organized by the International Institute for Peace through Tourism promoted the theme *One Earth One Family: Travel and Tourism, Serving a Higher Purpose*.

this respect (see Ashley, Dilys et al. 2001; Becton 2006; Harrison 2008; Reid 2003; Reid 1988; Roe, Goodwin et al. 2004).

While this is a complex field, the key point here has been to identify that underlying different types of tourism are different models of and assumptions about 'development'. Whether the above four models adequately capture 'development' forms and processes is an open question, with Jamal and Stronza (2008) pointing out that this typology does not countenance 'hybrid' development strategies "that may contain characteristics of more than one paradigm".³ Ultimately they point to the need to deconstruct the "eco-political rhetoric of tourism" particularly in the case of sustainable tourism, by asking:

What is being sustained, by whom and for whom? Who decides what sustainability means and entails, and who dictates how it should be achieved and evaluated?

But what these questions highlight for us is that WWOOF hosts directly choose to be involved, their degree of involvement and the benefits they can achieve, which is something not readily seen to be the case in many tourism forms. More generally, some argue that development or poverty alleviation models of any kind have simply not really 'worked' very well and that hope for some kind of genuine human progress that is equitable and environmentally harmonious is exhausted. Indeed, Telfer (2003) regards the idea of *development* as obsolete, and summarises three main camps of *post-development* thinking proposed by Peet (1999) which all reject the approach and lifestyle of modern development theory. They include:

- radical pluralism,
- simple living and
- re-appraising non-capitalist societies.

Recurrent in each of these is the idea of support for local initiatives and the need for community involvement in the development process. This is something common to the 'alternative tourism' movement (discussed below), but also mirrors WWOOFing in regard to its connections with 'development'. It is therefore relevant to explore WWOOFing in more detail and in the context of varying types of tourism and tourists.

³ For example they envisage *ecological modernisation* as sitting "between modernisation and neoliberalism" alongside instrumental 'sustainable development' initiatives, with implications for ecotourism.

4 TYPES OF TOURISM AND TOURISTS

Much theorising about the origins of tourism recognises the role of travel in ancient times and in more recent history as an exploratory and learning experience, particularly among the elite of colonial empires. The industrial revolution organised work and leisure time into distinct spheres and previously elite travellers were ostensibly overrun by the emergence of the phenomenon of mass tourism with the advent of mass transportation. Initial theorising about modern forms of tourism suggested that tourists were essentially similarly motivated, but critiques of the tourist as a singular entity (or essential category) soon emerged, largely based on demographic and/or psychographic attributes (Leiper 2004). Cohen made an initial attempt to typify tourists in terms of various possible relationships of individuals to their experiences of modern existence (Cohen 1972; Cohen 1979) with a five level typology ranging from *recreational* through to *existential* tourist experiences (gradation between these involved a deepening divide between a personal 'centre' located at 'home' and 'away', with the move from one pole to the other representing a religious conversion (Cohen 1979)). Such tourist types approximately mirror various tourism types as discussed below.

4.1 Conventional Mass Tourism

Conventional mass tourism (CMT) describes a tourism form in which large numbers of tourists converge upon 'destination regions' in which significant infrastructure and services exist specifically for the purpose of accommodating tourism related activities. Participation in CMT is well characterised by Cohen's *recreational* and *diversionary* tourists, though CMT is considered to be in some decline as more independent and alternative forms of tourism proliferate (Leiper 2004). Much has been written before, so only a few points need be made here. Despite many supposed benefits associated with mass tourism developments, particularly the redistribution of capital between developed and developing countries (Wahab 1997), numerous criticisms of this tourism form can be found. Economic benefits generated are commonly 'leaked', particularly in vertically integrated tourist operations based in offshore regions with little direct economic benefits flowing to local communities. Where economic benefits remain, they must be seen against the associated environmental, social and cultural costs associated (Boissevain 1996; Brown 2000; Crandell 1987; Farrell and Runyan 1991; Hong 1985; Krippendorf 1987; Mathieson and Wall 1982; Mieczkowski 1995; Pleumarom 2003; Vanhove 1997). In the case of mass tourism dependent economies,

market downturns and security and safety concerns of tourists can make the economic well-being of some local communities highly vulnerable (Brown 2000; Vanhove 1997).

4.2 Alternative Tourism

The many and various shortcomings of mass tourism across the triple (or quadruple) bottom line of social (and cultural), economic and environmental considerations, combined with a general consciousness of environmental degradation and growing concern about the erosion of natural and cultural sustainability in so-called 'destination communities' (Singh, Timothy et al. 2003) has led to the emergence of 'alternative tourism' (AT) (Brown 2000; Johnston 1993). AT has also grown out of the more general consideration of the need for alternative development and although the term may have lost meaning through over use, it is thought to have some minimum characteristics that distinguish it from CMT.

AT is low impact, small scale and more community oriented and focused. In its ideal form(s), the distribution of benefits from tourism are considered and it aims to avoid exploitation, or in some instances, positively and directly beneficial to local stakeholders. It also involves cultural sustainability, sensibility, respect and educational aspects (de Kadt 1992). AT has become the subject of much discussion, revolving around issues of:

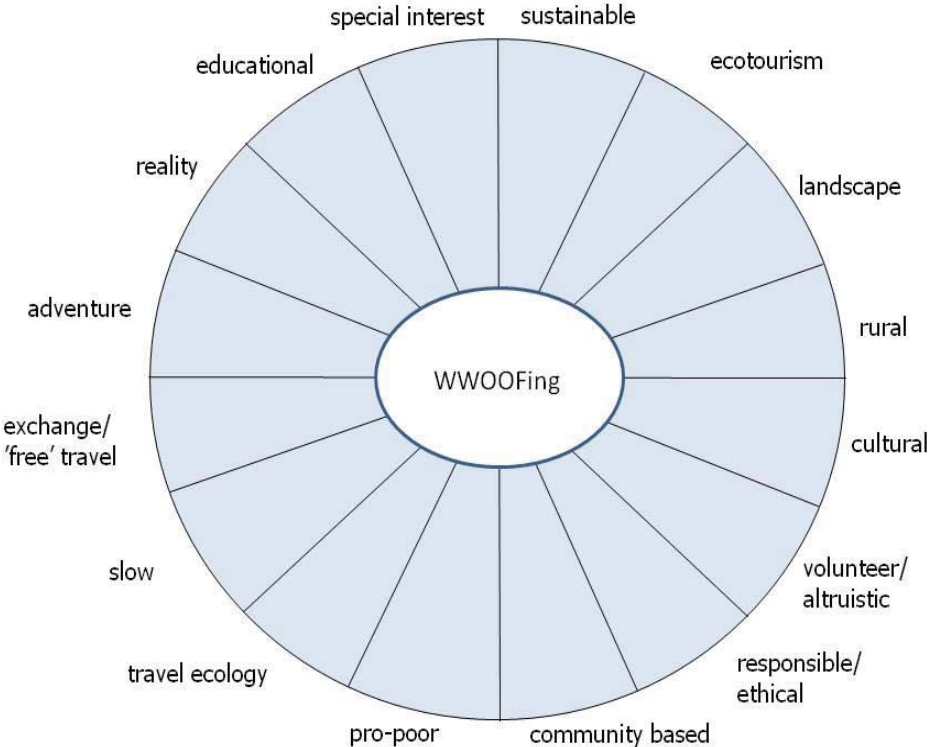
- the adequacy of the term, i.e. alternative to what?;
- its goals;
- its apparent elitism;
- its niche status and popularity;
- the apparent presumption that alternative is 'better' or equivalent to *appropriate*;
- its role as disturber of the undisturbed and precursor to mass tourism; and,
- the proliferation and confusion of relationships between the various 'sub-species' of alternative tourism.

In relation to this last point, Figure 2 seeks to capture the relationship of WWOOFing to the now multiple variant forms of 'alternative tourism'. It is not proposed that these be re-examined here in detail given the task at hand and the vast existing literature (Britton 1977; Butler 1992; Butler 1990; de Kadt 1992; Dearden and Harron 1994; Holden 1984; Johnston 1993; McGehee 2002; Pearce 1992; Pretty 1994; Saglio 1979; Scheyvens 2002; Weaver 1992; Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003; Zimmermann 1995). It should suffice to say that under the broad umbrella of 'alternative tourism' (see

Appendix 3), there can be found a large diversity of overlapping ‘tourisms’. Listing these aims to illustrate the continuing differentiation of forms of (alternative) tourism and where WWOOFing might have originated, or currently ‘fit’ in relation to tourism.

The term alternative tourism has been much used, particularly since the early 1990s. Apart from logical semantic difficulties associated with the term ‘alternative’ in the context of trend uptake, set against dynamic change through constant processes of differentiation and de-differentiation (Urry 2008), some forms of AT have been specifically targeted for criticism.

Figure 2: WWOOFing in Relation to Types of Alternative Tourism



The rejection of mainstream tourism by so-called ‘alternative tourists’ in embracing AT has been construed as a self-consciously visible marker of identity and distinction (a concept derived from Bourdieu, also discussed by Coleman and Crang 2002; McCabe 2002; Riley 1995; Wearing, McDonald et al. 2005; Welk 2004) and thus open to ridicule. By embracing various ‘alternative’ tourism experiences as an oppositional category, these tourists share a romanticised rejection of modernity which Meethan (2001, p80) says, can be traced back to the hippy movement of the 1960s (Cohen

2004a; Vogt 1976), through to a variety of new age travellers and others in the 80s (Pearce 1990; Riley 1988) and 90s (Elsrud 1998; Locker-Murphy 1996; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Pryor 1997; Ross 1997; van Raders 1994), which is still apparent today (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Cooper, O'Mahoney et al. 2004; Kain and King 2004; Maoz 2004; Murphy 2001; Richards and Wilson 2004a; Scheyvens 2002; Slaughter 2004; Sorensen 2003; Tomaszewski 2003; Welk 2004; Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003).⁴

Ecotourism has therefore been labelled 'ego-tourism' (Wheeller 1993) because of its reputed connection to the building of personal cultural capital. It has also been argued that ecotourism is a relatively expensive form of tourism because of the 'exclusive' nature of it (i.e. in seeking 'romantic solitude' in nature), and the "competition for distinction, uniqueness and differentiation" can be "alternatively expressed as another form of 'conspicuous consumption'" (Mowforth and Munt, in Holden 2000). Meethan suggests we should ensure that concern with community involvement and eco-friendly attitudes of alternative tourism businesses and tourists do more than "induce a warm glow in the hearts of western tourists, and salve their consciences", calling for resistance to "simplistic moralising" to be sure that alternative tourism developments are of actual benefit to those in need of it, rather than "romanticising nature and the primitive [which] may in fact simply consign the less developed economies to the status of an eco-or cultural theme park for the developed world" (Meethan 2001). Butler (1992; 1990) has also been at pains to make such a point, stressing that alternative tourism does not necessarily equate with 'better' tourism in all situations, neither is it always the most 'appropriate' form of tourism, though he says, it has come to be seen as such by some.

Ecotourism has also been named eco-imperialistic, eco-colonialist (Cater 1987), and eco-missionary (Dowden 1992). Responsible tourism and volunteer tourism forms have been dismissed as 'uncool' (Deziel 2005), moralising, fun spoiling, politically correct and misguided (Butcher 2005). Butler (1992), Pryor (1997) and Harrison (in Holden 2000) argue that alternative tourism (especially ecotourism) is often a 'pioneering' stage in a cycle inevitably leading to mass tourism. Indeed, ecotourism too is market driven and is now big business. As more people 'express an interest in nature' - however deeply and however defined (Acott and Howard 1998; Fennell 2004)) -

⁴ Meethan (citing Elsrud) describes the inversion of the notion of security among young, single backpackers, who engage in deliberate indulgence in risk-taking behaviour, which "can be used as tools for, and symbols of, distinction between the traveller 'self' and the 'self' of others" (Meethan 2001).

pressure on the integrity of natural environments will increase. This has led to significant concern about how to develop and promote ecotourism (or any tourism) in such a way that 'overdevelopment' does not occur. This carrying capacity centered approach has been the main focus of definitions of the meaning of 'sustainable tourism' (built upon the anthropocentric notion of *sustainable development*, compared with the more eco-centric term *sustainability* (Saarinen 2006)), in practice pointing to the need for the introduction of limits to tourist numbers, generating examples of exclusive, or 'romantic' tourism (Urry 2002).

Apart from a reputed elitism, alternative tourists have been differentiated and critiqued in other ways. Since the early 1970s attempts have been made to characterise prototype alternative tourists such as Cohen's (1972; 1973) *drifters*, Vogt's (1976) *wanderers*, and since the late 1980s and 1990s, *backpackers* (Pearce 1990), *long term budget travellers* (Riley 1988) and *global nomads* (Richards and Wilson 2004a). Demographic and psychographic motivational factors and behavioural aspects have been at the heart of such work and various arguments have been made to both group and further split these tourists. Key questions have been whether escape from alienation is (Cohen 1972; 1973; 1995; 2004a) or is *not* (Franklin 2003a; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Pearce 1990; Riley 1988) important as a travel motivation, or relatedly, whether this group are differentiating (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; 2004; van Raders 1994; Welk 2004), or are paradoxically verging on, merging with or instigating conventional mass tourism (Bennett 2007; Desforges 1998; Friend 2005) as alternative tourists become more and more institutionalised/appropriated as part of the logic of tourism as an industry (Curtis 2005; O'Reilly 2006).⁵

Sub-categories of alternative tourists have been analysed, with Holden (2000) for example summarising some of the growing ways in which ecotourists have been further differentiated (MacKay's three types of ecotourist; Cleverdon's pyramidal typology of tourists based on level of interest in the environment; Swarbrooke and Horner's ecotourist typology from *not at all green* to *totally green*). More recently the complex interconnections between environmental concerns and economic, social and cultural concerns (i.e. a quadruple bottom line approach) have been explored (Stanford 2008), reflecting a growing sophistication of understanding, particularly that responsible tourism is not only in the domain or responsibility of AT.

⁵ Backpacking is now so institutionalized that it has all but disappeared relative to its original, 'authentic' form and the "backpacker as a clearly defined species of tourist is disappearing, just at the moment of its discovery", according to Richards and Wilson (2004b).

A growing criticism of AT is the tendency in some of its forms toward 'greenwashing' (falsely labelling aspects of the tourism 'product' as eco-friendly or sustainable), perhaps resulting from the competitive nature of the market reality in which it is embedded and the related threat of mass AT as a precursor to mass tourism, as mentioned. Some have argued of AT (summarised in Holden 2000, pp242-44) that:

- its small scale nature cannot provide communities with sufficient income/employment;
- education of the tourist about fragile cultures and environments is a long-term process and that the doors cannot just be opened wide without some significant investment in priming tourists and hosts;
- logistics and financing are not always thought through properly;
- it is not necessarily environmentally beneficial where short term-ism prevails and unsympathetic governments or communities exist, there is little incentive to care for the longer term; and,
- ecotourism may be little different from mass tourism in terms of environmental threats or even worse, taking into account the fragility of the tourist resources (natural environments) that will be exposed to visitation.

These are important considerations, particularly in the context of any temptation to conceptualise WWOOFing as a small and specialised segment of the AT 'sector'. Such critiques highlight the limits to the relationship that might exist between WWOOFing and AT construed in these ways, since many criticisms of AT seem to have limited applicability to the case of WWOOFing, remembering among other things that:

- nobody stands to make short or long term profit from WWOOFing;
- WWOOFing is a relatively dispersed phenomenon, generally occurring away from ecologically fragile environments;
- WWOOFing is initiated at the invitation of local landholders;
- the aim of the exchange for hosts is commonly to 'improve' rather than solely to provide a touristic experience of natural or modified environments; and,
- hosts are free to refuse the request of WWOOFers to stay as it suits their needs, or to terminate the stay if it is not agreeable.

Despite significant effort of scholars in considering multiple forms of alternative tourism, WWOOFing has barely been noticed by this community (Chapter 2). Yet as this research suggests and hopes to demonstrate, it can be said to share much with *any*

and *all* of the forms of alternative tourism listed in Figure 2. For example, WWOOFing appears to have a clear role in the management of the health of local environments and ecology and is concerned with sustainable land management and the rehabilitation of degraded landscapes and habitats at a widely dispersed, 'grass roots' level. It could be proposed that this overlaps with the idea of 'ecotourism' in so far as that discourse and practice, in its most developed form, is concerned with conservation ecology *for the benefit of* local communities and the environment through tourism. Yet ecotourism is largely focused on nature-based tourism experiences and the related issues of management and carrying capacity, scientific research to underpin management of natural areas, local participation in generating tourism products, sharing of benefits and costs, access to natural resources, and so on (Wearing and Neil 1999). There is little visible concern within the field of ecotourism with ecologically sustainable farming systems or degraded natural areas in need of ecological restoration, since there is no apparent demand from tourists and perceived limited conservation value associated with degraded lands. Ecotourism focuses upon sites (or 'destinations') for which there is current or potential demand from visitors seeking to experience them, typically as high integrity natural areas with suitable and visible natural 'attractions'. This demand is connected to reputed 'significance' (de Botton 2002; MacCannell 1976; Urry 2002), arising from its reported natural integrity and rarity (i.e. limited supply), and perhaps its aesthetic properties. WWOOFing, generally concerned with the health and management of more prosaic landscapes, has not appeared within this branch of the literature.

Referring again to Figure 2 (p68), WWOOFing could be conceived of as a form of *sustainable* tourism, involving low environmental impact, low key activities that are aimed at achieving local level sustainable development related outcomes⁶. Due to the practical educational aspect associated with WWOOFing activities for some, it might alternatively signal a new form of educative or 'special interest' tourism that might be better named 'sustainability tourism', given the interest of some WWOOFers at least (as discussed in later chapters), in contributing to and learning about practical techniques for more sustainable forms of agricultural production and lifestyles generally.

⁶ In fact Fenton Huie (n.d.) argues that it is "... hard to imagine a more environmentally sound form of tourism than WWOOFing, where giving, sharing and learning on the part of both host and guest are the essential ingredients."

There is certainly significant overlap between WWOOFing and *rural* and *farm* tourism (as identified by McIntosh and Campbell 2001), with an obvious connection to the idea of rural farmstays, though there are several urban based WWOOF hosts as well (WWOOF Australia 2009).

The concept of *responsible* tourism (D'Sa 1999; Fennell and Przeclawski 2003; Johnston 2003; Johnston 1993; MacDonald 2006; Pleumarom 2003; Stanford 2008) also overlaps with WWOOFing insofar as they both advocate 'ethics' or principles to be taken on by travellers rather than merely by tourism industry agents and practitioners. 'WWOOFer Ethics' include travelling in the spirit of humility, with a genuine desire to learn about the people, being sensitive to others' feelings, avoiding offensive behaviour, listening and observing and making acquaintance with local customs and cultivating an awareness of the limited means of some hosts in providing tourists needs (WWOOF Australia 2005). As previously flagged in Chapter 2, WWOOF's Australian founder speculated that WWOOFing is a form of responsible tourism, citing the deliberate intent of hosts to have "a minimal impact on the environment while involving themselves with mans oldest industry - food production". The involvement of hosts in earth repair work also paints them as people "thinking globally and acting locally" and through interaction with these people and their lives, visitors will tend to be positively influenced, according to Pollard (n.d., p21). This is partly what Stanford (2008) has in mind in suggesting that WWOOFing represents an extreme example of responsible tourism because it necessarily involves "a deep engagement with local people" in contrast with most tourism forms.

Relatedly, the idea of *travel ecology* proposed by Potts and Harill (1998; 2002) is that tourism planning and policy "should help create communities that become resilient enough to survive in a highly volatile political and economic environment and think beyond mere 'sustaining' tourism or some specific aspect of tourism development." They argue that *travel ecology* be used as shorthand for *sustainable community tourism development*, which has a conceptual foundation emphasising "a more holistic approach to community development and ecological enhancement" through tourism. They advocate a tourism program that is cognisant of "relationships between community, ecology and travel can be used not only to sustain, but enhance human communities" in which individuals can reach their potential (Potts and Harrill 2002). If, as this research seeks to determine, WWOOFers can be said to be making a positive contribution to the efforts of 'hosts' seeking to design, create and maintain sustainable production systems and in undertaking earth repair projects at the local level,

WWOOFing may also be described as a 'positive impact' or enhancing form of tourism, resonant with the idea of *travel ecology* in suggesting that sustainable tourism can and should move beyond 'sustaining tourism'. The travel ecology concept also encourages us, along with WWOOFing, to look more broadly in conceptualising travel options when it emphasizes 'backyard activism' or the 'geography of everywhere'. That is, it encourages recognition "that all landscapes, no matter how mundane, contribute to the community tourism product" (Potts and Harrill 2002, p51).

WWOOFing could also be conceptualised as an extension of the growth of interest in *volunteer tourism* (VT) more generally also. Wearing (2002) has defined a volunteer tourist as a tourist who volunteers in an organised way:

to undertake holidays that may involve the aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment.

VT promotes 'meaningful' or purposeful forms of travel that provide interaction with local communities in a variety of types of cultures and landscapes. Despite overlaps, in general, VT requires significant pre-preparation, the payment of a fee to fund and administer projects and a specific time commitment. WWOOFing differs in that it can be organised directly and quite spontaneously, the length of stay is generally flexible and negotiated and in virtually all situations, WWOOFing occurs outside of any monetary transaction, relying on an exchange of labour for accommodation and food (and various experiences).

There are various alternatives to the payment of money that can make for an exchange-based tourism experience similar in some respects to WWOOFing (Figure 2, p68). In both house swapping and WWOOFing, no new construction of accommodation is required, which has significant natural resource conservation benefits. The use of local exchange trading schemes (LETS) as a supportive mode of travel also shares with WWOOFing the idea of offering skills (sometimes unskilled labour) in exchange for the food and accommodation provided by a host. More recently, 'couch surfing' has become a very popular mechanism for budget travellers to gain accommodation and share cross cultural experiences. Members of the scheme offer their home couch to travellers in exchange for the opportunity to access the use of other members' couches

when they travel.⁷ This scheme also has grown massively since 2004, with over 1 million members in 230 countries (as at 2009). Along with WWOOFing and now Help-X⁸, couch surfing appears to represent the latest manifestation of a very strong interest among travellers in alternative exchange based forms of travel.

In sum, alternative tourism is an idea that has some utility in framing WWOOFing, but there is little agreement about AT in terms of its character, its directions and even its existence, despite many attempts to capture it. From this amorphousness it might be said to follow that it is difficult to specifically identify WWOOFing as a specific *form* of alternative tourism. In the meantime, it is valuable to consider alternatives to the term alternative tourism in this attempt to locate WWOOFing in the tourism realm.

4.3 New Tourism, Postmodern Tourism

The concepts of 'new tourism' and 'postmodern tourism' attempt to describe shifts in tourism form and practice in recent decades stemming from the impact of wider socio-cultural and economic trends. In part, these descriptions try to bundle some of the commonalities found among contemporary tourism forms in a way that includes reference to growing consciousness about tourism impacts that underlie some of these forms of tourism.

The collective term *new tourism* was coined by Poon (1989) and has been explored further by Mowforth and Munt (1997). Holden summarises Poon's description of 'new tourists' as those with 'see and enjoy but do not destroy' attitude. They do not assert a '*West is best*' attitude. Other labels given to this emerging environmentally conscious brand of tourist include 'ethical' tourist, 'environmentally responsible' tourist, 'good' tourist and ecotourist (Holden 2000). *New tourism* thus overlaps in many respects with the idea of alternative tourism.

The shift from Fordist to post-Fordist consumption, reflecting wider changes in advanced capitalism has been said to have been reflected in tourism also. In post-Fordist consumption, producers are driven more by consumer choice, with new products being more specialised, based on non-mass (and often therefore more natural) raw materials. Urry (2002) suggests there is some evidence of a general shift

⁷ See <www.couchsurfing.org>

⁸ See <www.helpx.net>

towards more segmented, flexible, customised forms of tourism, compared with earlier (though still extant) packaged and standardised types.

Wwoofing is certainly flexible and can be tailored to the needs of the Wwoofer (and the host), aligning it with this aspect of *new tourism*. The attitudes of Wwoofers also align well with those of *new tourists* (McIntosh and Campbell 2001; Nimmo 2001a; Wwoof Australia 2004). Yet while Wwoofing itself may be an experience, it is not simply a consumer product in the sense that any other form of experience oriented tourism is, given its occurrence outside of monetary exchange.

There is an inescapable need to consider how tourism and its analysis is potentially affected by a broader shift to postmodernity. Postmodernism can be conceived of as the development of an aesthetic stance based on the production and consumption of symbolic forms that are significantly different from the earlier, so-called modernist era (Jamieson 1991; Ward 1997). Some argue that there has been a more far-reaching epochal shift in consciousness brought about through the various 'failures' of modernity to explain the world in universal terms (i.e. the failure of 'grand narratives'), resulting in a new cultural paradigm and social consciousness (Harvey 1990). Thus debate exists over the extent of penetration of 'postmodern thinking' and whether the novelty of the commodification of symbolic systems associated with it is accurate or overstated and better thought of as part of the "continuous modernist tradition" (Fanstein and Gladstone in Meethan 2001).

So the generation of differences as promoted and found among niche tourism destinations or forms may appear "admirably postmodern", but they may be able to be better explained as the result of "the application of an instrumental modern rationality by the producers" in a post-Fordist political economy which produces niche marketing (Meethan 2001).

Postmodernism (and the nature of its relationship to tourism) is a contested multi-dimensional concept, but postmodern thinking does seem to oblige consideration of an alternative, or "extended" (Uriely 2005) view of tourism and of tourism types. Following Munt (1994), Uriely and others (2005; 2003) identify two forms of postmodern tourism. The first is tourism built around simulation based experiences, in the sense of 'hyper-reality' (cf Baudrillard and Eco), such as is found in theme park tourist attractions or cruise ships.

The second so-called 'other postmodern tourism' "emphasises the growing appeal of concepts such as 'alternative', 'real', 'ecological' and 'responsible' forms of tourism, which are seen as the direct opposite of conventional mass tourism" (Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003). This suggests that the alternative tourism forms described above can be seen in opposition to modernist (and Fordist) mass tourism forms.

While the modern(ist) era was/is characterised by horizontal and vertical processes of differentiation of normative, aesthetic and institutional spheres of social activity⁹, the postmodern 'era' is fundamentally characterised by de-differentiation. Horizontal de-differentiation describes the "decreasing distinctiveness of tourism as a field of social activity" (Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003 citing Lash and Urry 1994, Munt 1994 and Urry 2002).¹⁰ Boundary blurring between tourism and everyday life was noted by Munt who noted that "tourism is everything, everything is tourism" (quoted in Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003, p59). Such blurring can be seen in the combination of activities such as trekking, climbing, skiing with tourism, the penetration of tourism by intellectual activities in the case various 'special interest' types of tourism, the use of codes of conduct/ethics which melds tourism/leisure consumption with professionalism, and the penetration of the tourism domain by altruistic motivations and volunteer activity.

On this basis, although volunteer tourism could be described as a form of alternative tourism (Wearing 2001; 2003), Uriely et. al. regard it as a form of postmodern tourism, or as:

a specific expression of postmodern culture...[being] congruent with the process of horizontal de-differentiation, in which conventional distinctions between different fields of social activity are gradually decreasing in contemporary culture (Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003, p61).

⁹ Horizontal differentiation describes the development of distinct fields with their own conventions and modes of evaluation, (e.g. microbiology, social welfare, child psychology, football), while vertical differentiation refers to cultural distinctions made between various fields, such as high and low or elite and popular.

¹⁰ Urry (2002) argues that tourism was once definable in terms of three main forms of exchange relationships: financial exchanges for the right to occupy mobile property; temporary possession of accommodation; and the ability to gaze at unfamiliar sites. These are no longer confined to tourism practices, and are found increasingly in everyday life such as shopping, eating out, sports etc. Interestingly, WWOOFing (and other exchange based travel mechanisms already described), moves a tourist *away from* such defining exchanges, in the other direction, being disconnected from the aspect of monetary exchange.

They also note that the emphasis on ‘real’, ‘alternative’, ‘ecological’, ‘responsible’ tourism forms, are “congruent with anti-globalisation and environmental awareness in contemporary Western cultures”, predicting that new combinations involving tourism/leisure activities with practices from other domains, such as volunteering, are expected to flourish (Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003).¹¹ There is certainly evidence of some of these sentiments among WWOOFers (Nimmo 2001a) and their hosts (McIntosh and Campbell 2001), as well as such a combination of characteristics. Dissolved boundaries particularly between the everyday and the extraordinary also characterise WWOOFing for many, suggesting some fit with (other) *postmodern tourism*.

But it is unclear whether the dissolution of boundaries *per se*, is enough to capture the phenomenon of WWOOFing. Boundaries are constantly created and dissolved in endless processes of recycling, appropriation and invention (Bauman 2000). The diversity of forms of (alternative) tourism implies differentiation on one hand, but as Urry later observed, this came to be countered by postmodern de-differentiation:

There was the implosion of tourism into a wide range of other systems, of shopping, entertainment, migration, sport, leisure, friendship, business, conferences, sex, family life and so on. There is the end of ‘tourism’ *per se* (Urry 2008).

The collision of differentiation and de-differentiation makes it difficult to clearly define any form of tourism for long.¹² However, the move away from commoditized host-guest relations made possible in WWOOFing, in combination with the opportunity it seems to present tourists to flexibly generate customised and personally ‘authentic’ experiences, may together form a very useful foundation in building a platform for conceptualising WWOOFing from tourism theory.

WWOOFing may be emblematic of the postmodern condition, its popularity largely unknown in tourism and cultural studies due to the relative novelty of its uses in travel circles. But we have seen that WWOOFing is not a new idea, nor is it precisely what is meant by the term *new tourism*, which refers to the segmentation of the industry into various ‘niche’ tourism products.

¹¹ Periodic observation of the online volunteer tourism realm certainly appears to confirm the accuracy of this opinion.

¹² It is for this reason that Urry now says there is need to “move on” in our thinking, arguing for the use of ‘mobility’ as an analytical lens for tourism scholars. Indeed, he has indicated the existence of a ‘mobilities turn’ which is not simply “a useful corrective to static notions of social life but is itself transformative of social science” (Urry 2008, pxiv).

Nimmo (2001a) described WWOOF (NZ) as a unique tourism experience provider that operates outside of any concept of 'industry', on the basis of an exchange of energy and resources as well as learning, insight, interpersonal rewards and anything else a person is able to independently give or receive. It requires and generates a highly individualised experience created as much by the WWOOFer as the host. While WWOOFing is different from conventional mass tourism, it becomes difficult to say on theoretical grounds alone whether WWOOFing is a new form of alternative tourism or a type of new, hybrid, post-Fordist, postmodern tourism, an adjunct to tourism, or an alternative to tourism, and thus, perhaps a form of post-tourism, to which we later return.

All of this again suggests the need to consider WWOOFing through a collaborative process of exploration with WWOOFers *and* hosts, from the ground up, which is the main task of this research. In order to research this tourism related phenomenon in a manner that could tie the research to key understandings of tourism, there was need to review relevant literature to guide and to sensitise the research.

5 KEY CONCEPTS OF TOURISM

However, tourism is a vast field of study which has been examined from many perspectives (Jafari 1990; Leiper 2004; Meethan 2001). The approach taken to adequately covering such a wide field has been to order concepts in terms of their relevance to three simple stages of tourism: *before*, *during* and *after*. This temporal ordering corresponds with some conceptualisations of tourism/leisure experiences themselves [such as those suggested by Clawson and Knetsch (1966) and Jafari (1987)], and overlaps with broad concepts widely used in the field, namely tourism *motivation*, *experiences* and *outcomes*. The framework used for organising and discussing research data is presented below, echoing Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) description of the phases or stages of leisure experiences, including:

- anticipation of an experience (before);
- travelling (before/during);
- the actual experience (during); and,
- recollection of the experience (after).

It also overlaps to some extent in form with Lewin and Dewey’s ideas about the ‘experiential learning cycle’, as adapted by Kolb (1984), to include:

- observation;
- reflection;
- the formation of abstract concepts or ideas based on this; and,
- the use of these ideas in shaping new experiences (Kolb, 1984).

Figure 3: Framework for Organising and Conceptualising Research Data



Figure 3 represents the three key perspectives of *motives*, *experiences* and *outcomes* in context of a cyclical, experiential learning based framework. It represents the mechanics of leisure-travel experiences, but also the way in which data has come to be organised through iterations of interpretive analysis and generally interpreted. Details of this model are progressively explained in this thesis, but for the present purposes, Figure 3 provides an organisational spine around which discussion of the WWOOFing phenomenon generally and experiences of both hosts and WWOOFers is presented. It also structures the immediate concern below with key concepts that could be useful in exploring WWOOFing as tourism, commencing with tourist *motivation*.¹³

¹³ While individuals’ have unique and varied ‘backgrounds’, the discussion here assumes that host and WWOOFer backgrounds feed directly into their motives for undertaking travel related experiences or WWOOF hosting. Details of hosts and WWOOFer backgrounds are provided as relevant in later chapters.

5.1 Tourist Motivation

Studies of tourist motivation form the basis of much tourism research (Leiper 2004), probably largely connected to the widespread desire to understand tourists as sources of economic return. Less commercial interest in the subject of tourist motivation is also apparent in the literature which can be briefly considered in the quest to identify WWOOFers as tourists.

Much tourism research has built upon the *hierarchy of needs* developed by Maslow (Brown and Lehto 2005), ranging from satisfaction of basic physiological needs, through to more complex 'self-actualisation' needs. For example Pearce (1993) developed a travel career ladder, consisting of relaxation, stimulation, relationship, self-esteem/development and fulfilment. Although this conception of motivation has its use in negotiating this complex subject, its utility is perhaps in explaining different tourist behaviour at different points in time (Blamey and Braithwaite 1997).

The discussion below revolves for simplicity around the much used dialectic between 'push' and 'pull' factors (Dann 1977; Iso-Ahola 1982). With WWOOFers in mind, there is consideration below of the existence of an interplay between *escape* from certain conditions/situations at home, providing (temporary) relief and restitution, and *enticement towards* specific 'destinations' or activities that reward particular travel choices, such as experiences of people and places and/or the accumulation of cultural capital and possibly 'distinction' as a result of these experiences. For brevity, many motivations for tourism such as the need to relax are not considered in this targeted discussion.

Tourism as an Escape from Everyday Lives

Early sociology of tourism examined tourism in a dialectical relationship with the workaday world, as a "culturally sanctioned escape route for Westerners" with the issue being for tourists to establish their individuality in the "face of anomic forces of a technological world". As such, holidays became conceptualised as a free area for mental and physical escape and were used "for the manipulation of well-being" (Wearing 2002). This implies a degree of dysfunction in the place of origin (Jack and Phipps 2005; Meethan 2001), articulated most characteristically by Krippendorf (1987).

For him, if everyday industrialized life was more fulfilling, “people would be happy to stay put, or at least to travel in a less destructive way” (Brown 2000).¹⁴

Critics suggest that there is more to tourism than a simple escape from drudgery, and that other factors are at play such as climate, the human desire to travel and to experience difference, and the fact that people return to their everyday lives after holidays. Brown (2000) and Franklin (2003a) defend industrialized society as it provides the *means* of escape for so many in the first place. Brown insists we should ask whether those who are not afforded this means in other societies are more content than the tourist-generating societies. Further, a class analysis of the tourist would suggest that not all tourists live in drudgery and alienation (critiquing Krippendorf’s ‘grey structures resembling silos and bunkers’) without sufficient recreational and cultural activities. Brown suggests that Krippendorf’s analysis is focused on the symptoms of the current economic and political organisation, portrayed as *causes* of mass tourism, without examining what has produced these symptoms. Contemporary leisure and tourism, although they have historical antecedents, are the results of and are made possible by modernist industrial society and its organisation (Franklin 2003a) and cannot be understood if isolated from these determining factors.

Various suggestions for humanizing tourism (such as ‘people before profit’, self-determination policies, sharing of costs and benefits to all parties, education measures throughout the industry) are laudable, but according to Brown, unrealistic and unenforceable without a more fundamental system change away from ‘business is business’. For Brown and others (Adamson 2005; D’Sa 1999; Moscardo 2008; Pleumarom 2003), tourism is not an altruistic business, but a self-interested one and it is therefore not feasible to assume that tourists want to learn things and/or ‘self develop’ while on holiday.

Meethan (2001, p8) argues that a fundamental categorisation underpinning many forms of tourism (and tourism analysis) is that ‘primitive’ and ‘traditional’ are seen as the antithesis of modernity. He too critiques the idea of modern people being driven to tourism primarily by the need to escape from their condition and their society. The idea of modernity as a dystopia, with the tourist seeking to recover or recreate what has been lost in the processes of modernisation and ‘differentiation’ of social forms, has been at the root of a number of attempts to explain the tourist experience, with

¹⁴ Similar conclusions were apparently drawn by Young who noted that the top 15% of income earners did not tend to take holidays as they had less reason to escape (ibid Brown 2000).

MacCannell's (1976) major 'ethnographic' study of the tourist in particular, being critiqued because it views the tourist as 'an essential category' and removes agency and diversity in explaining the actions of tourists. Modernity (described by MacCannell and others), while associated with progress, described a linear path to social development in which the pre-modern is swept aside and has no respect for its own past. Modernity disrupts 'real life' and shifts people away from the "stability of interpersonal relations" found in the "primitive case where family structure *is* social structure" (MacCannell in Meethan 2001, p11). Importantly, MacCannell also characterises the non-modern/pre-modern as the modern's plaything, particularly for sightseers and tourists who "search for the authentic, the pre-modern and the primitive" in their "quest for heritage", which is a "ritual response towards the alienation of modernity whose purpose is to reconstruct a 'cultural heritage or a social identity'" (MacCannell in Meethan 2001, pp12-12).

However, Brown suggests that the 'unpleasantness' for some of a highly modernised world should not be regarded *per se* as the same as 'ungenuine'. Well intended attempts to protect and prevent losses of authentic culture, especially in lesser developed communities, not only fails to appreciate the nature of culture change and the actions of members of 'authentic' communities (Meethan 2001), but may prevent the establishment of desired improvements and "help perpetuate structural inequalities" (Brown 2000), particularly for those people striving to "free themselves from poverty and drudgery" rather than exist in some pre-modern utopia (Butcher (1997) in Meethan 2001).¹⁵ The idea of tourism as a *compensation* for what is missing from the 'inauthentic' everyday modern lives of people, or as some sort of substitute for religious experiences, is a limiting view according to Meethan, who is also troubled by other approaches that attempt to open up the singular category of the tourist and tourism as an escape from home and search for the 'real thing'.¹⁶ But Meethan would prefer to do away with alienation as a motivating factor entirely and suggests tourist typologies are problematic as they represent *a priori* categories. Besides says Franklin (2003a), tourism is the result of and a celebration of modernity and what it offers by way of constant novelty, not an escape from it.

¹⁵ However valid, it is the view of the author that this stance denies prospects for a realistic appraisal of a genuine sadness, desire or simple nostalgia by some moderns for that which has been lost through continuous modernisation and the apparently unquestioned universal demand for limitless increases in 'standards of living'.

¹⁶ For example Cohen (1979) suggested five types of tourist and tourism experiences that consider the role and significance of the personal 'centre', with some tourists being more alienated than others.

Yet Brown (2000) reaffirms that escape from the ordinary and everyday remains an important reason among others for people (of means) to engage in tourism. Motivations for travel are the same as those that drive all human activity: humans have many 'needs' and tourism has an ability to satisfy these. Brown concludes that tourism is now "the most convenient and accessible means of escape from the ordinary" (p108) and that it is an essential component of modern day life, which is fun, considered good for health and a way to reduce stress.

It likely that there are a continuum of perspectives on this issue, and thus debate about the role of escape from everyday modern lives as an explanation for tourism and the tourist experience is likely to continue and have relevance to WWOOFing.

Alternative Exchanges and Escaping Commodity Relations

Some have conceptualised tourism in relation to the escape from generalised commodity relations. Cohen (1988b) described commoditisation as:

a process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services); developed exchange systems in which the exchange value of things (and activities) is stated in terms of prices form a market.... [M]arkets have expanded throughout the world in the modern era, bringing about the commoditisation of an ever wider range of things and activities (cf. Appadurai 1986).

One of these things is leisure tourism, and it has therefore been asked (Wearing and Wearing 1992), *what does the effect of commodification have on the perceived quality of an experience (and in the resulting identity formation)?*

We can note MacCannell's (1976, p157) observation that the "dividing line between the genuine and spurious is the realm of the commercial...".¹⁷ However, citing Balinese dances performed for tourists to exemplify the idea of 'staged authenticity', Cohen concludes that though cultural products do become commoditized under the impact of tourism, this process does not necessarily destroy the meaning of such products, although it may change it or add new meanings to old ones.

¹⁷ He goes on to say that "the line is the same as the one between furniture and priceless antiques or between prostitution and true love which is supposed to be beyond price... A defining quality of a true attraction is its removal from the realm of the commercial where it is firmly anchored outside of historical time in the system of modern values" (MacCannell 1976, p157).

Wearing and Wearing (1992) suggest there is need (especially for youth) to access leisure outside the commercial realm which is “self-exploring, self-determining, rather than purchased” and that informal and unstructured leisure is significant for identity exploration and formation. There has been attention to tourism in terms of consumption of goods, services and experiences, and in terms of the authenticity of commoditised relations between tourists and hosts, but there appears to have been limited attention to the idea that existing and experiencing the world outside of such commodity relations may also be a significant and specific agenda for some tourists.

Some attention has been given though to alternative economies that exist outside of the realm of capitalist market based commodity exchanges and to what life and politics might resemble in these dimensions (Gibson-Graham 2008). Jack and Phipps (2005) have dwelt specifically on the idea of various *exchanges* in the analysis of tourism also, which obviously has relevance for WWOOFing given its particular basis of exchange. Nimmo (2001a) describes one of the motives of some WWOOFers interviewed as a means of “escaping the mainstream backpacking circuit” which may represent one face of the desire to escape commodity relations more generally. MacCannell (1976, p197) concluded his musings about the commoditized realm by saying that:

[o]ne of the few remaining freedoms under advanced capitalism, if we choose to exercise it, is to abjure commercialised entertainments, to continue to set our own touristic itineraries.

While bearing in mind the motive of cultural capital accumulation (discussed below), the possibility that WWOOFers represent the type of ‘imaginative traveller’ or ‘neo-nomad’, benefitting from displaced self-understanding and the freedom to go beyond the limits that frontiers present - as hoped for by MacCannell – has provided an interesting conceptual fragment for consideration in this research. Hughes and Stitt (2008) claim that the one radical idea needed to allow escape from consumer culture (or the ‘culture of scarcity’ that focuses us on what is lacking from our lives, thus priming us to consume to fill the void) is that we pursue “those things which escape commodification entirely”, and meet our needs from “outside of the global capitalist market economy”, particularly from amongst the so-called ‘gift economy’. Importantly, they cite WWOOFing as an example of such a move for transcending consumerism when travelling, while a number of other mechanisms have emerged recently such as Help-X, Air B&B and Couch Surfing (discussed later) that are part of so-called emerging collaborative consumption sector (Botsman and Rogers 2010).

Seeking Authenticity

In stepping *away from* commodity relations, we find that conceptualisation of tourist motivation has also been seen as a *step towards* the more 'authentic'. As suggested already, an initial focus on tourism as an *escape* in the sociology of tourism became focused on the authenticity of attractions/experiences and the site (Jack and Phipps 2005). In many instances, concerns with authenticity revolved around people (living or dead) and their everyday activities, objects and beliefs. MacCannell took particular interest in work undertaken by 'pre-modern' and early modern people as an object of the modern tourist's attention.

Cohen (1988b) was troubled though by the uncritical introduction and use of the term "authenticity" in sociological analysis of tourism, particularly because it seemed that local 'hosts' were not considered in the use of the term as a criteria of evaluation: traits of their culture that they considered authentic were disregarded in theory *and* practice. Further, the analyst is assumed to be able to ascribe authenticity as an evaluative criteria where the tourist cannot, and MacCannell is said by Cohen to assume that the unsuspecting tourist would reject the 'staged authenticity' typical of 'touristic sites' as contrived, if they were only aware.

Yet, many (Cohen 1988b; Feifer 1985; Franklin 2003a; Ritzer and Liska 1997; Rojek 1993; Urry 2002) have noted that some tourists are untroubled by or even quite deliberately seek the *inauthentic*, making the quest for authenticity an unhelpful basis for considering the organisation of and motivations for tourism.¹⁸ Urry (2002) notes descriptions (by Turner and Turner) of 'liminoid' situations, whereby in much tourism, everyday obligations are suspended or inverted for tourists, left unexamined by MacCannell. Inversion (i.e. opposite role playing as a tourist relative to real life roles), permissive, playful, and non-serious or ludic behaviour and the relative anonymity and freedom from collective scrutiny that can be part of the tourist experience are restitutive or compensatory and are largely unexamined in earlier considerations of authenticity, which tended to focus on judgements (by 'outsiders') of the 'accuracy' of cultural settings (refer to Pearce 2005 for a useful discussion of the (d)evolution of the concept of authenticity in tourism contexts).

¹⁸ Some tourists "willingly, even if often unconsciously, participate playfully in a game of 'as if', pretending that a contrived product is authentic, even if deep down they are not convinced of its authenticity" (Cohen 1988).

More recently authenticity has been thoroughly considered as essentially paradoxical and ultimately and indefinitely problematic, being closely tied up with the ontological problem that exists when one hopes to bridge the paradox in observing objectively (and therefore judging) and experiencing subjectively. There is a moment when simply by means of mere co-presence of the tourist and the would-be authentic host or place, there has been change to what might be experienced or judged to be authentic. Assuming some level of interaction, even if it is to ignore each other, it is not possible for a tourist (or multiple tourists) not to impact on a host community or a 'destination'. If one cannot be a 'fly on the wall', one cannot hope to assess its authenticity or know it *as it really is* [in the absence of tourists (MacCannell 2001)]. Thus, the ontological impacts on the epistemological, reflecting the broader problem of living with the paradox of modernity's binaries such as self-other and object-subject, which is reinforced by this dialectic.¹⁹ Oakes (2006, p242) says:

travel only takes us further from authenticity because the practice of travel is an enactment of the subject-object binary, a binary which only renders authenticity impossible.

The search for authenticity, long held to be a motive for tourists escaping their own alienation, thus becomes a doomed quest, which also has major implications for the notion that tourism is connected to the possibility of 'finding yourself'. The traveller, like other moderns seeking to make sense of situations, must live with contingency and paradox and thus, *embrace* liminality.

Needless to say, the unresolved issue of authenticity recurs both in the literature and in connection with WWOOFing and these ontological/epistemological concerns have a bearing on this in later conceptualising.

Tourism as a Means of Experiencing the Ordinary Lives of Others

Cohen (1979) noted that for pre-modern people, when a powerful mythological imagery located the 'real' spiritual centre elsewhere, the need to journey beyond the limits of the known/empirical world develops. He characterizes the journey, along with traditional pilgrimages, as proceeding from the "profane periphery towards the sacred centre of the religious 'cosmos'" (Cohen 1979). In parallel, but at the other end of the spectrum, modern travellers have been awakened to a "*generalised* interest in or appreciation of

¹⁹ The concept of integrated, complex cybernetic systems, as appreciated by holistic thinkers in the field of social ecology (von Foerster 1990), also reminds us of this.

that which is different, strange or novel in comparison with what the traveller is acquainted with in his cultural world”.

Thus, as well as the idea of *escaping from* the ordinary (‘push’), there is clearly also an *attraction to* other worlds at the heart of tourism [the so-called ‘pull’ factors (Iso-Ahola 1982)]. This type of journey involves a movement *away from* a spiritual culture or religious centre, to its periphery and *toward* the centers of others’ cultures, societies and environments, seeking difference or ‘otherness’ (Urry 2002) or possibly ‘authenticity’ (MacCannell 1976), however paradoxical. Rather than viewing the tourist as simply the modern pilgrim in search of authenticity lost through modernisation (like MacCannell), Cohen saw a variety of types of ‘quests for the centre’ in different tourists, derived from their privately constructed worlds. His five types range from relatively superficial modern tourism at one end (recreational), to the profound spirituality of the pilgrim at the other (existential).²⁰ In addition, he explored a mix of modes and noted that any tourist may experience several modes on one trip as part of a ‘touristic biography’. Cohen’s idea of *existential* and *experimental* tourists has some utility when later considering the function that WWOOFing seems to serve for some tourists.

Accumulating Cultural Capital

In contrast to the notion of engaging in some forms of travel to escape commodity relations, some individuals might be motivated by the promise of increased kudos gained through the accumulation of various tourism related experiences that lead to increased ‘cultural capital’. Through Bourdieu, Baudrillard and others, the idea of the production, circulation and consumption of non-material commodities which can be symbolic of ‘worldliness’ provides a useful concept in this research. The consumption of symbolically important ‘cultural experiences’ can be a means for individuals to establish social differences and satisfy individual needs. ‘Distinction’ (Bourdieu 1984) may help to explain the proliferation of some of the many types of tourism described above and may have utility in considering issues connected with the motivations of

²⁰ The *recreational tourist* enjoys a trip to restore well-being, focused on enjoyment, recreation and release. The *diversionary tourist* escapes boredom, unpleasantness and routine and seeks to endure their alienation through consumption of largely meaningless pleasures. The *experiential tourist* is alienated from their own society and searches for meaningful and authentic but vicarious experiences in the ‘otherness’ offered by the outside world. The *experimental tourist* is an explorer of alternative life ways in their quest for meaning in a nebulous uncertainty, sampling and seeking some form of resonance through constant wandering and drifting, possibly never committing to others’ authentic lifestyles. The *existential tourist* is fully committed to an elective spiritual centre external to their native society and culture that they must submit to and attach to for authentic existence, or live in permanent exile.

WWOOFers. As already seen, some critics of alternative tourism, sustainable tourism and ecotourism in particular, have admonished what they see as the elitist nature of these forms of tourism and the requisite exclusivity they associate with them, dismissing them as faddish romantic returns to an imagined natural state (Brown 2000; Butcher 2005; Butler 1992; Butler 1990; Wall 1997; Weaver 2002; Wheeler 1990). Thus engaging in self consciously 'alternative' (even de-commodified) forms of tourism "can be seen as attempts by certain social groups to distinguish themselves from the masses through their patterns of consumption" (Munt quoted in Meethan 2001, pp79-80).

Connected to this is the pursuit of more *exotic* experiences in more 'authentic', hitherto unexplored places (see above and below). Bennett (2008) has demonstrated how this quest for kudos is magnified through the discursive practices of the backpacker guidebook industry: ever expanding rounds of commoditisation by means of romanticisation of path finding traveller routes that satisfy the need for escape from an "an oversaturated tourist trail". Note that WWOOFing represents a significant means of both 'escaping' the tourist trail and accumulating experiences, thus consideration of these issues in exploring the popularity of WWOOFing has been part of the rationale for this study.

Naturally however, without a deliberate intervention into the field of contemporary WWOOFing as discussed in later chapters, these theoretical fragments from the tourism studies literature addressing motivation are only speculatively useful as explanatory ideas.

5.2 Tourism as an Experience

Uriely (2005) says that the conceptualisation of tourism 'as an experience' (Pearce 2005; Ryan 1997a; Uriely 2005) is one which has been underway since the 1960s and has since that time received much attention. Exploration of at least some of the main conceptualisations and their evolution (through modernist to postmodernist 'modes of analysis') is important to the development of an account of WWOOFing as a *tourism-related phenomenon*.

It was indicated that some are motivated to undertake tourism because it provides a means of experiencing the ordinary lives of others, particularly in contrast to their own. Thinking of tourism experiences in relation to the 'everyday' or 'ordinary' and the

'extraordinary' or unfamiliar has been a recurring theme: the activity and focus of 'tourism' is considered to stand in contrast to the everyday reality of people who, when they travel and thus transcend their everyday lives, enter the realm of tourism. Tourism is therefore often thought to be bound up with and focused upon experiencing (even consuming) the details of the lives of others, which can be extraordinary and different to/for the tourist²¹. This forces us to consider that 'hosts' and their places are an essential part of a tourism experience as well (Ryan 1997a; Wearing 1998a) and that their role in a tourism experience is not merely as provider and maintainer of context for that experience. Interactions between tourist and host shape the experience in crucial ways for both parties, returning focus then to the important binary of 'self' and 'other' at the heart of much theorising in order to appreciate the totality of a tourism (or any social) experience.

Before dwelling on *what* is experienced by tourists, there is need to consider first the question of *how* tourism is experienced.

Consumption of Experiences

According to Urry, tourism is about:

consuming goods and services which are in some sense unnecessary... consumed because they supposedly generate pleasurable experiences which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life (2002, p1).

Both Urry and Wearing (2001) explore Campbell's argument (following Weber), that the 'spirit' of modern consumerism rests upon an attitude of 'restless desire' and discontent, producing consumption as an end in itself. Campbell theorises that Romanticism as a cultural movement - advocating self-expression and fulfilment - is the most likely 'source' of an ethic which legitimates such a spirit of consumerism.²² The 'romantic ethic' of the enlightenment provided a contradictory and compensatory ethic to the self-disciplinary future orientation of the Protestant work ethic, and was necessary for the ideology of perpetual consumption. The two contradictory ethics have been socially accommodated by separating out the sphere of leisure, with its emphasis

²¹ But there is also commonly a "lingering want for the familiar" bound up with the search for the new (Ryan 1997a).

²² In this we are reminded again of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the fact that the elite are the social stratum most likely to be in a position to graduate from basic to self-actualization needs.

on self-expression and fulfilment, from the sphere of work, with its self-denying disciplinary ethic.

Urry (2001) focuses on Campbell's general concern with anticipation as the key to modern consumerism. As opposed to being built upon satisfaction from product selection, purchase and use, consumerism is more about associated anticipatory imaginative pleasure seeking. Materialism is founded on experiencing 'in reality' the pleasurable dramas already experienced in the imagination and as reality rarely provides the imagined pleasures:

[E]ach purchase leads to disillusionment and to the longing for ever-new products. There is a dialectic of novelty and insatiability at the heart of contemporary consumerism.

Franklin (2003a; 2001) observes that modernism itself, which generates tourism as a primary form of consumption and which creates many objects of tourist interest, is built upon constant change. In this view, novelty and tourism and consumption are deeply enmeshed. Urry notes Campbell's idea of imaginative hedonism as very useful to thinking about consumption in tourism, but argues for a powerful role played by advertising and various other signs in generating the relevant day-dreams.

The change to increasingly consumer driven, individuated, Post-Fordist consumption discussed above (Lash and Urry 1994; Meethan 2001) underpins some tourism analyses describing more flexible, less standardised "new tourism" (Poon 1989) forms (O'Dell and Billing 2005). It is clear that WWOOFing, being a highly flexible, customisable and unique experience, can be partly understood in these terms, but again, it is unclear what it is that might be consumed by WWOOFers. Experiences, and more recently, 'sensations' (Wymer, Self et al. 2010), may be considered as consumable in general terms, but in the data collected for this research and in the available literature, there is no evidence that WWOOFers are in a position to simply consume, given that the experience and outcomes from it are dependent upon an exchange in which neither party benefits (for any length of time) from non-reciprocity (Maycock 2008; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; Nimmo 2001a; Nimmo 2001b; WWOOF Australia 2008; WWOOF Australia 2009).

The Tourist Gaze

The way in which tourism experiences are consumed is important and is taken up by Urry (2002), using a Foucauldian perspective to group a wide variety of objects under

'the tourist gaze', including monuments, people, cultures and natural landscapes, essences of 'typical' scenery or action, representations of people (in museums), familiar objects in different contexts, acting in familiar ways in different contexts and markers or signifiers of 'fame'. These can be gazed upon collectively in groups, or romantically in solitude, but in all cases, there is for Urry an assumed degree of *difference* in the object of the gaze that makes it appear as a 'commodity of difference', to be visually consumed. Urry suggested that everyday life and concerns can be understood by considering the typical objects of the tourist gaze as a contrast to the everyday/mundane and that tourist behaviour provides a framework for understanding changes in society more generally.

In this view, it is tempting to consider that WWOOF hosts and their properties represent intriguing and sociologically telling objects of the gaze of specific tourists, but it is worth recalling that Nimmo (2001a; 2001b) found it difficult to accept that WWOOFers are in a position to gaze at/upon their hosts, concluding that WWOOFing represents a significant challenge to the utility of this theoretical construct in this context. Also the WWOOFers interviewed by Nimmo differentiated themselves from regular tourists/mainstream backpackers in part, along these conceptual lines. That is, that tourists are those travellers that 'only' look at things and do not go deeper, or *engage* more bodily and actively in activities (such as WWOOFing and more conventional adventure tourism forms). This critique of the gaze as the primary mode of experiencing has led to a focus among many scholars away from the visual and towards tourism as an embodied experience involving many senses and/or the whole self (Crouch 2007; Franklin 2001; 2003a). This embodied 'turn' also feeds back into discussions of new and postmodern tourism raised above and below, in which boundaries between tourism and everyday life have been said to have blurred.

Experiencing Front and Back Stage Regions

An important concept relevant to tourism as an experience of 'authentic' difference, is the idea of 'front' and 'back' stages or regions of tourism (Goffman 1974). The front stage is the designated meeting place of hosts, guests, customers and service people within a tourist interaction, while the 'back' is the place where members of the community reside and return between 'performances' to relax and prepare for the next staged experience provided for tourist consumption. Tourists do occasionally enter the back stage deliberately or otherwise, and increasingly the idea of penetrating to the back regions to experience the 'real' culture or sights is specifically used in advertising

tourist destinations. The growth of cultural tourism and nature based tourism is perhaps further evidence of this trend towards seeking to experience the backstage.

This in turn brings the discussion back to the question of what is authentic, and MacCannell's use of the term 'staged authenticity' to describe the performed and bracketed presentation of 'real life' of 'typical' local people in a given tourism destination. The question of the acceptance of this as real or 'close enough' to the real to satisfy, is ultimately personal, and is at the heart of ongoing theoretical interest. It also connects the discussion back into the above concern with escape from commodity relations. That is, the quest to go into the back regions by the dissatisfied or curious in pursuit of the authentic is also much discussed and forms a dilemma for tourists, hosts (or communities) and tourism operators. The desire to see a place before tourists arrive creates its own dynamic flow of people, commonly armed with the same directions in the form of popular guidebooks, promising a chance to experience 'the real thing', at least until more tourists arrive in such significant numbers as to 'spoil' the authenticity of the 'destination' (Hong 1985; Pryor 1997).²³

Misanthropy directed at other tourists by tourists (sometimes declaring themselves 'travellers') is common (Bennett 2007; Friend 2005; Riley 1988; Urry 2002; Welk 2004) and possibly relevant to the study of WWOOFing (Nimmo 2001b). But the penetration of WWOOFers to the back stage to engage with ordinary people in their homes has clear and significant implications for our consideration of WWOOFing as tourism and particularly the idea of constructed 'tourist space'. Some WWOOFers describe experiences with hosts as like being part of the host's family, with Nimmo (2001a) usefully picturing WWOOF as providing a "gateway" to the everyday lives of real people. It is therefore appropriate to consider this backstage space of ordinary people's homes in the context of broader ideas of tourist space.

Tourist Space

Some attention has been given to the issue of space as an analytical tool that allows a mapping of tourism in the context of broader social activity (Lash and Urry 1994; Lefebvre 1991). For example, Meethan (2001) describes the development of tourism spaces as part of a general process of modernisation/differentiation of functions in

²³ Frow (1997) helps to consider this contradictory situation when he notes that the 'Other' found in modernity, which is key to the authentic tourist experience, is defined by the absence of design or of calculated self-interest or self awareness. It must therefore exist outside of the commodity relations 'circuit' and exchange value, but it is of course, *generally* only available through this circuit, which is "one form of the basic contradictions of the tourist experience" (McRae 2003).

space and time, pointing to a spatial restructuring underway in advanced capitalism, concentrating on the economic factors underpinning this restructure. He aims to conceptualise the production and consumption of space as a continuous and dynamic process of interaction and change at the macro and micro levels, without reducing one to the other. Using Lefebvre's idea of a 'symbolic economy of space', Meethan aims to conceptualise space without seeing it as an "empty container" that serves as a mere venue for social activities, nor as a mere philosophical abstraction.²⁴ In this view, the production of tourist space involves the material environment and the socio-economic circumstances which give rise to its form, as well as encapsulating symbolic orders of meaning for both hosts and guests. This allows for the:

symbolic and imaginary nature of spatial formations, the gazes of tourism, and the forms of knowledge they generate and indeed the localised forms of knowledge that permeate daily life, to be taken into account without separating them off from broader issues concerning the political economy, and the management and control of space (Meethan 2001).

McRae (2003) suggests that tourist space is defined by consumption, yet the thing to be consumed must remain sufficiently distant. Tourists engaging with hosts on the same terms would transcend (and possibly destroy) the vital relationship to otherness established in/by these spaces. She suggests that while tourists can transcend spaces, hosts must remain "locked and bounded by their surroundings" (McRae 2003) if they are to be 'successful' objects of touristic consumption in which objective authenticity plays some role. McRae wants to provide access to tourist narratives that are not recognised in contemporary tourism studies, with particular concern [following Said (2000)] to look at the experience of yearning and exile of other types of mobile people (such as refugees). McRae tries to use ideas of space to destabilise unquestioned theories of tourists and hosts, saying that:

a theory of exile is needed to formulate a conception of space that can enable the tourist and host to meet and negotiate with each other outside of the limiting tourist dialogue currently defining the field" (McRae 2003, p250).

²⁴ A three-fold distinction is made between *spatial practices*, which are the fundamental economic determinants of the formal uses of space (such as resort or factory); *representations of space* by a range of interests/stakeholders in attempts to control, direct or mediate the dominant form of spatial practice, as well as being where narratives of space are produced e.g. in tourist brochures; and *representational space*, which is the "more or less coherent systems of non verbal symbols and signs" that are partly imagined and which can be important in the generation of local identity, values and meanings, which in turn are "the raw materials that are commodified to produce tourist space" (Lefebvre, quoted in Meethan 2001, p37).

This is an important insight and indeed, preliminary analysis of the relationship between WWOOFers and hosts and the WWOOFing space itself underscores the need for such an alternative way to approach host-tourist relationships.

In this regard, Wearing and Wearing (1996; 2001) called for a move beyond a masculinized conception of the tourist experience built around a dominant male gaze upon (or objectification of), and/or penetration of, the host space. They argued for adoption of an interactionist based and feminised analysis of tourism space, which sees it not as the contained objects of tourist gazes and their authenticity, but as an interactive space in which tourist and host become mutual agents of the mutual experience that in turn is what impacts on the tourist's (and host's) sense of self. Focus upon social interaction within the tourist space can move conceptualisations of tourism as a time and space bound activity, towards "an open-ended process in which the self may be enhanced" (Wearing and Wearing 1996, p230). This kind of focus, which appears to be of much relevance in conceptualising WWOOFing, has been further developed by Wearing, drawing on Bhabha and others in his focus on volunteer tourists (That work is revisited below in terms of *outcomes* of tourism experiences).

The Fusing of Tourism and Everyday Life

The very ubiquity of tourism has perhaps made it such that tourism and the everyday have begun to fuse. The objects of tourist interest may be extraordinary or mundane, depending on perspective, and boundaries between them dissolve under a postmodern view. For McCabe (2002), touristic experiences "infuse the mundane and vice versa" and tourism is no longer conceivable as a departure from routines/practices of the everyday life. Tourism is now an established part of culture and consumption, not a point of contrast to them (Franklin 2003a; Munt 1994). Tourism is pervasive in postmodern society and intrinsic to the everyday life of people. "Tourist activity reflects a microcosm of everyday life seen through a prism, concentrated, magnified and fused back into the home setting", via mementos collected and put on display in the home as testament to the tourist experiences collected (McCabe 2002).

Fieffer's (1985) idea of the 'post-tourist' was recast by Urry (2002) in speculating that tourism may disappear as a category of life as we all become tourists or the object of

someone else's tourist gaze²⁵. Global culture incorporates multiple gazes which leads towards the end of tourism in the more general 'economy of signs'. Anywhere can become a niche location and "within the swirling contours of the emergent global order", there are countless mobilities and *home* and *away* are blurred (Urry 2002).²⁶

Tourism is thus changing and its relationship to the everyday of others' lives is altering as processes of globalisation affect those everyday lives. However, there are significant numbers of places on the planet that are yet to become or perhaps may never become touristic despite their potential under this view. The views of the impoverished majority of the planet are not commonly articulated in discussions of the fusion of the everyday and tourism through processes of globalisation and modernisation. Postmodernity and the 'touristic stance' to the world held to be widely adopted (Franklin 2003a) has not arrived uniformly across the world, with Brown (2000) describing it as a "patchy" phenomenon. Some have pointed out that it is one thing to refer to the development of a new aesthetic or form of cultural production and consumption and another to accept that there has been an epochal and global shift in consciousness in the form of postmodernism (Meethan 2001; Uriely 2005).²⁷

A different instance of the fusion of the everyday and tourism can be seen in the example of 'reality tours', which are experiential tours to impoverished places, intended to educate people/tourists about how they contribute to global problems and to facilitate dialogue and understanding of ways in which they can contribute to 'positive change'.²⁸ WWOOFing is arguably for many also an example of the fusing of the everyday with tourism, since it is into the very real back regions of ordinary families or communities

²⁵ The 'post tourist' knows they are a tourist and that tourism is a series of games, with no single authentic tourist experience. They know about queues, the pop culture value of the tourist brochure, the contrived nature of the local authentic entertainments, that the tourism industry makes destinations survive and they are realistic about being outsiders and know that they cannot escape that condition. They are self-conscious, 'cool' and role distanced (Urry 2002).

²⁶ Urry later described "the implosion of tourism into a wide range of other systems, of shopping, entertainment, migration, sport, leisure, friendship, business, conferences, sex, family life and so on. There is the end of 'tourism' per se" (Urry 2008).

²⁷ Indeed, we should perhaps be wary of the inherent conservatism involved in an uncritical acceptance of the view that there is an inevitability of such a global shift, in the same way that we might resist reinforcing the hegemonic effect of viewing the global spread of American style democracy and neo-classical economic paradigms of market-oriented capitalism as inevitable (Gibson-Graham 2008; Jackson 2003; McVey 1998).

²⁸ *Reality Tours* are not aimed at providing immediate solutions to the world's most intractable problems and neither it is claimed are they a "brand of voyeurism". But these tours (based in the US) aim to allow people to examine first hand the reality of the impacts of US foreign policy in particular, through meeting those affected by them in distant places. The tours are described as 'delegations' through which meaningful and empowering relationships with people from other countries are established (Global Exchange 2005).

that WWOOFers go, experiencing private stresses and sometimes “grimmer realities” of daily life (Nimmo 2001a). In this light, the concept of ‘fusion’ is useful to a consideration of WWOOFing in providing a ‘tourism’ experience which is “not separate from everyday life, but intrinsic to it” (McCabe 2002, p73), offering possible insight into its nature and growing popularity.

To conclude this brief exploration of tourism as an experience, it is worth noting Uriely’s (2005) observation that there have been four key developments in this area over time:

1. There has been a turn towards acknowledging de-differentiation of everyday life and touristic experiences;
2. There has been a shift away from generalizing and towards pluralizing conceptualisations (including that of hosts);
3. There has been a shift in focus toward more (inter)subjective, negotiated meanings of experiences; and,
4. There has been an increase in relative or complementary, rather than contradictory/decisive statements in the field.

These changes Uriely maps onto “the so-called “postmodernist” theorizing in the social sciences” (p199).

5.3 Outcomes of Tourism Experiences

Many possible outcomes can result from tourism experiences, ranging from increased relaxation and sense of well-being, changed knowledge or understanding of other cultures and geographies, altered motivation to travel (more or less), or to change one’s life in certain other ways. Detailed consideration of outcomes for WWOOFing tourists are considered later: from the satisfaction of ‘lower level’ motivations through ‘higher’ order concerns with self-awareness, self-development and fulfilment (Pearce 1993).

Direct experience has showed that the prospects for WWOOFers to create personal networks and significant relationships with hosts are fundamentally different to most tourist-host relations, due partly to the interpersonal interaction at the heart of the WWOOFing experience. Such outcomes are important, however, in the search for a conceptual basis for understanding WWOOFing based in the existing tourism studies literature, there is need to consider a transcendence of the self in and through experiencing ‘others’ encountered through tourism, as explored by Wearing (Wearing

2002; Wearing and Wearing 2001), since this may also be what is behind key outcomes of the WWOOFing experience.

Much tourism theory and practice has been concerned with the idea of the tourist as someone gazing upon an object of difference and consuming it in order to satisfy their individual, self-oriented desire. The tourist industry itself often encourages tourists to be 'voyeurs', glimpsing aspects of other cultures, conforming to tourist brochure/guide book images, while tourism destinations "become places for viewing the 'other' rather than as spaces for interaction with them" (Wearing 1998a). In this passive type of experience, hosts provide and contextualise experiences in lieu of monetary transactions. However this can be seen to be changing towards greater interactivity (Tourism Australia 2006). As tourists begin to interact more with host people and places, either through curiosity or via forms of tourism that specifically lead them away from the 'tourist bubble', there can be (but is not necessarily) a closing of the gap between 'self' and 'other'.

The outcome of this merging depends on how such interaction is produced and managed, which is the subject of some debate. Some might prefer designated 'front regions' for tourist–host interaction, allowing 'back regions' to remain tourist-free for ongoing private practice of traditional modes of living. In the case of natural areas, the creation of 'sacrificed areas' for visitation allows for some interactivity between the tourist 'self' and the natural 'other', while maintaining the natural integrity of a larger preservation area by exclusion. But since the "desire to see new places and enter the closed-off spaces of 'back regions' of everyday life is unlikely to diminish" (Rojek and Urry 1997, p19), the adequacy of separated sacrificed areas as a preventative measure in the 'preservation' of cultures or environments is an uphill battle. Regardless of whether nature and culture change or evolve in spite of tourism (Brown 2000; Franklin 2003a; Meethan 2001), new tourism 'frontiers' are constantly being explored (Coleman and Crang 2002; Pryor 1997) and altered through micro and macro entrepreneurial transformations (de Kadt 1992), perhaps becoming economically enriched, or a beaten track or 'tourist ghetto' (Butler 1990; Friend 2005; Frow 1997; Hong 1985; Johnston 1993; McLaren 1998). However, the optimistic view of this relentless pursuit of back regions, according to Rojek and Urry (1997), is that it may affect the character of civil society and "demystify our notions of 'the other'" to reveal "the strengths and limitations of our domain-cultural assumptions and bonds of association".

MacCannell (1976) had earlier attempted to explore the idea that tourism could widen culturally constructed identities and identified the need for a sociology of interaction. He saw opportunity within the logic of tourism to form hybrid cultures through the movement of people to and from the western world, requiring inventiveness in creating subjectivities which resist cultural determinism. His 'Neo-Nomads' of tourism in the postmodern era, cross cultural boundaries as welcome(d), "imaginative travellers" who benefit from displaced self-understanding and the freedom to go beyond the limits that frontiers present. Cohen argued also, that some tourists are capable of penetrating beyond the staged 'tourist space' to observe 'reality', but that this "demands an effort and application, and a degree of sophistication which most tourists do not possess" (1979, p195).

Wearing (1998a; 2001; 2002) noted in valuing this ideal, that there is need to be attentive to power differentials between tourists and hosts (and among members of the host community (Hall 2003; Timothy and Tosun 2003)) and to avoid the imposition of ideas/values on host cultures or reconfirming pre-existent tourist rigidities (Reisinger and Turner 2003) that would devalue or diminish "the self of the host person" (Wearing 2002, quoting Craib (1998)). With this in mind, Wearing (1996; 2002) suggests there is much to gain by considering more closely the individual subjective experience and the interactive role of *the tourist*, *the site* and *the host* in creating a mutually shared tourism experience and space. He calls for recognition of the micro-social, the interrelationships between time, the 'site' and the activities engaged in, not to remove it from a sociological context, but to posit the centrality of experience for individuals and the elements required to sustain that experience (Wearing 2002, p238).

Such a focus has been developed by Wearing specifically in relation to volunteer tourism, using an 'interactionist' approach which emphasises the value of understanding how tourist space is experienced by all participants, including 'hosts'.²⁹

²⁹ The idea of 'destinations' and 'hosts' reveals the tourist centred (self-other) focus of much of the literature of tourism studies. People not directly involved in tourism living at these 'destinations' are effectively excluded by the use of this term and are part of the background 'milieu' (or 'atmosphere' (Leiper 2004)) in which the main activities and gazes of tourists occur (Scheyvens 2003). People in these destination communities are not always in accord with their classification as the objects of tourist interest and their experiences of tourism are often considered by tourism advocates to be secondary if at all, after consideration of their apparently generally limited options for economic development alternatives (Vanhove 1997). Notably, coverage of the Australian commemoration of the anniversary of the first Bali attacks on SBS television in October 2005 included the song "My Island Home", by Aboriginal singer Christine Anu, which has arguably become an alternative Australian national 'anthem' in its own right. This was poignant given that there had been recent media discussion about the issue of Australians acting as if they 'owned' Bali.

Being highly interactive with local communities, Wearing considers the volunteer tourist experience to be more intense than ordinary tourist 'brushes with difference', resulting in a more developed dialogue with other cultures' views of the world. Hence the experience of the volunteer tourist, working with or for the host community, is directly connected to and shaped by the experience of their interaction with the hosts and the landscape (space) that houses and informs that experience. Importantly, evidence suggests that the experience of some volunteer tourists is that the host 'other' is, or becomes, part of the 'self', through interactive processes. These 'other' elements are not merely gazed upon by a tourist self, but recognition of the interconnectedness between them together, transforms the view of the 'self *and* the other' into the 'self *is part of* the other' and the 'other *is part of* the self'.³⁰ The idea of the 'other' to the tourist, particularly in developing country contexts, itself is a reinforcement of colonialist dominance when seen through the frame of post-colonial theory, such as that of Bhabha. Wearing holds that most sociological theorising about tourism has an "excessive focus on the self" which prioritises the self over the other. However, when the *other* assumes as much importance as the *self*, this de-centring of self allows us to push views of tourism beyond the boundaries of self-improvement, self-enhancement etc (Wearing 2002). He argues this does not mean elimination of the idea of self in travel, but it does allow for an extension of the way that travel and self are conceptualised, providing a more "inclusive role for specialist areas such as volunteer tourism" (Wearing 2002). This in turn allows for a de-commodification of views of tourism, which offers a potential footing for the conceptualisation of WWOOFing.

6 A BASIS FOR CONCEPTUALISING WWOOFING?

WWOOFing operates outside of the commodified relations of most tourism, yet is strongly connected to tourism and tourists, providing a gateway for tourists to the 'ordinary' (yet sometimes 'familiar' or familial), 'other' and real people that constitute its hosts. A significant degree of power is retained with these hosts who receive and direct such tourists to work with them on a variety of projects (Nimmo 2001a). Where WWOOFers and hosts interact in the ordinary homes of hosts, it seems that either a unique mode of tourism is in operation that defies existing theoretical constructs

³⁰ Bordessa (1993) argued that "a revision in the definition of what it means to be a human being reinforces the general collapse of the world into a unitary whole, within which everything is ultimately connected to everything else... Without denying individuality, we can foreground our melding into the wholeness of the world whose fate thereby becomes part of our own destiny."

devised to account for the variety of tourism forms, or perhaps that WWOOFing is something other than a form of tourism.

Yet most of the limited work on WWOOFing regards it as somehow a form of tourism or closely tied to tourism, generating various residual questions. Nimmo for example, citing Wearing (as above), frames WWOOF as a 'unique tourism experience provider', offering backpackers in particular, decommodified eco-tourism experiences. Yet this framing of WWOOFers as backpackers immersed in host cultures not only overlooks host perspectives on the subject (and limits the host's ability to evolve or be changed by their experiences), but revolves around the concept of *the tourist* in explaining the actions of people WWOOFing. This analytical starting point makes it difficult but also tempting, to raise the *Devil's Advocate* possibility that WWOOFers might be something less specific than 'tourists', namely, people. In New Zealand, it is a pre-requisite that intending WWOOFers first obtain a working visa and there are some who have argued that although many WWOOFers are part of the tourism market, they sometimes stay with hosts for long periods of time and "almost become part of the family" and therefore "are not holiday makers on the organic farms - they are workers and expected to earn their keep" (Doherty 1997).

Though the vast majority of WWOOFers are indeed (also) international tourists, it is well established that there is no uniformly accepted definition of the term 'tourist' (Franklin 2003a; Leiper 2004; McCabe 2009) and while some workable definition can be adopted for particular purposes, not all WWOOFers will conform to the selected criteria, given their great diversity. Further, as McCabe (2009) suggests, we can and should distinguish between the etic concept of 'the tourist' (or the backpacker, etc) as devised for certain statistical and observational purposes, and that which is used in more everyday parlance and which has certain socio-cultural definitional baggage, or ideological (and often pejorative) weight. For this reason, there is need to also refer to individuals involved in an activity to determine their (emic) perspective regarding their activities (however sometimes faulty they may seem to the outside observer). While Nimmo's work does this in the sense that it aims to build upon constructs generated by WWOOFers, these WWOOFers were methodologically and analytically always regarded as backpacking tourists.

Despite its popularity among 'tourists/backpackers', there also seems to be no *a priori* reason to characterise WWOOFing as a primarily 'touristic' activity, since it also involves hosts who show no sign of seeking to be involved in tourism. It should be

allowed that some WWOOFer-host interactions could be construed as 'touristic', in the sense that some WWOOFers might have a certain "attitude to the world or a way of seeing the world" (Franklin 2003a) which involves touristic consumption on their part (Franklin 2003a; Meethan 2001; Urry 2002; Wang 2002). Indeed, tellingly, some hosts do state that some 'misguided', 'lazy' or sometimes 'unwelcome' WWOOFers resemble tourists attempting to engage in such practices. Anecdotal evidence from WWOOF Australia and empirical evidence discussed later all suggest that hosts are not interested in being the object of touristic consumption, that they have the power to ensure that this is not the case, and that the structure of the WWOOFer-host relationship does not provide for such consumptive tourist-host relations (Chapter 7).

If the dynamic social interactions that occur and which create the experience in its whole are to be grasped, there is need to strive for a "more symmetrical approach which recognizes the two way interaction between tourist and host and includes the subjective experiences of both" (Wearing 1998a).³¹ Thus if the host perspective was also incorporated in constructing a conceptual starting point, WWOOFers might be initially framed as 'people who WWOOF', some of whom were and who will again become 'tourists'.

With this wider view of WWOOFers in which they are first and foremost, *people* engaged in a range of human-human and human-environment interactive exchanges in different spatial and temporal dimensions, research becomes a matter of exploring with both parties, the phenomenon of WWOOFing, *including* its relationship with tourism. In bracketing off 'WWOOFer' as a certain (usually temporary) *role*, there is a hint that different rules apply to the roles of WWOOFer and tourist. Indeed, WWOOF organisations do urge WWOOFers to be aware of the existence of such 'rules' or guidelines that warn of the need for behaviour different from that of the tourist (WWOOF Australia 2009). This allows for a consideration of the role of 'WWOOFer' to be conducted in parallel and perhaps weighted equally with the role of 'tourist'. It has the heuristic value of considering the phenomenon of WWOOFing in conjunction with, rather than only in the context of, or as a subset of the phenomenon of tourism. Despite clear indications that there are many low budget, international long term tourists

³¹ Bennett (2008) also warns about a disproportionate focus on the *tourist experience* in the backpacker literature, which for researchers like Wearing - working from a symbolic interactionist perspective - it is crucial to overcome through close attention to the tourist and host 'selves' interactively engaged in the process of meaning (and experience) making (Lyons and Wearing 2008; Wearing and Wearing 1996; Wearing and Wearing 2002; Wearing 1998a; Wearing, McDonald et al. 2005; Wearing and Neil 2000; Wearing and Wearing 2001).

(backpackers) using WWOOF as a mechanism (among a growing range of others) in their travels, this is justified given historical origins and aims of WWOOFing and as suggested, the diversity of WWOOFers and their particular perspectives. It liberates analytical thinking from constraints associated with allegiance to an ambiguous connection between the category 'WWOOFer' and the difficult category of 'tourist'. Rather than *assume* that WWOOFing represents the further differentiation of tourism types, this approach offers the provocative idea explored later, that there can be a mutual exclusivity at play: that a person might shed (or bracket off) the role of *backpacker* for example, in becoming a *WWOOFer* - a person in a different sort of role. We can note here that the category of 'tourist' has been usefully conceptualised by some as a role to be performed (Crouch 2007; Edensor 2001) and/or to be distanced from (McCabe 2009; Welk 2004).

Inspired partly by Hughes (1995), this suggested focus on *roles* played by *people*, including the hosts, allows for some *de novo* thinking about what WWOOFing is about, which is crucial for the grounded theorist. It also allows for an assessment of the conjecture that people, rightly or wrongly, for better or worse, and for a variety of reasons, go WWOOFing to avoid being, or being with, 'tourists'. That is, perhaps through WWOOFing, people can and do switch travel roles, or as noted by Jacobsen (cited in McCabe 2009 and following Goffman), in seeking to preserve their sense of identity and individuality, tourists may enact a degree of 'role distance' in taking an anti-tourist stance. A strong underpinning for this is the evidence that WWOOFers commonly share the desire to be with and to get to know their hosts and their cultures (Nimmo 2001a; Nimmo 2001b), effectively and affordably achieved through WWOOFing. Indeed, getting to know the 'real people' and 'real places', away from the 'beaten track' of tourism, is the 'marketing' pitch of WWOOF organisations globally and is a theme for many writers on tourism.³² WWOOFing, and those that do it, are clearly connected to these concerns, regardless of what we might think of an anti-tourist role distancing stance (Boorstin 1987; McCabe 2009; Welk 2004; Wheeler 1993).

In any case, Wearing's insights (above) concerning the relationship of the self to the 'other' and in proposing conceptualisation of the tourist space as an interactive

³² MacCannell (2001, p382) recommends we consider what is lost from a *travel* experience when the "itinerary has been worked out in advance". Compared to *tourism*, travel "implies selecting one's own route" and local transport for example and finding places to stay that are "not already set up in advance".

'chora',³³ allow for a different view of people interacting as tourists and hosts or as tourists and places/spaces. These are central to an appropriate consideration of WWOOFing experiences, which appear to devalue the cultural hegemony generally associated with tourist–host relations, and provide the possibility of creating (tourist or perhaps non-tourist) spaces that can generate *mutually* beneficial exchanges to the benefit of all the selves involved. It has certainly been promoted in these terms, and further empirical exploration of the phenomenon will help to illuminate such important considerations.

7 CONCLUSION

WWOOF is neither the organic networking tool it began as in the 1970s, nor is it solely a contemporary travel mechanism for budget minded long term travellers. Without further research there can only be continued speculation about what the WWOOFing phenomenon *really* is or represents: a form of tourism, an adjunct to tourism, an alternative to tourism, or a form of post-tourism...?

In the search for a generalised explanation or meaning, perhaps WWOOFing should be considered a flexible mechanism, unconstrained by particular definitions, but which is constantly shaped and reshaped to individual users' needs, including those of tourists. Perhaps it represents a hybrid activity, exemplifying postmodernist/post-Fordist de-differentiation between various human spheres, including tourism (Munt 1994; Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003; Urry 2002). As we will see, WWOOFing allows for the achievement of personalised cultural experiences independent of the constraints and deficiencies of industrialised travel itineraries. Indeed, the flexibility of WWOOFing combined with increased global consciousness about our *connectedness* may be generating some of the growth in WWOOFing.³⁴

³³ The idea of the 'chora' is used following its use by Grosz (1995) in reconceptualising public space. The chora is a reference to Plato's 'space between being and becoming' or the 'space in which place is made possible', suggesting "a space to be occupied and given meaning by the people who made use of the space" (Wearing and Wearing 1996). Thus "'Chorasters' would be tourists who bring meaning to the chora from their own position in their own culture and who creatively incorporate into their sense of self the experiences of interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds in the tourist space... It is the experience that is the reality" (Wearing and Wearing 1996, p235).

³⁴ The insight may be growing that the 'other' is the 'self', or that there is a connectedness between local and global, me and you, or me and nature, which is bound up and expressed as part of the 'new tourism'. As Bordessa (1993) observed, the tourist perceives the self as a seeker of experience and depends on external stimuli for that experience of that externality. Not only has and will a greater awareness of environmental issues emerge, but a rejection of the "turning a blind eye to the moral dimensions of environmental realities" inherent in modernist thinking.

This growth is perhaps symbolic of the convergence of tourism with broader social and economic changes or stances such as those found in increasing consumer support for more sustainable food production in the form of 'organics', and a proliferation of experiments in alternative ('neo' or 'post'-capitalist) economies (Botsman and Rogers 2010; Gibson-Graham 2008). WWOOFing has not to date been specifically considered in this light, but hints made in existing literature raise the possibility that as well as being backpackers, WWOOFers are *people* seeking to escape not only the ecological, social, cultural and psychological effects of industrialised tourism, but for some, the hegemony of the commodified world *as a whole* (Hughes and Stitt 2008).

Recurrent interest in the uptake of more simple, less commercial lifestyles, more closely connected to earth - as seen also in the growing popularity of the food localisation movement – suggests stronger recognition of the impossibility of achieving both perpetual economic expansion and ecological sustainability in an economic system derived from finite natural resources and subject to the effects anthropogenic pollution. In the context of a recent global economic downturn, there has also been a noted increase in food insecurity in the developed world and a localisation of food production systems via that pathway (Connor, Mandell et al. 2008). As discussed in Chapter 2, WWOOFing may therefore be a window for some people into the some of the practical aspects of more sustainable living and production as being experimented with by many WWOOF hosts. By going 'below the surface' (Nimmo 2001a) or 'beyond' tourism and gaining immersed experiential learning, WWOOFing may be reinvigorating the educative role of travel.

Less grandly, we may be witnessing the evolution of a further segment of special interest tourism that will only ever be suited to limited people. But equally, in the sense that tourism can be a useful metaphor of the social world, WWOOFing may demonstrate change in the way people are choosing what they do with their available leisure time.³⁵ With Stebbins' idea of serious leisure, Wearing finds his volunteer tourist research subjects perceive themselves as involved in a form of 'good citizenship', doing community work, in contrast to the more self centred 'tourist' of mass tourism. Of

³⁵ Critics of so-called *moral tourism* have expressed their dislike for the tone that has crept into what is supposed to be fun and restorative (Butcher 2005) and what such critics would make of WWOOFing is an interesting question. However, if in the WWOOFing exchange, as Wearing suggests it is for volunteer tourists, the *other* can be perceived as the *self*, the pejorative term 'moral' tourism is misplaced, in contrast with 'ethical' tourism (MacDonald 2006; Novelli 2005; Trainor 2008), since ethical action does not stem from a moralising directive, but from an extended form of enlightened self-interest (de Young 2000) in which one acts in one's own interest: what is better for the *other* is also ultimately also better for the *self*.

course, it is ultimately for hosts to judge the good of any tourists' efforts, and while WWOOF promotes the value of the work that WWOOFers do, this aspect has not yet been researched.

More pragmatically there are a range of self-serving benefits in WWOOFing while travelling: saving money, the extension of travel time and of working visas, acquiring cultural and social capital through adventurous experiences removed from the beaten track of tourism, perhaps achieving Boorstin's (1987) much critiqued 'traveller not tourist' distinction.

Many of these speculations may be simultaneously true or helpful. As a growing phenomenon still little understood, it is timely to broaden and deepen the understanding of WWOOFing and consider what it tells us about contemporary tourism and the limits of tourism theory. These early chapters have sketched diverse perspectives on the subject and held it against existing theoretical frameworks, but the aim now is to work from the ground up, as a researcher that has WWOOFed and hosted, surveyed and interviewed people involved in the contemporary WWOOFing scene, to build an account of what WWOOFing is currently about. This account addresses the interests and perspectives of both sides of the exchange in Australia, the nation with the largest WWOOFing program, but about which very little has been specifically written. In doing so, it is hoped that empirical and theoretical insights are generated that scholars in the field of tourism studies and related disciplines will find of interest.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

1 INTRODUCTION

The research undertaken in this study has been approached with an awareness of a range of possible standpoints regarding the generation of knowledge in general. The first of these is that knowledge itself is a construction of some sort and that 'truth', regardless of the position taken on a continuum between hard positivism and extreme relativism, is at best, tentative. As noted by Lincoln and Guba (in Cupchik 2001), in knowledge generation there is no absolute criteria for "judging either 'reality' or 'validity'" (p.167). The guiding principle therefore informing the research process has been that:

Truth is a matter of the best-informed and most sophisticated construction on which there is consensus at a given time (Schwandt 1994).

The research underpinning this study can thus be characterised as a process that led to an interpretive construction. Without a clear predetermined plan to be followed, there was rarely a clear vision of the shape and character of the final construction, until completion. Flexibility and initiative was used along the way and the construction presented has been built with a mixture of methods. None of this is considered to indicate the existence of an inherent methodological weakness due to lack of advance planning, but rather constitutes a statement testifying to the practicality of doing some types of social research. All constructions can only be built within available resources of time, money and enthusiasm. In addition, all (knowledge) constructions eventually date and are either renovated or replaced by entirely new paradigms (Kuhn 1962).

While the knowledge-construction presented here is likely to be superseded, it is obviously hoped that it might serve a useful purpose for some period, which demands that the construction presented has been built upon appropriately sturdy foundations and therefore that the methods used and the conclusions drawn can be seen by most, to 'align'. This in turn requires that appropriate 'data' have been collected, represented and analysed in relation to each other in a reliable and valid manner, to generate the 'consensus' referred to above.

The key assumption underpinning this research and the methods used is that one can and should consider a range of possible views about the nature of reality and how it is

(or is not) possible to know that reality. While no fixed position is adopted by this researcher, it is recognized that the location of a researcher on an ontological spectrum determines the possible options or techniques for knowing and representing 'reality'. This is a crucial issue for the design of any form of research, but particularly in the case of social research where it has long been recognised that reality is itself a social construction (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and the corollary, that there are multiple realities corresponding to multiple existences.

This chapter begins with consideration of personal experiences that led to an interest in the subject. The intention is to reflexively signal early on the role of researcher involvement in determining the intended and the actual research pathway taken. While stating up front the importance of researcher interests, this research is also the product of an attempt to achieve some measure of 'objectivity' where appropriate, noting both its importance and its limitations. But the notion of objectivity preferred here is that it is something which arises from the conscious attempt to free oneself from prejudice (discussed further below, following Schratz and Walker 1995). To do this, a mix of methods and therefore ontological positions has been used to 'get at' different facets of the social phenomenon under consideration. The role of this chapter is to detail the theoretical and practical issues that produced and justified the final approach taken to exploring, interpreting and representing this subject.

2 APPROACHING THE SUBJECT

Travel guide books are extremely useful and empowering to the independent traveller in an unfamiliar place. However, in the experience of the researcher during the mid-1990s as a visitor, particularly in some economically poor regions of the world, the inner self often felt largely ignored as the outer person was apparently regarded by locals *primarily* as a wealthy tourist.¹ In well trodden tourist arenas, objectified locals had apparently learned to objectify and become predatory upon comparatively wealthy visitors. In this role it was difficult to express pathos, or *assist* in some more lasting way than giving token gifts to street beggars and making payments to local tourism service providers. Disappointment at being treated as the next economic opportunity generated a restlessness and desire to find an alternative way to be welcomed in other people's communities. I sought to escape from the dilemmas (or 'tourist angst' (Oakes 2006)) that this privileged, transitory social occupation of travelling seemed to constantly

¹ Or a "wallet on legs" as one Israeli backpacker apparently put it (see Maoz 2004).

produce, without necessarily going further afield in the geographical sense, to search for and impose myself upon hitherto 'unspoiled' pre-tourism communities. Having also developed an interest in food security, the design of sustainable human settlements and in organic production techniques, WWOOFing seemed to provide a number of opportunities to satisfy these concerns.

It is relevant at this point (heeding McCabe 2009, p33) to acknowledge the possible applicability to my situation of critiques that portray some backpackers as tourists keen to distinguish themselves from 'conventional' tourists for the purpose of accruing a certain road credibility or kudos, and social-cultural capital specific to that particular tourism sub-culture (Bennett 2007; Cohen 1973; Cohen 1979; Cohen 2004a; Desforges 2000; Welk 2004). Nevertheless, at some point, WWOOFing indeed appeared attractive as an alternative to the prospect of remaining a 'regular' backpacker/tourist, and the opportunity to travel with more of a 'sense of purpose' and less of a sense of voyeurism, suited my interests and became personally very satisfying, for many reasons. Thus, spread over a two year travelling period as a backpacker in Australia, south-east and southern Asian regions, I engaged with a variety of communities in Malaysia, India and Nepal as a WWOOFer for about 10 weeks, and additionally spent about 10 weeks separately as a volunteer in an NGO focused on the promotion of 'responsible tourism' through environmental education in Nepal.

Upon hearing of the significance I attributed to my WWOOFing experiences, I observed a keen interest and curiosity among numerous others versed in long term travel that had not heard of WWOOFing. When the scale of the WWOOFing phenomenon was initially investigated, it appeared that I may not have been the only reluctant tourist seeking alternative ways to travel (Photo 3). This later on produced an interest in studying what seemed to be a travelling phenomenon of some significance. A further key question for me was that of what hosts were getting from the experience, since among other things, I had grown troubled by the idea that Western tourists are correct to assume and assert their "right to roam" all over the planet, a 'right' arguably arising through a "middle class consciousness of colonisation, wealth and pleasure" (McRae 2003, citing Franklin, p242).

Photo 3: Japanese and Canadian WWOOFers, Malaysia, ca. 1997.



As noted, existing perspectives among academics were limited and examination of these marked the start of a list of further questions, since WWOOFing is not confined to New Zealand, is not only a rural phenomenon, and is not the sole preserve of international backpackers (Chapters 2 and 3). This research has thus been driven by a perceived need to better understand the relationship of WWOOFing to contemporary tourism. At the core seemed to lie a central concern with WWOOFing as an experience. Thus a research design was initially proposed that had the overall aim of creating knowledge about that experience. It was to be an exploratory and descriptive exercise, rooted in the perceived need to extend efforts to fill a gap in knowledge within tourism studies.

But as this subject matter lay within a field that may have broader social significance, interest and implications, further questions became relevant to forming a research approach. For example: *What is the experience of WWOOFing succeeding (or failing) to achieve for WWOOFers and for hosts? What is the potential of WWOOFing in delivering practical sustainability learning, and for facilitating sustainable community development, particularly in lesser-developed regions?*

While these questions have served as starting points, it was always possible that their formulation was overly presumptuous and might not provide an appropriate basis for capturing the phenomenon as it is lived and experienced by the current generation of

'actors'. This possibility suggested that a research design was needed that could be guided, but not dogmatically directed by such questions.

It is increasingly acknowledged that objective or 'value free' research questions cannot be easily formulated and the goal of establishing a logical and linear research process is unlikely to be met in the reality of conducting social research (Flick 2002; Strauss and Corbin 1994; Veal 1997). In fact, many of the non- or post-positivist research approaches found in much contemporary social science resemble more a 'path of discovery' (Denzin and Lincoln 1998) than an orderly and predetermined process of presumptive hypothesis formulation, testing and proof. In the context of a general blurring of genres in the humanities, Denzin and Lincoln (2003; 1998) identified the notion of the researcher as a 'bricoleur', by which they mean someone "always already in the empirical world of experience", but who is also and always confronted by their paradigm or "interpretive perspective", gathering data as it occurs to them through these lenses. The bricoleur deploys whatever strategies, methods or empirical materials are at hand ((Denzin and Lincoln 2003, citing Becker, p6).

This research was indeed conducted through an interplay of strategies of inquiry, with a research method that was emergent, or contingent upon the emergence of data and concepts and theoretical formations. Inductive and deductive methods were adaptively applied during the research in an effort to put the researcher onto a suitable path of discovery. For as noted by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p33) describing qualitative research methods, the design, as well as the concepts, "must be allowed to emerge during the research process":

As concepts and relationships emerge from data through qualitative analysis, the researcher can use that information to decide where and how to go about gathering additional data that will further evolution of the theory.

Further, the driving force of research design should be the evolving theory, while methods are the means of achieving that end:

[T]he idea behind varying methods is to carry out the most parsimonious and advantageous means for arriving at theory" which requires sensitivity, tolerance, flexibility and creativity (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p34).

This chapter then is concerned in a sense with a retrospective justification of the methodological choices made throughout the research process, to be considered in relation to, but not necessarily held accountable to, initially described 'objectives' of the research. This is not to say that there was *no* prior understanding of how to proceed, but rather, that it was understood in advance that a research 'design' was required that countenanced the strong likelihood of the need for significant adaptability.

While understanding and embracing the idea that there was no single correct approach, it nevertheless remained critical that the most *appropriate* approach was taken in terms of intended research objectives. *Appropriateness* is determined by the researcher closest to the subject, resource availability and other practicalities of many kinds (Flick 2002; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Veal 1997).

Judging appropriateness however, derives from a deeper philosophical stance and there has long been debate about the relative merits of particular research approaches in all fields of inquiry. The distinction between the 'hard' and 'soft' sciences remains difficult to dislodge, itself indicating much of what is at the core of such ongoing debate: the nature of reality (ontology) and whether and how it can be determined (epistemology). But putting aside the 'natural' world and the physical scientists that aim to objectify and quantify it in order to render it knowable, within the social sciences, doing research generally is still problematized by the existence of an irresolvable, seemingly dichotomous philosophical choice between viewing reality as 'out there' and at least potentially knowable by an objective observer with the right methods (objectivism-positivism), and reality as an ongoing social and/or personal construction that can be approximately represented (post-positivism, subjectivism, constructivism) (Cupchik 2001). As suggested, tied to this is the question of the appropriateness of methods of inquiry. A range of quantitative and qualitative methods of research offer advantages and disadvantages, depending on where one stands on the ontological spectrum (at a given time).

Despite the remaining existence of a qualitative versus quantitative (and for that matter, a positivist versus post-positivist/postmodernist/constructivist) rivalry in the social sciences, it is increasingly recognized that a combination of various qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to analyse social phenomena, provided there is understanding of the appropriateness of the combination and the interpretations made from this combination which is clearly articulated and assumptions stated (Flick 2002; Strauss and Corbin 1994; Veal 1997). If a positivist position can be accepted at all, the

use of 'external' perspectives such as observation or statistical information that can serve to 'contextualise' the inner worlds being expressed by research subjects may also be a useful complementary tool for qualitatively based research (Cupchik 2001). The important point made by Guba and Lincoln (2005, p200) is to avoid attempts to blend incompatible philosophies (ontologies, i.e. 'there is an external, knowable reality' and 'there is *not* an external knowable reality') in the attempt to blend methods.²

Thus, rather than endorse one particular view of reality and attempt to justify a particular paradigm, multiple tools at different stages have been applied to approach the topic. The range of perspectives and combination of methods used, hopefully achieve a 'triangulated' and therefore strengthened research approach. Details of the methodology and its implementation are discussed after first clearly establishing the basis for this multi-method approach.

2.1 Researching Social Phenomena Using Qualitative Methods

Social inquiry is increasingly driven by or at least informed by a variety of qualitative research methods (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Flick 2002) that assume that multiple human subjects have multiple and unique realities, based on different ways of seeing or experiencing the world. Qualitative research methods help gain insight into the worlds of human subjects and to use their actions and expressions about their worlds as the basis for interpreting and/or constructing their reality.

The idea that reality is not fixed but the product of processes of social construction is generally attributed to the 'Chicago school' of sociologists, and phenomenological sociologists and philosophers such as Alfred Shultz (1998). The term 'social construction (of reality)' became prevalent as a result of the work by Berger and Luckmann (1966) and has since been applied to theories generally in which the socially created nature of social life and reality is stressed (Cupchik 2001).

While there is undoubtedly some external material basis for the shaping of individual's experienced reality, they are also actively engaged in understanding and shaping their environment, not simply shaped passively by it. Piaget emphasized that interaction is

² This is not to suggest that qualitative research that seeks to interpret humans' expressions of their views and understandings and their actions is unable to be augmented by the use of quantitative methods. They stress the importance of not taking naturalistic and conventional to mean qualitative and quantitative respectively. Quoting their own earlier work they argue, "there are many opportunities for naturalistic investigations to utilize quantitative data – probably more than are appreciated" (Guba and Lincoln 2005, p201).

an agent for the active construction of individual and shared realities, and a key driver of understanding, change and experience. This has been foundational in establishing the term 'constructivism', whereby an individual actively constructs knowledge about reality, including social realities, but may also consciously or otherwise test and either discard, modify or maintain particular knowledge, depending on its utility in the 'real world'.

These insights into the interactively constructed nature of human realities form the basis for the general approach to this study of a fundamentally social phenomenon: reality is divergent in nature and is partly the temporally and spatially dynamic product of social construction by individuals and groups. The key research concern has been to characterise and chart the scope of the truths of those involved in WWOOFing, *including the author*, by exploring together a social phenomenon of shared interest.

This embrace of the existence of multiple truths is not to say that the idea of 'truth' per se is not useful, but is instead as mentioned, taken to be the best informed and most consensual construction possible. The approach to understanding this phenomenon has therefore been to allow the subjects involved (including the researcher) to say something of their truth, which is of interest to an audience in terms of a broader 'truth value'. The job of the researcher has been to enter 'the field' in order to access and understand these multiple realities, to describe and explain them sometimes with the conscious assistance of the 'subjects' or informants, in such a way that they portray that reality. The job has also been to interpret what is seen and heard (also felt, tasted, smelled and sensed generally) empathetically, from the inside perspective of the subject, rather than (only) from some assumed external or 'objective' perspective. The properties and dimensions of the described and lived experiences of people have been explored and compared with those of others, to progressively generate useful theory about a shared phenomenon, grounded in valid interpretation of others' observed and constructed realities.

This approach essentially describes a constructivist 'grounded theory' approach to the research, which is discussed in more detail below. But for those engaged in such forms of qualitative research, a key difficulty to address is that of representing and rendering these realities.

2.2 Philosophical Issues in Qualitative Research

Ongoing debate about the validity of qualitative research highlights that in seeking to state something about the world, researchers are necessarily drawn into issues about the nature of reality (ontology) and the ways we have of knowing about that reality (epistemology): *How are we to represent the nature of social reality accurately if all accounts are constructions of reality? How can an account of a phenomenon made up of multiple realities be in any sense 'true'?* No one account can be more accurate than any other since they are all constructions and furthermore, the influence of the researcher on generating the relevant material and in interpreting it is also problematic (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998).

Attempts to work in methods from the physical sciences to lend rigour and objectivity, or 'scientificity' to social inquiry have been made, while accounts of the historical development of qualitative research methods have described how it emerged as a *reaction* to inappropriate and often overbearing assumptions of positivism and its claims and methods for apprehending the 'truth' about people's inner worlds. Methods such as ethnography, participant observation and the use of in-depth interviews began to reveal the nuances of people's behaviour that quantitative methods alone could not grasp, and an acceptance of qualitative research techniques increased. But the need for 'objective' (positivist) evaluation criteria for qualitatively based research (validity, reliability and generalisability) to be applied in the social sciences is still asserted in many quarters, while others argue that the nature of qualitative research methods and the fact of the uniqueness of individuals' worldviews, necessitates adapted or new evaluative criteria (see Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Flick 2002; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Moser (1999, following Gubrium and Holstein (1997)) helps illuminate some of the philosophical issues that underlie the conduct of qualitative social research by sketching the historical movement of discussions about such research in terms of "the four different styles in which the object of qualitative research can be discussed".

Each of these styles has a different ontological and epistemological position affecting the 'validity' of the methods used and consequently the research assessment criteria that could be meaningfully applied. Moser's review of the four main approaches to qualitative research (Table 4, with detailed discussion provided at Appendix 4) recognises the need to negotiate the chasm between positivism and relativism. Many positions and thus many choices of methods lie between the extremes of positivist and

relativist methods of knowledge generation and having considered the advantages and disadvantages of these, the key point for Moser is that “even in the area of qualitative research something akin to the breakup of a safe ground of a research paradigm is taking place”, concluding that in the contemporary practice of qualitative social research, “anything goes”.

Table 4: Four Qualitative Research Styles

Research Style	Key attributes
Naturalism	Aims to reflect the reality/truth of research subjects through an objective expert witness based account
Ethnomethodology	Examines local methods used for the construction of reality, not only what is meaningful
Emotionalism	Researchers draw on their own experience and feelings to know and represent the subject’s inner world
Postmodernism	Involves scepticism regarding the possibility for objective descriptions of reality, given reality is a series of products and constructions, making authoritative ‘representation’ a difficulty for researchers

Adapted from Moser (1999)

2.3 Negotiating Positivism and Relativism

While such freedom of choice may be liberating, as long as there is no easy way to adopt a specific, fixed ontological position, it remains difficult to simply choose a method for exploring a phenomenon. There are aspects of the WWOOFing phenomenon that seem to lend themselves well to a traditional positivist and quantitative research approach, particularly for rooting out missing background or contextual information about things such as *how many WWOOFers and hosts are there? Where is WWOOFing occurring? What sorts of properties and work do hosts have? What are the most important aspects to WWOOFers and hosts?* Indeed, many of these questions are addressed quantitatively as part of this research through the use of surveys of hosts and WWOOFers. But as the subtleties (and possibly limits) of participants’ meanings and understandings are also valued by the researcher, qualitative research methods are also seen as vital to the research. Yet, even in choosing qualitative methods to ‘get at’ individuals’ realities, we have seen that it is difficult to suppose that the researcher can ever simply stand as an observer outside of the world in which they are dealing, gleaning the facts of the situation. It is not even enough, following the critique of postmodernist deconstruction, to be empathetic and ‘well positioned’ in doing qualitative research, straddling the insider-outsider divide as carefully as possible, since an objective external perspective may be impossible to

gather, let alone represent. While a fully positivist approach to either quantitative or qualitative research is incomplete and contentious, extreme postmodernist sceptical deconstruction readily leads to “debilitating nihilism” (see Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) and Moser (1999)), paralyzing the researcher attempting to choose an epistemological and methodological pathway. In short, there is need to overcome the apparent deadlock between the conception of truth as achievable only through use of a positivist scientific or objectivist approach and truth as hopelessly unattainable and completely relative.

One suggestion is to consider that this may be a ‘false choice’ between “dogmatism and relativism, between a single oppressive conception of science and some uniquely liberating alternative” (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998). Working with the premise that there are many ways to tell a story (Denzin and Lincoln 2003), and following Latour and Stengers, the problem for the researcher could be recast as a choice between “those philosophies that hold the real and the constructed to be opposites, like fact and fiction, and those that hold them to be synonymous aspects of fabrication” (Latour, citing Stengers in Whatmore 2003, p95).

For many, the general collapse in faith in the idea of objectivity and the acknowledgment that “there is no perfectly transparent or neutral way to represent the natural or social world” (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998, p123) is irreversible and necessitates a redefinition of the role of the researcher. If it is not possible to stand outside of the reality being described, the researcher must be someone who to some degree participates in it and actively constructs knowledge about it. Research can then be seen as a kind of “social activity” rather than somehow “removed from outside social life” (Schatz and Walker 1995, p125):

...if knowledge of the social (as opposed to the physical) world resides in meaning-making mechanisms of the social, mental, and linguistic worlds that individuals inhabit, then knowledge cannot be separate from the knower, but rather is rooted in his or her mental or linguistic designations of that world (Guba and Lincoln 2005, p202).

Thus, techniques for doing ‘action research’ for example, explicitly incorporate the researcher as an active participant and collaborator with other ‘subjects’ in the co-production of their *shared* knowledge (Reason 1998).

Schraatz and Walker (1995, p122) have usefully suggested how in this circumstance, we can define objectivity so that it remains a useful concept for the conduct of qualitative research. It can be seen not as an “absolute value enshrined in the application of certain research procedures and practices” but something which “arises from the struggle to free oneself from prejudice and bias”. It is agreed therefore that it not be seen as “a condition that can be assured by compliance with procedures, but an honesty and truth that can be achieved only by conscious critical effort and with difficulty”. For Schraatz and Walker, in the end, much comes down to the generation of trust between author and reader. At the same time, they acknowledge that collapsing the boundary between being inside research and being on the outside, runs the risk of “colonising the world of the ‘subject’ in new ways”, for example “by seeming to make our concerns seem more important than theirs, or by attempts to create an ‘us’ that is implicitly ethnocentric and essentially patronising” (Schraatz and Walker 1995: 137). Feminist writers have already drawn our attention to the nature of the privileged gaze of the male ‘author’ and the issue of ‘authority’ (Masey 2003), and this insight has suggested the need to make appropriate effort to address the privileged nature of the researcher (or ethnographer, or author) in general. It generates the need to produce research texts “that replace the ‘monologic’ mode with more ‘dialogic’ forms, in which the text allows for a multiplicity of ‘voices’” and which subvert the privileged gaze and assumed formats (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998, p127). Masey (2003) therefore suggests embracing the concept of fieldwork as “an engagement”, whether with archives, non-humans, or people with varying degrees of power.

Thus, the single ‘privileged’ view of the researcher can be replaced by a dialogue that is more collaborative and therefore more representative of the ethnographic situation in which authority is shared. Such a dialogue thus aims to evoke rather than describe or represent the social world and this, it is suggested by Moser (1999), is to be done through a collaborative and “craftsman-like process of articulating meanings and their associated experiences, in order to give the respective circumstances and actions the appearance of substantiality”. This language emphasizes the idea that research findings can be considered as constructions. Again, appropriateness of the approach to a social situation, supplanting the idea of ‘correctness’, is central, determination of which will involve judgment and consideration of the sense of responsibility as a researcher, to the researched (Masey 2003).

2.4 Constructivism

To practice such a “craftsman-like process”, the constructivist approach of Guba and Lincoln offers a pluralist and relativist framework that allows for distinctions to be made between competing, sometimes conflicting yet meaningful constructions, without having to select one as true in any absolute sense (Moser 1999). Constructions “are simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated” (Guba and Lincoln 1994) and vary in terms of their ‘validity’ in accordance with the respective ‘stakeholders’. The responsibility of researchers then is to attempt to be as reflexively aware as possible in the telling of the stories that are their ‘final’ interpretive constructions and aware of the limits imposed by their chosen approach and the circumstances of the research process.

Touching on the phenomenological approach of ethnomethodologists, researcher awareness could also extend to the practical context or ‘reality’ in which they articulate the interpreted meanings of subjects (their words, texts, actions). That is, how everyday meaning is manufactured and maintained by actors/subjects and seen as true creates a ‘reality’ which can be seen as ‘real-in-the-making’. Gubrium and Holstein (1997, p115) therefore argue that interpretive practice must aim to avoid the excesses of positivist dominance by tying the ‘real’ to the symbolic (i.e. people’s meanings), and resist nihilistic relativism by locating representation of reality “in the lived context of empirical circumstances” (Gubrium and Holstein 1997).

Qualitative research has itself only recently begun to overcome an “objectivist” or “naturalist” dominance. Rather than debate further the need for increased ‘objectivity’, rigour and validity in the social sciences, or pitting quantitative against qualitative methods, positivist against post-positivist methods, Moser (1999) sees the need to build a research paradigm which is explicitly ‘and systemically ‘constructivist’, even allowing ‘facts’ sought and gained empirically through statistical methods to be integrated with other forms of data. Based on Maykut and Morehouse (1994), Moser developed an illustrative table of the essential criteria of his ‘systemic-constructivist’ paradigm. For the purpose of this discussion, a further adapted version of Moser’s systemic constructivist paradigm is presented in Table 5 contrast with a traditional positivist approach, incorporating criteria also from Lincoln and Guba (2005; 2000).³

³ Guba and Lincoln, themselves declared ‘constructivists’, considered what they call the controversies, contradictions and confluences among various qualitative inquiry paradigms (2005). Recently updated to include the action research perspective, they compared and summarized the variety of differences and similarities between the approaches of Positivism, Post-positivism, Critical theory, Constructivism and

This might suggest that a constructivist paradigm, adopting as it does, a postmodern sensibility in relation to truth, generates infinite, highly diffuse and arbitrary worldviews with no possibility for any inter-subjectivity, let alone interpretation or representation of realities. However again, Moser aims to show that there is not *only* a choice for researchers and their audiences between postmodernist arbitrariness *or* positivism as underpinnings for knowledge generated. While indeed the researcher “does not stand as an observer - as supposed in naive realism - outside of the world” they are dealing with, their position is instead seen as “in the very middle of that multi-layered reality” they are studying. While attempting to solve its puzzles, the researcher “never knows to what degree his position itself defines them”.

For Moser therefore, it is less a matter of drawing conclusions in the shape of generalisations, but rather of forming informed conclusions that can be called ‘abductive’” (Moser 1999). ‘Abduction’ describes the ‘detective-like’ process of following clues, solving puzzles and using intuition that frame “suitable conclusions” based on “observations and incumbent contextual knowledge” (Peirce in Moser 1999). Mason (2002, p180) cites Blaikie’s notion of an ‘abductive research strategy’, belonging to the interpretive tradition, as being somewhere between induction and deduction in such a way that “theory, data analysis and data generation are produced dialectically... in a process of moving between everyday concepts and meanings, lay accounts and social science explanations”. It is not limited to testing knowledge (deduction), but allows for the generation of new knowledge (such as through induction). In this respect, Moser argues that an abductive research process overlaps with the approach to social inquiry known as *grounded theory*, a research method in which researchers move back and forth between observation, data collection and theory construction, tested by the ever more targeted collection of further data and analysis for theoretical fit. While the epistemological position of ‘traditional’ grounded theory as a method is generally considered as positivist (or partially post-positivist – see below)), there are those that argue persuasively for the use of post-positivist (Moser 1999; Wagenaar 2003) and constructivist versions (Charmaz 2003) (described below in Table 5).

Participatory research. For each of these, they usefully describe the differences in ontology, epistemology, methodology and the inquiry aims, nature of the knowledge produced, how knowledge accumulates, quality criteria, role of values and ethics, the nature of the ‘voice’ or voices involved and several other factors.

Table 5: Positivist and Constructivist Approaches to Research

Questions	Positivist approach	Systemic constructivist approach
How does the world work?	Reality is one. By carefully dividing and studying its parts, the whole can be understood. Research can converge on the true' state of affairs.	There are multiple realities which are socio-psychological constructions forming an interconnected whole. These realities can be understood as such. 'Truth' is determined by finding which explanatory attempt is better informed (at present).
What is the relationship between the knower and the known?	Dualist and objectivist: the knower can stand outside of what is to be known. True objectivity is possible in studying an object without influencing it or being influenced by it.	The knower and the known are interdependent. Findings are created as inquiry proceeds and the researcher needs to be reflective about their position in 'the field'.
What role do values play in understanding the world?	Values can be suspended in order to understand.	Values mediate and shape what is understood. Researchers must be conscious of normative prejudices and make them transparent in the study. Triangulation and use of member checks of data/interpretations assist.
Are causal linkages possible?	One event comes before another event and can be said to cause that event.	Events shape each other. Multi-directional relationships can be discovered. Abduction is used to assist puzzle solving in complex, networked situations.
How is inquiry conducted?	Experimental and manipulative, hypotheses in propositional form are empirically tested by largely quantitative methodology.	Constructions are elicited and refined through interaction between and among researcher and researched, hermeneutic techniques used to distil a consensus construction more sophisticated than previously existed.
What is the aim of inquiry?	Explanation: prediction and control.	Understanding; reconstruction
What is the possibility of generalisation?	Explanations from one time and place can be generalized in other times and places.	Only tentative and context dependent explanations for one time and place are possible.
What does research contribute to knowledge?	Generally, the positivist seeks verification or proof of propositions.	Generally, the systemist seeks to discover or uncover propositions.
What is the nature of the knowledge?	Verified hypotheses are established as facts or laws	Individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus

Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (2000) and Moser (1999, based on Maykut and Morehouse 1994).

3 A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

Given the relatively uncharted territory of WWOOFing in the tourism literature, in combination with the personal experience, interest and very tentative 'hunches' of the researcher about the rapid growth in uptake of WWOOFing, an approach was needed that could offer an opportunity to both 'suspend' yet acknowledge and pursue some of these ideas that are both exploratory and possibly explanatory, and detective-like in broad terms. In particular, an approach was needed that would maximize the opportunity to generate new concepts in explaining the rapid uptake of this form of human behaviour which was flexible and robust enough to allow the subjects involved in the phenomenon, perhaps including the researcher, to say something of their truth that would nevertheless be of interest to a larger audience in terms of a broader 'truth value'.

Since WWOOFing has at its heart, social interaction, it also appeared justified to pursue a study of it upon a methodological basis with *interactionist* underpinnings that would capture the dynamics of individuals actively engaged in shaping and understanding their lives in an interactive fashion. The research approach known as grounded theory (GT) emerged in the 1960s as a means of operationalising social research emerging from the 'symbolic interactionist' school of sociology in opposition to the dominant, conservative and overly normative, functionalist thinking of the time which could not account for rapid social change (Kendall 1999).¹ Symbolic interactionists sought to use detailed and close observational work to focus on the ways in which meanings emerge, persist or were transformed through interaction with others, determining perceptions of reality (Marshall 1998).

The use of a grounded theory approach was therefore initially selected in this study to allow for description, conceptualisation and a degree of theorisation in the midst of multiple and multi-layered realities. This approach to understanding social reality differed significantly from the dominant quantitatively oriented research methods of social inquiry of the time, which Blumer had argued, were poorly suited to the study of human interaction and behaviour. Grounded theory, informed by symbolic interactionism, was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a systematic method better suited to studying human behaviour (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: ix).

¹ Functionalism assumed individuals could be understood in relation to the roles they played and the functions they served in an overall stable and ordered social structure (Macey 2000). It was based on a model of social life that appeared more orderly and logical than was suggested by empirical observation of social reality(ies).

3.1 Grounded Theory Practices

Although various handbooks for the conduct of grounded theory research have been prepared (Glaser 1992; Pidgeon and Henwood 1996; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1994), there is no single agreed upon method for the conduct of grounded theory research (Charmaz 2003; Glaser 2002; Kendall 1999). Since its introduction it has evolved into several camps. As with many research methodologies, broad shifts brought about by critiques of positivism, through postmodernist deconstruction, the 'crisis of representation' and the so-called 'rhetorical turn' have all presented challenges to its adherents and spurred methodological evolution.

Given differing philosophical standpoints, debate about how to conduct grounded theory continues. Some see it as something that *can* be relatively well defined as a rigorous and systematic process and set out (to varying degrees) in prescriptive handbooks (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Yet it has also been represented more generally as a useful "set of flexible procedures for beginning the difficult task of rendering qualitative data meaningful, both in its own terms and in relation to the researcher's theoretical aims and interests". That is, it can be used to "stimulate and discipline the theoretical imagination" (Pidgeon and Henwood 1996, p86).² Even among those articulating a specific procedure based approach to doing grounded theory, there seems to remain room for a great deal of flexibility in its application, with the research situation and researcher determining its specific and final use. Thus Strauss and Corbin suggest that it can be considered "a general methodology, a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data" (Strauss and Corbin 1994, p163).

On this basis, the broad principles generally shared by grounded theory practitioners were taken as useful guiding lights for approaching this research, rather than adopting a specific technique. By identifying with the earlier idea of the researcher as a bricoleur (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, xi), the point is to re-emphasize that the process of doing grounded theory has offered a suitable general approach to doing this research. It has offered the means of justifying and operationalising an investigative approach that allowed the researcher to move adaptively between inductive and deductive stages in relation to data and theory, throughout the research process.

² Pigeon and Henwood (1996, p86) suggest it is helpful to think of grounded theory strategies as offering "ways into the maze of a fractured and multiseamed reality that is infused with multiple and often conflicting interpretations and meanings".

Debate and rift among grounded theory practitioners and broader critique of it as a research method are important in helping to locate the results of this research in an epistemological sense, particularly in serving to provide boundaries to the scope and breadth of the applicability of 'theory' developed through this research. However it is helpful to first consider the 'essence of doing grounded theory' before being able to consider internal and 'external' critiques of this 'method'. This will provide a basis for explaining the so-called constructivist approach to grounded theory that has been adopted in this research.

3.2 Doing Grounded Theory

Doing ground theory does not rely on the proof or disproof of a clearly specified hypothesis by an outside observer, but chiefly employs inductive theory building: theory which develops from close observations of broadly constituted 'data'. Taking the procedures of its original proponents, it arises through the working and reworking of 'data' in an overall process of coding³ and category description, conceptual development and 'memoing' (or note taking), conceptual sorting and ordering and lastly, integrative theorizing.

In practice, data is commonly taken to be the words of research subjects, usually generated through some variation of a loosely structured 'interview' or directed conversation, rather than an interview taking the form of a "monitored and measured pseudo-experiment" (Pidgeon and Henwood 1996, p89). Observation of participants and their surrounds in an ethnographic mode are used as data, while more broadly, data might include "documents, films, videotapes and even data that have been quantified for other purposes such as census data" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p11). Indeed Glaser (2002) has suggested that for grounded theorists, "all is data". Anything that "the researcher is receiving, as a pattern, and as a human being (which is inescapable). It just depends on the research".⁴

³ Coding is the process of identifying concepts that exist in the data, as well as their properties and dimensions. Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify three types of coding that are used at different stages of the research and for different purposes: 1) Open coding is the initial discovery of categories within data. 2) Axial coding is the process of discovering the relationships fractured by open coding and which links together subcategories. 3) Selective coding is the means by which to integrate and refine theory in the latter stages of research, essentially by choosing the driving category that pushes the story along to be the core category, and relating all other categories to that category.

⁴ Glaser argued that "what is going on in the research scene is the data, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told. It means

As well as being an inductive process of ordering and generalizing from such data, it is noted by Strauss, the other 'originator' of GT methodology, that in practice it also employs deductive reasoning:

[W]henever we conceptualise data or develop hypotheses, we are interpreting to some degree [which is a] form of deduction. We are deducing what is going on based on data but also based on our reading of that data along with our assumptions about the nature of life, the literature. In agreement with Glaser above, he says 'we recognise the human element in analysis' (Strauss and Corbin 1998, pp136-7).

Given this human element, they (and Glaser (1992)) recommend "constantly comparing one piece of data to another" to achieve 'validity' or 'fit' of interpretations of data, grounded in the particular research situation. Both deductive and inductive reasoning attempt to generalise, either following testing of a specific hypothesis to determine its truth or from repeated cycles of interpretation of observed events. The use of inductive and deductive reasoning in GT suggests a process of moving back and forth between observations, suspicions, temporary theory or hypothesis formation and testing of such theory for 'fit' (Strauss and Corbin 1998).⁵

The building of a grounded theory does not assume a linear pattern in which data is collected, analysed and then theory built. Data is initially and then continuously collected in an ever more targeted fashion throughout, by which means theory is emerging as hypotheses to be tested by comparison with incoming data. *Emergence* is central in GT and can be thought of as the "process by means of which a number of divergent elements are synthesized and organized into a new form" (Marshall 1998):

A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind (unless his or her purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data... Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p12).

what is going on must be figured out exactly what it is to be used for, that is conceptualisation, not for accurate description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more data to keep correcting the categories with more relevant properties" (Glaser 2001, p145).

⁵ It can be noted briefly here that abductive reasoning is a form of logic that differs from induction and deduction in that it pursues possible premises through reduction from a given conclusion. Given the cyclical and temporary nature of theory and hypotheses and the cyclical interplay in practice between induction and deduction in the process of doing grounded theory, Moser (1999) suggests it is appropriate to describe grounded theory as an abductive method.

Researchers using grounded theory therefore attempt (to differing degrees) to allow concepts or hypotheses to 'emerge' from collected data which in turn, influence the direction and nature of the ongoing data collection process and further sampling techniques, known as "theoretical sampling". As data is coded and categories are developed into concepts, the collection of data continues, being constantly examined and compared with existing empirical and theoretical concepts (including those from existing literature) for 'fit'.

For Glaser (1992), the broad aim of his grounded theory method is to discover the theory implicit in the data. To avoid forcing and allowing for emergence, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest being able to 'read' data in an effective and mentally 'prepared' way, which requires a certain degree of 'sensitivity'. There is need also to achieve a certain degree of distance from the research materials to be able to represent them fairly and to give suitable 'voice' to the words (and actions) of participants. They argue that the driving force in the process of grounded theory should always be the emerging and evolving theory, while the actual methods used are the means of achieving that end. Theory itself, they define as "a set of well developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena" and theorizing is the process of construction of an explanatory scheme from analysis of the data. Such a scheme is systematic in its integration of concepts through clarification of relationships between them and for Strauss and Corbin in particular, this enables the prediction of events and guides to action (1998, p24).

3.3 Issues in the Practice of Grounded Theory

If "all is data" and concepts and their ordering into theory are the result of an encouraged emergence by prepared and sensitive minds, there is a practical issue of knowing when to stop. Key practitioners argue that a point of saturation will eventually be reached where "collecting additional data seems counterproductive; the 'new' that is uncovered does not add that much more to the explanation at this time. Or, as is sometimes the situation, the researcher runs out of time, money or both" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p136).

It is partly due to this consideration of the practical limits of doing research that there has been some debate about the role and the nature of research questions in the

grounded theory approach. The originators of the practice of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) appear to have diverged considerably in their later approaches, partly around this very question: Can one work from a truly disinterested state given the impinging practicalities of time and resources? Here it is noted that Glaser (1992, p25) holds the more 'pure' position that:

the research question in a grounded theory study is not a statement that identifies the phenomena to be studied. The problem emerges and questions regarding the problem emerge by which to guide theoretical sampling.

Thus researchers should (be able to) dispense with preconceived ideas about phenomena and allow for emergence of questions from the data to stimulate research direction. Much has been written elsewhere about *becoming* and the generative, transformative nature of the world researchers aim to capture, both from movements inside to outside ('eruptions') and changes triggered by *incoming* events or disruptive movements, that are convergent with a consideration of *emergence* in grounded theory.⁶ The shaping of the field of potential research itself and the questions or leads we find interesting, or which appear to emerge, are shaped by our general *receptiveness* and ability to see openings and interconnectivities and process novel experiences and information, in turn informed by curiosity and ultimately our 'philosophical position' (Clark 2003, p39). An emphasis on pragmatic aspects, stances and 'techniques' to give rise to *emergence*, suggests some difficulty in locating when and how a researcher becomes aware of the emergence of a phenomenon without already having some form of over-bearing 'interest' or pre-disposition. As Charmaz (2005, p509) points out:

what observers see and hear depends upon their prior interpretive frames, biographies and interests, as well as the research context, their relationships with research participants, concrete field experiences and modes of generating and recording empirical materials... the questions we ask of the empirical world frame what we know of it.

⁶ Clark (2003) has written on the ideas of Derrida and Deleuze and their respective interests in openings of self to the outside and generative encounters between diverse elements. They emphasize the importance of being able to be moved by happenings/spheres outside of our language/culture and the role of chance and contingency, reminding us of the process of awakening to the fruitfulness of a research question and also during the process of conceptual and theoretical 'emergence'. Irigaray also shares this interest through her focus on the boundaries of the known and the unknown and the productivity of a female sensibility that emphasizes permeability of boundaries rather than masculine rigidity (Rose 2003).

Given an inescapable condition of “theory dependence of observation” (Chalmers 1999) and general critiques of the very idea of objectivity (Albury 1983), it is also difficult to see how one can entirely dispense with prior interest in allowing for either phenomena to emerge or guiding questions to investigate them, particularly in the face of limited time and resources for most researchers.

A more pragmatic approach to conducting grounded theory might suggest that it is justified to create an entry point for an initial thinking about a topic broadly, by constructing key research questions. In contrast to Glaser, Strauss and Corbin argue that a research question *is* a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied. It tells the reader what the researcher specifically wants to know about their subject, particularly where it is not practical to start by settling in on an entire ‘research situation’. The question is to be posed in such a way that “prevents the researcher from becoming distracted by unrelated and unproductive issues and from going off on paths that can lead away from the problem” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p41). This allows for the progressive and flexible narrowing of the exploration in accordance with the discovery of emerging concepts and relationships.

It is important to note that Glaser has been particularly concerned about this issue, suggesting that when a researcher has a ‘sociological interest’ that yields a research problem, they may look for a “substantive area or population with which to study it”, but for him, “this is not grounded theory”. Such an exercise might produce useful ‘sociological description’, but it “usually misses what subjects... consider, in their perspective, the true problems they face” (Glaser 1992, p22).

This was part of a broader critique by Glaser of Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) first edition of their grounded theory methodology handbook. Glaser was apparently so concerned with the deviation from his understanding of the intent and process of the grounded theory method as to produce a book in the form of a chapter by chapter reply (Glaser 1992). At the heart of this rift was the recommended handling by Strauss and Corbin of the issue of emergence of theory, connected also to the use of generative research questions. Glaser argued that they were overly focused on process and conceptual description to the detriment of emergent theory (Kendall 1999) and this was a formula for producing theory that was *forced*, rather than sufficiently *emergent* from the data. This concern needs to be seen in the context of broader or external critiques of grounded theory, for as noted by Charmaz (2003), as well as disputes among its

advocates, grounded theory has been attacked by outsiders as well, for being both overly *and* insufficiently positivist.

Glaser's (1978; 1992) own approach to theory building has been cast by Charmaz (2003) as traditionally positivist (or objectivist), since he contends the existence of an objectively knowable external reality that can be discovered by a suitably primed, yet 'disinterested' observer. To the extent that grounded theory (and qualitative research generally) had already sustained numerous attacks from those seeking greater objectivity in the conduct of social 'science', Glaser was concerned that it be (and be seen to be) conducted as a 'rigorous' mode of inquiry. In denouncing Strauss and Corbin's process for conducting grounded theory, Glaser fought against the possibility that grounded theory be open to positivist critique in relation to 'forced' (or subjective) data collection and interpretation, brought about by the play of preconceived ideas about the research area.

Glaser also railed against Strauss and Corbin's 'procedural lists' - developed to instruct grounded theory (or other qualitative) researchers - as an inadequate substitute for appropriate 'rigour' applied by objective researchers who should be assiduously using the constant comparative method to ensure objectivity.⁷ Again, Glaser appears to be concerned to defend grounded theory against actual or possible objectivist critiques of the method and its misuse. For example, Bryman and Burgess (1994) and Green (1998) argued that the term 'grounded theory' has sometimes been invoked to inject a sense of scholarly credibility to research that might otherwise not be sufficiently rigorous when it comes inductive theory building. Green suggests that in reality, some of this research is more of "an account of some key themes in the data, with brief textual quotes in illustration, and sceptical readers remain unconvinced that qualitative analysis is anything other than journalistic reportage" (Green 1998, p1064). For Barbour (2001) there is need to (and to be seen to) "systematically analyze the commonalities and contradictions reflected in the data" or risk producing "an artificially neat and tidy account that is descriptive rather than analytical". In fact says Barbour (p1117), an uncritical adoption of grounded theory and 'procedural lists' for practicing grounded theory:

can result in explanations tinged with 'near mysticism'...[a] sleight of hand produces a list of 'themes', and we are invited to take it on trust that theory somehow emerges from the data

⁷ From a different perspective, Charmaz (2003, p274) considers that such lists and guidelines have taken on their own life as method and are now didactic and prescriptive, not emergent and interactive.

without being offered a step by step explanation of how theoretical insights have been built up.

Implicit in these critiques is that the researcher's interests or *a priori* ideas about their area of study, consciously or otherwise, commonly produce already anticipated theoretical conclusions. Hammersley (1999) reminds us of Glaser and Strauss's own original warning about 'exemplification', whereby data are collected and interpreted, but various different meanings it could carry are not sufficiently considered. Rather than showing why one interpretation is more convincing than another, "dollops of data are doled out as if their meaning were obvious and univocal" resulting in problematic concepts and ill-fitting theory.

Notwithstanding their differences, Glaser, Strauss and Corbin have attempted to address positivist concerns about the rigour of the method. They cite techniques relating to data collection and handling measures such as constant comparison, theoretical sampling, saturation, and core relevance (Glaser 1992; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1998) in an attempt to outline the ways in which GT can be validly and rigorously developed. Since qualitative research can be seen to be "based on a fundamentally different set of axioms or postulates" compared to quantitatively based positivist research (Lincoln and Guba in Makyut and Morehouse 1994, p10; Strauss and Corbin 1998), GT practitioners have called for a different set of evaluative criteria more appropriate to their method. For example, for Glaser, such techniques can be used to ensure that data are progressively worked into theory derived from participants' 'reality' achieving '*fit*' and '*workability*' with that reality (discussed further below), while Barbour and Barbour (2003, p185) have argued for the development of a distinctive approach to evaluating and synthesizing qualitative work that does not "import and impose templates and methods devised for another purpose".

As noted, the issue of interpreting and representing participants' reality remains a difficulty for all forms of interpretative practice. Radical postmodernist scepticism generally has brought us to the point where the very basis for any form of truth has been undermined. The detection and then transfer of 'data' from 'participants' via objective observers requires 'accurate' interpretation and then representation, all of which is problematic. Thus grounded theory has also been attacked on the basis of its overly positivist epistemology, with arguments made against the possibility of any kind of neutral observer capable of discovering data and theory in an unbiased, precise, valid or reproducible kind of way. As Charmaz points out, the application of earlier

grounded theory methods serve to limit an understanding of the experiential world of research subjects and relies in great part upon the researcher's *authority* as an expert observer (Charmaz 2003). Note that Charmaz (2003) argues that Strauss and Corbin could be seen as traditional positivists in the sense that they also assume an objective external reality and aim towards unbiased data collection while advocating a set of procedures and the requirement for verification. But she says, they also "move into" a post-positivist position in that they propose giving voice to their participants, representing their positions as accurately as possible, if and where they conflict with their own views and that use of the method is both art and science. Notably, Strauss and Corbin (1994, p168) themselves have said they consider theory derived through the use of their methods to be provisional constructions, pervaded by the 'human element' in the analysis that produces them.⁸

The idea of grounding theory in empirical 'fact' at all has become problematised by the interpretive turn in the social sciences, with the very idea of what counts as a fact and the epistemological basis of facts being challenged. The truth value of representations of reality (or realities) through naturalistic inquiry - such as through traditional grounded theory based on interviews and ethnological observations - is now always and irreversibly doubtful, the end point of this deconstructionist trajectory being a seemingly unbridgeable relativism.

But Moser's (1999) suggestion was earlier flagged as to how we might break from a false choice between an 'oppressive' positivist stance and a 'nihilistic' relativism, by building and utilizing a systemic-constructivist research paradigm that is abductive in nature. That is, a process of drawing conclusions not limited to testing knowledge, but which allows the generation of new knowledge. Such knowledge can arise through a moment - or progressive series of moments - of 'enlightenment', drawing from the

⁸ Such theory "consists of *plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts* and *sets of concepts*" and should be traceable to the data that gave rise to them. Yet it remains fluid and provisional since it embraces the interactions of multiple actors and can only offer an interpretation of those actors at a period in time. Theory is a pragmatic yet systematically derived statement of plausible relationships and with this interpretation of theory, Strauss and Corbin claim to be avoiding a positivistic notion of theory as the "formulation of some discovered aspect of a pre-existing reality 'out there'." Theories may yet be more or less sound and more or less useful (1998, p171), but changing conditions can always affect the validity of theories in terms of their relation to contemporary social reality since as they say, we confront a universe "marked by tremendous fluidity" (ibid, pp171-2). Charmaz (2003, p274) sums up their position as truth with a small 't'. In addition, their position in response to recent intellectual trends and movements via postmodernism is one of "openness". They suggest that the methods remain the same, but "additional ideas and concepts suggested by contemporary social and intellectual movements are entering analytically as *conditions* into the studies of grounded theory researchers" (Strauss and Corbin 1994, p165).

world of 'data' brought into consideration by the researcher. Moser acknowledges the renowned philosopher-logician Charles Peirce (1839-1941) in arguing that the abductive assumption is a moment of sudden "enlightenment", which is "like a flash". It is an act of insight, though a deceptive kind of insight, in that the:

various elements of the hypothesis existed in our minds; yet, to bring together what we would never have dreamt of bringing together evokes the new assumption like a flash in our contemplation.

Concurrence with the idea of emergent theory by means of a grounded theory approach was signalled earlier. But in contrast to Glaser's view that grounded theories develop inductively from the data by an objective observer, Moser (1999) argues that the key process of moving back and forth between data and theory in the interactive act of constructing 'suitable conclusions' could be better considered abductive. He thus casts grounded theory as a constructivist tool rather than an objectivist tool for interacting with broadly defined empirical data to constantly confront and discipline the theoretical hunches of the researcher in developing theory. Wagenaar (2003) has also considered that grounded theory need not be dependent on an objectivist approach to social science. In fact, its inductive logic and reflexive qualities he says, offer remarkable fit with an interpretive, constructivist understanding of social phenomena in a pluralist, decentred world in contemporary liberal societies.

3.4 Constructivist Grounded Theory

A specific operationalisation of a constructivist type of paradigm, retaining methodical aspects of grounded theory as a general approach to building middle range theory about the empirical world, has been attempted by Charmaz (2003). In doing so, she has aimed to address and overcome postmodernist critiques of grounded theory. She explicitly distinguishes her approach from earlier 'objectivist' approaches, which she says have obscured the view of the potential for grounded theory. Hence, while rejecting the possibility of absolute truth and of objective observers of social realities, she has sought to develop grounded theory to its potential. Moving grounded theory away from its positivist origins, in fact, reclaiming the valuable tools provided by the founders from their positivist underpinnings, Charmaz seeks to incorporate or accommodate critique from those advocating a constructivist paradigm. She aims overall for a more reflexive practice in calling for a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism, advocating the use of grounded theory methods "as flexible, heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures" which can be overly

didactic and prescriptive (Charmaz 2003, p251). She acknowledges the interactive nature of data collection and analysis between researchers and the researched and that researchers interpret data and that wittingly or otherwise, this is often (best) done to some degree in a collaborative way with other 'participants'. The objective observer does not exist independently of the observed and 'both' parties can and should be reflected in the final interpretive account, which is a construction. Charmaz contends that such an approach can be used in association with quantitative and qualitative data.

Responding to the postmodernist/post-structuralist critique that in grounded theory studies the subject is deconstructed by a privileged researcher with remnant commitment to "outmoded conceptions of validity, truth and generalizability" (Charmaz 2003, citing Denzin, p271), she suggests that this criticism can best be used to strengthen research reflexivity and contextualisation of grounded theory based studies. This then would produce research in the form of a painting rather than a photo, in which the author "can claim only to have interpreted a reality, as we understood both our own experience and our subjects' portrayal of theirs" (Charmaz 2003). Her ultimate vision of a constructivist grounded theory approach is one that "preserves realism through gritty, empirical inquiry and sheds positivistic proclivities by becoming increasingly interpretive" (p272).⁹

Constructivist GT can and should also allow subjects concerns to take precedence over researchers' questions yet makes a distinction between real and true. It is realist in the sense that it addresses human realities and does assume the existence of real worlds, which in turn (following Schwandt (1994)), are based on perspective. This requires developing substantial relationships with participants that allow the researcher to "go beyond respondents public presentation" to seek out meaning, rather than truth (2003, p277). Data is thus collected and analysed by actors and the researcher interactively, together conferring meaning upon it, with the hand of the researcher in the process and the result being acknowledged (Charmaz 2003, p271).

The resulting construction is not a 'real' rendering of *the* real world for subjects, but one among many interpretations of a reality, reflexively rendered, as a painting of the world 'made real' by the relevant actors. Constructivist grounded theory consists of a series of conditional statements that remain causally indeterminate, not as generalisable

⁹ As put by Wagenaar (2003), broad constructivist perspectives rest on a body of preconceived assumptions, but what remains when these are used in a strategy of grounded theory is "the constant confrontation of theoretical ideas with empirical data".

truth(s), but as a set of hypotheses and concepts which offer useful explanation and understanding of a particular slice of life.¹⁰

For Charmaz, many of the processes of working from data to tentative conceptual and theoretical development and back to data to test and consolidate emerging theory is shared with more traditional forms of grounded theory, though with less concern for some of the structured and 'prescriptive' procedures (especially 'axial coding' of Strauss and Corbin) can "increase complexity at the expense of experience" and can "foster externality". Beyond coding and other forms of working with data, Charmaz says that researchers develop theory not only before writing, but through writing. Indeed, concepts and theory continue to emerge during writing and sometimes results in the need for further data collection to test for the fit of concepts and theory. But Charmaz is keen to suggest that writing style is also different from objectivist grounded theory in a range of ways. She compares the laboratory report style of objectivist grounded theory with her own, in which she aims for theoretical interpretation, balanced with an "evocative aesthetic" that is "consistent with the postmodern turn" in evoking experiential feeling for the reader. She wants to impart the mood in the style, without creating a drama or fiction, and suggests a range of techniques for doing so. Theoretical constructs about experiences can be difficult to translate in linear fashion and many processes may be at work rather than one. With attention to tone, style and imagery, she suggests building stories around conceptual categories, not as an omniscient scientist, but as a storyteller in the background, to pull the reader into the emotional world of the subjects. In summary, Charmaz suggests a constructivist approach offers a middle ground between objectivist and postmodernist attitudes towards representation of people's experiences and achievement of this approach requires "becoming more reflexive about how we frame and write our studies" (Charmaz 2003, p281).

It is important to point out that Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory paradigm has been attacked by Glaser (2002) in a debate that continues. In brief, he argues that the very term constructivist grounded theory is a misnomer because "constructivist data, if it exists at all, is a very very small part of the data that grounded theory uses". He argues that Charmaz, in offering constructivist grounded theory on the basis of assumptions of the relativism of multiple social realities and the need to mutually create

¹⁰ Although traditional (objectivist) grounded theory was also argued to be provisional (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1994; 1998), Charmaz (2003) rejects the scientific criteria of testability, verificational procedures and the notion of prediction tied to the ideal of 'objectivist' theory.

knowledge “by the viewer and the viewed” is too simplistic, since this should depend on how the “data come down”. He suggests that her assumptions, in her effort to justify a constructivist form of grounded theory, get in the way of taking the data “as it comes” and that researcher intrusion through mutual interpretation would be “unwarranted”. In fact he says, with her concern for the accuracy of the meaning in the statements and descriptive capture, she has confused grounded theory conceptual abstraction with qualitative data analysis. Rather than deny the existence of researcher bias as Charmaz suggests he does, Glaser says these do indeed exist and are revealed through the constant comparative techniques he recommends, which bring about an appropriate level of distance from these biases, reducing them “to the point of irrelevancy”. He disagrees that researchers doing grounded theory are ‘story making’. Instead they are “generating a theory by careful application of all the GT procedures” and what matters is the skill in doing grounded theory research.

Much of Glaser’s (2002) retort to Charmaz is in the form of a reply to specific charges leveled by her at his objectivism. So it might be suggested that this debate, and the emergence of the constructivist grounded theory approach itself, could be seen as a result and a reframing of irreconcilable ontological and epistemological positions. It is not the role of this researcher to choose to take a particular side in this debate, nor in the very long running philosophical conundrum that underpins it. The above discussion on the emergence of grounded theory and the more recent version of constructivist grounded theory, was intended in part, to demonstrate why Moser (above) suggests that in socially oriented research, ‘anything goes’.

While wanting to be grounded in the empirical world of the participants’ experiences in a largely unexplored area, I have sought to take into account something of the postmodern sensibility in relation to understanding and representing the realities and experiences of the research subjects involved in WWOOFing. Thus I have followed the lead of Charmaz in both the conduct of the research and its presentation in seeking to avoid engaging in a fully objectivist approach or account. Theory development is usually built around generalisation and for some, the ability to test and predict, but the use of a more constructivist approach to grounded theory avoids the tendency to seek a singular objective truth about ‘the’ experience of WWOOFing, but rather to discover or uncover ‘well informed’ propositions about experiences in (some of) their variations.

In practice, in tackling the qualitative material at the core of this research by attempting to tread a middle epistemological ground may generate paradoxical perspectives.

Therefore, this work may reflect elements of various philosophical perspectives at times. Nevertheless, through a conscious awareness of limitations of claims and the use of reflexivity recommended by theoreticians and practitioners of qualitative research in general, it is hoped that this research endeavor will be in some measure successful. The use of different philosophical perspectives within a study, particularly through use of a mix of research methods for different 'styles' and sources of data, should be seen as a strength (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Flick 2002; Moser 1999).

Thus, the important remaining task is to explain the means by which quantitative data and qualitative data have been sought out, thought through and brought together under the rubric of the approach outlined above, to develop a construction, grounded in the empirical realities that have generated such data.

4 APPROACHING THE FIELD: RESEARCH METHODS USED

While a constructivist grounded theory approach would help explore the making of social meaning in this little understood phenomenon, a range of basic statistical information with which to contextualise such understanding and make some sense of the historic and current scale of involvement in WWOOFing, the origin of WWOOFers and other essential background about the people involved was needed. Sourcing this type of information has created a major focus of the empirical data collection phase in its own right. Grounded theory founders and experienced practitioners have implicitly and explicitly commended the use of a breadth of data types and methods of collection, including the integration into analysis of traditional forms of quantitative statistical data.¹¹ Rather than worry over which form of data is primary, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest we might better ask how to keep the flow of data going, achieving a circular or iterative interplay. Not only can the combinations vary and be used at different stages of the research to formulate more hypotheses to further drive data collection, but the overall research design can be allowed to *emerge* during the research process (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p33):

[T]he idea behind varying methods is to carry out the most parsimonious and advantageous means for arriving at theory" which requires sensitivity, tolerance, flexibility and creativity (ibid, p34).

¹¹ Strauss and Corbin (1998) dedicate an entire section of their book to examining the interplay between qualitative and quantitative data in theorizing, saying that the long held attitude that exploratory interviews should precede the formulation of 'final' questionnaires is limiting and that there can be many combinations of approaches to the use and integration of qualitative and quantitative data.

While this interplay is not quite the same as a 'triangulation' of methods, Strauss and Corbin also view that as useful in research: a combination of methods allows researchers to view a situation or phenomenon from a range of perspectives. Triangulation might be considered in terms of the data used, the investigators deployed, the theoretical lenses applied and the actual methodological approaches adopted (including qualitative and quantitative methods). Flick (2002) suggests that triangulation of methods represents an alternative to *validation* for qualitatively focused research and sensitively handled, can serve as a strategy that can add complexity and depth to an inquiry.

As such, considered both as data for the development of grounded theory and as a form of methodological triangulation, a range of data collection and research tools were used in tandem in this research, including (1) in-depth interviews with Australian WWOOF hosts and WWOOFers, (2) ethnographic style participant observation through WWOOFing fieldwork in Australia (and New Zealand) and (3) written and online surveys of WWOOFers and hosts to explore both quantitative and qualitative dimension of the WWOOFing experience. Consideration of the views and actions of both hosts and WWOOFers embedded in each of these methods itself adds perspective to analytical consideration of the phenomenon of tourists WWOOFing, but also of the interactive aspect of the WWOOFing experience.

It is hoped that the mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods used here serve to enhance the 'rigour' of the research (for readers with a more positivist disposition), by offering something of an extra, 'outside' perspective to complement the 'inside' emergent perspective at the core of the research. For the researcher as well, the different data and perspectives from which to view them, has provided the basis for the development of an 'insider' and 'outsider' perspective. A bridging of inside and out is in principle not a particular difficulty for constructivist grounded theory development since the (reflexive) researcher in the construction of concepts and theory is taken to be active, present and visible (Charmaz 2003). But it does require belief in the possibility of doing both with a suitable degree of awareness of the epistemological impact it has.

The problem of implementing practical reflexivity of this type is considered in the theory of social research offered by Bourdieu. Jenkins (1992, p50) describes a kind of double participant observation whereby researchers can inhabit the perspective of both

outside observer and the research subject, combining an 'objective' account with reflexive knowledge of the subject(s) gained through engagement and participation:

First, there is the work done in the act of observation and the objectification or distortion of social reality which it is likely to produce. Second, there is an awareness of that distortion and of the observer as a competent social actor in his/her own right (Jenkins 1992, p50).

With suitable reflexivity, it is therefore hoped that the incorporation of a range of data types in this study, through a range of means of collection and from a range of perspectives, offers a rich source of insight, breadth and depth in the effort to construct a plausible interpretation or conclusion about *what the WWOOFing phenomenon is about*.

4.1 Generative Research Questions

Despite Glaser's (1992) 'purist' methodological position, concern about being lost in too much data and the practicality imposed by time and resource limits has led to the use in this research of some generative, 'subordinate' research questions to broadly shape and thus tame the scope of the research, rather than face complete open-endedness. There is always need to begin somewhere. But this required some consideration of 'sub-ordinate' research questions. This is not to diminish the importance of 'emergence' to the process (which remains a contentious point as suggested), but rather, to emphasize its importance within the context of seeking to actively construct theory within a somewhat defined field of interest and with inevitable constraints.

Guiding questions have been used to generate thought about which set of specific methods could be used to get the ball rolling in the direction that satisfied the curiosities of the researcher. Posing questions can be difficult in an open field and there is need to generate a focus of inquiry to be assured of "gathering up the important aspects of the phenomenon under study about which we initially know little" (Makyut and Morehouse 1994, p53). Generative research questions have been posed, but there has never been an expectation that these would remain critical to the unfolding evolution of the research process and its 'findings'.

Thus, beginning with the knowledge that WWOOFing is most certainly part of the contemporary backpacking/travel scene and a personal sense that there is something significant about WWOOFing, I discovered that it had not been described as such in relevant parts of tourism discourse. Certainly it is a small fraction of all tourism activity,

but why has it grown so much in popularity in the past decade? Why (and how) has it been transferred into new spatial and cultural contexts? How do WWOOFers think of themselves? Is WWOOFing a form of (alternative) tourism or an alternative to tourism? What is the significance of this activity to hosts and to WWOOFers? What is the potential for this activity in the context of tourism, self-development, and alternative forms of economic development? Why has it been overlooked in studies of contemporary alternative tourism?

Such questions emerging from researcher interest of course imply some hunches. Acknowledgment of these areas of interest/curiosity outlines the disposition of the researcher, but adoption of the tenets of the grounded theory approach offers opportunity to both declare and 'suspend' this interest, without committing to a set of tightly defined research questions that presume to know exactly what is of most importance to the current generation of WWOOFers and hosts. Research participants were able to construct their version of their engagement in WWOOFing, while the researcher focused on grasping and interpreting these, with a view to generating 'theory' in a broader sense¹², building on these grounded, empirical 'realities'.

4.2 Research Methods Used

Taking non-positivist research to be more like a 'path of discovery' (Denzin and Lincoln 1998) than a logical and linear process, the intent was to develop a set of tools to allow the researcher a significant degree of freedom to move between inductive and deductive phases, with the detail of the research design emerging in tandem with data and theory. But the need to begin somewhere and the requirement to set out a formal research proposal, along with the generative research questions above produced commitment to three mechanisms of data collection:

- 1) **Field work as a WWOOFer**, allowing for experiential immersion, participant observation and the development of researcher perspective on the WWOOFing phenomenon.
- 2) **In-depth, semi-structured interviews with WWOOFers and hosts**, to explore and develop understanding of the experience of WWOOFing and hosting from subjects' perspectives.

¹² A distinction is made between 'general' theory, which refers to theory developed with a very broad scope and great generalisability, and substantive theory, which addresses and theorizes about 'middle range' concerns rather than 'universal' phenomena. A substantive theory is one which has sufficient variance and detail to be able to explain 'similar' situations and can, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p267), "speak specifically for the populations from which it was derived and to apply back to them."

- 3) **Structured written surveys of a sample of hosts and WWOOFers** in Australia to explore in 'census' style, a range of aspects of the WWOOFing experience for current participants, seeking a less detailed but more 'representative' subject based perspective, through the lens of researcher generated survey instruments.

These three techniques were conducted in overlapping fashion, allowing each to inform, shape and triangulate the other, ideally overcoming deficiencies in each method and increasing the strengths of each. Serendipity and practicality also played important roles in their development and timing, while the research process was also developed closely with WWOOF Australia in the early phases to gain the support of the membership. As an experienced WWOOFer offering to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality, WWOOF Australia supported this study, helping to achieve host support and involvement as well, and to avoid worrisome ethical difficulties and unacceptable researcher intrusion into the lives of hosts and WWOOFers.¹³

As mentioned, crucial missing 'factual' information about the scale and character of the WWOOFing phenomenon in Australia was generated by surveys largely to contextualise data generated by subjects in interviews and conversation, which have been handled interpretively. But these surveys produced more than context, also feeding data into the interpretive analytic process along with that from participant observation and interviews, resulting in a triangulated approach overall.

Experiential Immersion and Participant Observation

Minichiello et al (1995, p69) observed that social scientists are interested in the experience of social reality through people's own routinely constructed interpretations of it, otherwise they risk "constructing and imposing on that informant a fictional view of their reality".

Interviews can produce a verbal account of experiences of social reality, but by this means alone researchers may not be able to observe subjects in their everyday (or unrehearsed) moments. Using participant observation as well - where the researcher becomes a participant in the process or phenomenon being studied (Veal 1997) - provides a richer 'ethnographic context' for utilizing other data. Participating in an activity can also lend credibility and provide access to the 'inside story' (or stories) of

¹³ WWOOF Australia prepared a letter of support, a newsletter article and other assistance that facilitated the research process in many essential ways.

participants. But admitting to being a researcher in such a situation can compromise the 'insider' perspective, creating an 'us and them' barrier. Alternately, not admitting to being a researcher in order to maintain an illusion of inclusion in the group can generate problems associated with honesty, trust, loyalty and betrayal when at some point, the truth about identity and purpose is revealed, for example, to gain formal informed consent for a participant's later involvement in an interview.¹⁴

Participant observation can involve extensive and regular note taking, supplemented by photos, audio and possibly video as a means of memory enhancement for later contextualisation. There can be problems of how to pick appropriate informants, with particular need to avoid choosing only those that are 'friendly' but possibly 'unrepresentative', which leads back to the more general problem in using ethnographic methods of the issue of objectivity and authority.¹⁵ But authority is nevertheless achieved by first recognizing and affirming the existence of cultural relativism rather than any absolute standpoint from which to claim authority in relation to the interpretation of socio-cultural life-worlds. Different perspectives are 'positioned' differently in the world (Hall, citing Abu-Lughod (1991)) and what is gathered and learned in the field is then best regarded as 'partial truths' (Hall, citing Clifford 1986), which together contribute towards the larger socio-cultural world. There is a widely held expectation that ethnographers be reflexive in their work, providing readers with "a brief, clear picture of how the research we have done has been or could have been affected by what we bring to it...[by] revealing details of our own experience or background to readers up front" (Hall 2003).

There is a limit to the sense in which fieldwork in this research can be considered as ethnographic participant observation. In particular, ethnographically based research is generally considered to involve significantly more lengthy involvement in the field, this in itself acting as a component of the persuasive affirmation of the authority of any conclusions offered. In contrast, the grounded theory approach adopted was more generally focused on a slice of life than deep immersion in a particular community. But as with ethnographic research, the process of analysis of ethnographic materials was

¹⁴ Depending on the nature of the research and the degree to which observations might be affected by participants knowing they are being observed, a timing decision must be made about revealing researcher identity.

¹⁵ Hall (2003) suggests that ethnographic research is unlikely to be replicable as in the natural sciences, since subjects – even the same ones – will not say or do exactly the same thing on different occasions. Ethnography is not based on large numbers of cases from which valid generalizations about 'reality' can be made and objectivity in that sense, is not considered as having the same weight either.

continuous and involved arriving at many interim conclusions rather than a final truth. The experiences themselves, photos and written journals have been drawn upon during the process of data interpretation, chiefly to recall, inform and continuously prepare for later, ongoing research stages, particularly through 'theoretical sampling' in interview situations. Importantly also, this form of fieldwork provided a practical if not essential means of 'accessing' interviewees.

This therefore made immersion in the experience of WWOOFing and participant observation a useful *component* tool within the broad research approach outlined above. Staying with participants for varying periods (both hosts and WWOOFers) and observing them in action allowed contextualisation of what they said, both in an out of interview mode. It produced an 'insider' perspective which itself served to sharpen 'theoretical sensitivity' during the research process.

Initially, hosts were identified by the researcher in much the same way as WWOOFers would choose them, on the basis of convenience and interest. In some cases, field work was conducted with my partner and small child, thus hosts that accepted children became a selection criteria during that phase of the research. I also travelled and WWOOFed independently in other research phases, so that the field of choice was wide in terms of host selection. In total, 13 host properties were visited (3 in New Zealand) between January 2005 and February 2008. A total of 41 WWOOFer nights were spent at these properties, involving meeting and interacting with 20 hosts and many WWOOFers (see Chapters 5 and 6).

In-depth Interviews

If social reality exists as meaningful interaction between individuals, then it can only be known through understanding others' views, interpretations and meanings. Since much interaction depends on language, words are central and in-depth interviews are highly valuable. They are commonly used as part of an exploratory study in order to gain understanding of a field and to develop, rather than test pre-existing theory, which has been the intent of this study.

Bogdan defines the in-depth interview as "repeated face to face encounters between researcher and informants directed towards understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, situation as expressed in their own words" (in Minichiello, Aroni et al. 1995, p68). In practical terms, WWOOFers are highly mobile and inherently

difficult to locate, while hosts are widely scattered. For the most part interviews were arranged following on from a period of WWOOFing fieldwork in several locations within Australia and these interviews were not therefore, repeated encounters.

In terms of a desired strategy for qualitative sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994), the intent was to conduct research on-site in order to view and interact with WWOOFers 'in their natural habitat' or 'in vivo' and as a 'fellow traveller', engaging on an equal basis to increase chances of being regarded with a degree of trust not likely to be afforded to 'outsiders' (Minichiello, Aroni et al. 1995). With awareness of this, WWOOF administrators had recommended approaching WWOOFers as a 'co-WWOOFer' and thus, having developed rapport, being able to determine on an individual basis their willingness to be interviewed. In any case, contacting WWOOFers can only be achieved by luck as a 'fellow traveller', or by intervention, presenting logistical and methodological problems with engaging with WWOOFers. Since WWOOF hosts accommodate limited numbers of WWOOFers, it was also recognized that it would perhaps not be an efficient use of time to rely entirely on luck to find WWOOF hosts with both WWOOFers on site and the ability to accommodate another at the same time. In other words, some form of strategic intervention in site selection to access WWOOFers was required to make the most efficient use of the fieldwork time available. I therefore recruited 'helpful hosts' via the WWOOF newsletter and emails to a sample of previously surveyed hosts who had been asked if they were willing to further assist the research by contacting me when they had suitable WWOOFers willing to be interviewed.

Suitability was given to be a combination of several criteria. *Availability* and *willingness* to be interviewed were key since each experience in the process of qualitative research is taken to be as valid as any other for informing about the phenomenon. However, one exclusion criteria was proficiency *with English language*, since qualitative research requires good comprehension of questions and correct interpretation of replies. In addition, the issue of *WWOOFing experience* was a selection criterion, since it is less likely that first time WWOOFers would have much in the way of valuable insight, other than that associated with anticipation. There is however also value in considering the views of the inexperienced.¹⁶ Thus the criteria for inclusion were sufficient English language ability and having had three WWOOFing experiences, or three or more weeks of WWOOFing experience, at the time of interview.

¹⁶ One Scottish WWOOFer was interviewed on the morning after his first day of WWOOFing as the opportunity presented itself.

In addition, this study necessarily operationalised a range of strategies for qualitative sampling, as described in Table 6 below.

Wwoofing is strongly concentrated in Australia and there are known Wwoofing ‘hotspots’ (Wwoof administrators, pers comm, 2004-05), correlating approximately with the occurrence of higher densities of people living in so-called ‘alternative’ communities or pursuing ‘natural’ lifestyles (see Chapter 5). In terms of Wwoofer demand, hotspots have also been found to be correlated with the co-occurrence of other social, cultural and natural area tourist attractions and transport linkages (see Chapter 6). For practical, logistical and time related reasons, there are likely to be some biases in terms of the locations from which interviewees were selected. But given the concern in this phase of the research with what participants said about their experiences, it was not considered appropriate to be overly concerned with randomising the spatial aspects of the interviewee sample.

Table 6: Strategies for Qualitative Sampling

Convenience	Use of conveniently located persons or organisations – eg friends, colleagues, neighbours etc
Opportunistic	Similar to convenience but involves taking advantages of opportunities as they arise
Maximum variation	Studying contrasting cases. Opposite of homogeneous sampling, in order to develop concepts in their variation
Purposeful	Similar to criterion sampling, but may involve other considerations eg max variation, ‘typicality’ etc
Stratified purposeful	Selection of a range of cases based on set criteria eg representatives of a range of age-groups or nationalities

Adapted from Miles and Huberman (in Veal 1997).

In-depth interviews were conducted with 8 hosts at 6 host properties, and 8 Wwoofers between July 2005 and February 2008. Each interview was digitally recorded with the permission of research subjects, having explained the purposes of the research and having gained informed consent. Consent forms were signed by all interviewees prior to interview conduct.

Different types of interviewing techniques exist, varying in degrees of formality and structure (Minichiello, Aroni et al. 1995). An unstructured interview involves no schedule of questions or order of topics of discussion and relies significantly on social interaction to obtain relevant information. It is more like a conversation in which participants are

encouraged to tell personally meaningful stories, rather than give a formal report. As an immersed co-WWOOFer (as described), opportunity existed to conduct (but not always to record) such interviews in the field during WWOOFing work. Depending on the circumstances, this was often a prelude to the revelation of researcher identity and the attempt to gain WWOOFer permission to later undertake and record more focused and more formal semi-structured interviews. In these cases, no fixed wording or ordering was involved and open-ended questions were used as much as possible, flowing around an interview 'schedule' that was retained as a prompt if needed. Interviews involved a minimal degree of control of conversation by the researcher, conducting the process more like a directed conversation. An awareness was maintained by the researcher of the need to avoid presupposition in generating information about other people's experiences and posing specific hypotheses that limit what insights and views participants will offer.

Interviews generally ran between 1 to 1.5 hours and participants were initially offered the opportunity to speak about anything relating to their involvement and experiences of WWOOFing. This allowed for issues of concern or importance to emerge immediately and subjects were pursued in accordance with researcher's perceptions of participant emphasis and interest. In keeping with theoretical sampling processes advocated by grounded theory practitioners (Strauss and Corbin 1998), it became important with each new interviewee to inform questioning in accordance with some focus on issues of emerging theoretical interest arising from consideration of earlier interview (and other) data. Evolving concepts constantly compared and revised in accordance with emerging insights gained through research in the field and analysis of data allow for theory to 'emerge' (be induced) from the data rather than purely from ('forced') preconceptions of the researcher (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967). In practice, concepts, themes and theory are constantly retested in the field, revising the interview prompt 'format' and foci and/or guidance of conversation.

Recognizing that subjective worldviews underlie multiple truths about multiple realities perceived by individuals involved in an interactive social phenomenon, in-depth interviews are a crucial way to capture their social reality and to build theory from their stated views:

different models of reality lead to different propositions about what reality is, and therefore demand different ways of establishing what can be accepted as real; different ways of

validating or justifying the data relevant to reality; and different strategies for collecting such data (Minichiello, Aroni et al. 1995, p73).

In general terms, validation, generalisation and repeatability have limited utility in qualitative research, with a more appropriate requirement being that any other researcher, using the same methods, should be able to arrive at a similar conclusion (Minichiello, Aroni et al. 1995; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Grounded theory techniques aim to incorporate in the process of theory building, mechanisms such as constant comparison and theoretical sampling, that ensure that moving conceptually from the specific to the general reflects the widest variation that can be (practically) found in the field (Strauss and Corbin 1998). However, additional or external validation of evolving concepts and 'final' (but always interim) theory through 'member checks' is also a useful process. One approach for dealing with the question of data validity (are they telling the truth?) and its accurate interpretation (have I understood it correctly?) is to "try to make provision (as above) for the ethnographic context in which the informant is operating" as suggested by Schwartz and Jacob (cited in Minichiello et al (1995)).

It had been hoped that by undertaking the participant observation phase and by operating as both a researcher and a co-WWOOFer, it has been possible to validate and interpret verbal data during its collection and analysis with some 'authority' and precision. Clarification of meaning in the interview context and the later 'clearance' of interview transcripts with all interviewees (by email transactions) were also used to this end.¹⁷ Thus the final theoretical construction (in the sense of constructivist grounded theory outlined earlier) remains the researcher's interpretive construction, built upon such cooperative foundations.

Interview data was transcribed, analysed and coded using NVIVO software. A process of open coding and node building was undertaken for each interview, drawing also on field observations and quantitative data at hand (see below). This process involved close reading of each transcribed sentence, 'coding' any particular meanings detected into 'nodes' (and sub-categories as appropriate) which represented an understanding of participants' concepts. Using NVIVO, such nodes were tentative groupings of similar meanings from across the spectrum of coded data, able to be modified by altering the name, the 'definition' of the node, or shifting its relationship to other nodes, as new challenges to its conceptual 'fit' were detected. That is, each node as a relational

¹⁷ Only one (pair of) WWOOFers were concerned to alter their transcript, but only to the extent that any identifying names of people and places would be removed from research publications.

conceptual marker was tested for utility through each new coding process and revised wherever a more plausible interpretation that captured meaning more broadly or plausibly was possible. The process of coding and node building therefore evolved within and between rounds of analysis. Sometimes, the test of conceptual fit came from analysis of the next interview transcript, from new insights in the field, or from consideration of statistical data.

In general, as concepts and theory emerged during this process, they were tested for fit or plausibility through the collection and analysis of further, sometimes more targeted data in a process of 'constant comparison' of codes/nodes and relationships between concepts and theory (Pidgeon and Henwood 1996; see Strauss and Corbin 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1998). As discussed in Section 5, this process led to the eventual structuring of the data as a whole around the core category of *engagement*.

Surveys of WWOOFers and Hosts

Due to relatively undeveloped data collection systems at WWOOF Australia, there was need to seek more detailed quantitative and qualitative information from the membership using a pair of surveys of WWOOFers and hosts.

Hosts have fixed addresses and contact details and so are readily contactable and easily approached to complete a written survey. However, surveying mobile and unpredictable WWOOFers is more difficult. By working closely with WWOOF and by gaining their authorisation for conduct of the research, a high level of host support for the research was generated, thus enabling the use of a number of amenable hosts to pass on surveys to WWOOFers and return them to the researcher on behalf of WWOOFers. It is important to note however that while encouraging participation, WWOOF Australia positioned itself as independent of the research itself.

It was agreed that to merely invite 'interested' participants to be involved would be unlikely to achieve a strong degree of involvement alone, possibly even resulting in a biasing of respondents towards those with a particularly positive stance towards WWOOFing. At the same time, there was clearly need to allow all potential participants an opportunity to decline involvement, but in a way that was not too onerous. To this end, WWOOF published a brief note in their quarterly newsletter that 'advertised' the research to all hosts and recommended their involvement in the independent research proposed. WWOOF also assisted with the selection of a representative sample and

with survey design and to resolve a mutual concern to develop and undertake the survey to the fullest extent possible, without wasting paper and postage costs.

1) *Survey Design*

The survey instrument components of the research were developed through a number of stages. A draft survey of hosts and WWOOFers was initially developed based on preliminary understandings and/or hunches about the WWOOFing phenomenon through:

- personal experience as a WWOOFer;
- general discussions and informal interviews with WWOOFers and hosts in Australia and New Zealand in 2005;
- discussions with the managers and staff of WWOOF Australia and NZ; and,
- consideration of available literature about hosts and WWOOFers (at the time).

The chief aim was to develop surveys that would gather missing key information, analysis of which might help clarify the relevance of burgeoning theoretical conceptions (including those of other authors) for which there was no reliable Australian data. A related aim was to produce data that WWOOF Australia had expressed an interest in retrieving.

Draft surveys were therefore developed and with the assistance of my supervisor and WWOOF Australia, these were fashioned into pilot surveys tested by a group of enthusiastic hosts who were identified following notification of the research in the WWOOF newsletter. The pilot was completed and reviewed by ten hosts and two WWOOFers and relevant refinements were then made.

2) *Survey Implementation*

Several issues shaped the process of implementing these surveys which may have influenced the overall rates of response.

Not all hosts have use of computers, printers, nor email and of those hosts who have, not all would be comfortable with allowing WWOOFers to use their computers to complete an online survey. A decision was made in the early stages that to make it as easy as possible for all hosts to participate, and to simplify the process for the researcher, a paper-based survey and a return reply paid envelope system would be used. This was done with a full awareness that many hosts are environmentally conscious people, and that all measures would need to be taken to ensure that paper

use was as targeted and efficient as possible. This meant staging the survey engagement process, allowing hosts to decline involvement at early stages so as to be reasonably realistic about the final sample size, before a final costing and printing of paper surveys was completed. In addition, there was need to ensure that any paper that was used was produced from recycled sources and that all printing was double sided.

A costing was undertaken to determine an affordable, practical and suitable sample size which took into account printed materials needed in each participant survey pack and postage. It was concluded that about half of the WWOOF host population should be sampled and selected for the researcher by WWOOF staff.¹⁸ The initial sample comprised 830 hosts, representing 52% of the population of hosts at that time.

The concept of a 'census' was arrived at by the researcher in an effort to achieve both a snapshot of WWOOFing activity at a certain period of time, but also to provide a practicable, workable temporal boundary to the survey period. WWOOF Australia were happy to work with this concept, and a period of one month was agreed to be neither too long to be cumbersome, nor too short to be unworkable in terms of 'capturing' a picture of WWOOFer activity. The month of May was chosen out of a desire to avoid months that were on average too cold or hot, and to avoid holiday periods that may have meant many hosts were away from home and thus not hosting.

Initial contact was made with sampled hosts largely by email (or by standard mail if no email was available) to explain the research and to invite host participation. This included a letter of introduction, co-signed by the WWOOF manager and research supervisor. It was suggested that hosts could contact the researcher (or WWOOF) if they had concerns about the research or wanted to be withdrawn from the sample. This process left 675 hosts in the target sample.

At this time, a number of hosts suggested that an online version of the survey should also be made available to save paper and expense. While this option had been initially considered unworkable, further investigation and a quick poll of all emailable hosts led to the decision to develop an online version of the surveys, prior to determining and

¹⁸ As there are two membership renewal periods per year, use of this as a basis for sample selection ensured the sample was random and also created a spatially representative sample since there is no geographical stratification involved in its generation.

ordering the final print run for paper-based surveys. This saved a significant amount of paper postage costs and time in data entry.

The final sample of hosts were then either posted or emailed at the end of April 2006 and a reminder letter or email was sent to all sampled hosts during the second and third weeks of May 2006.

3) Data Collection

Data from paper based surveys was collected by reply paid mail, with data entered manually into SPSS software for later analysis. Data was also gathered directly from the online survey host site and fed directly into a survey database and then into SPSS.

Hosts

Table 7 provides results of the survey implementation process as described. 323 hosts responded with completed surveys, representing a 39% response rate, and approximately 20% of the total WWOOF host population in May 2006.¹⁹

Table 7: Hosts & WWOOFer Survey Response Rates, May & Nov 2006

Survey Date/Type	Hosts	WWOOFers
May 2006		
Online	83	19
Paper	240	139
<i>Subtotal</i>	323	158
June 2006		
<i>Additional Ad Hoc</i>	-	1
November 2006		
Online	-	29
Total	323	188

WWOOFers

158 WWOOFers completed surveys during May 2006, which is about half the number of participating hosts (Table 7). Additional WWOOFer surveys were conducted in November 2006 to add bulk to the response rate from WWOOFers and also to attempt to take a snapshot of WWOOFer activity at the opposite end of the calendar in the event that it might provide interesting data about spatio-temporal 'seasonality' of WWOOFing. This was done by inviting hosts who, during the first round of surveys, had indicated their willingness to further assist the research by administering additional

¹⁹ Based on an estimate of 1600 hosts by WWOOF Australia in 2006.

surveys to WWOOFers. Thus 100 hosts willing to receive and send surveys electronically or to allow WWOOFers access to online surveys then repeated the administration of surveys to willing WWOOFers throughout November 2006. This second round produced a further 29 WWOOFer responses, while an additional serendipitous survey was completed during an interview with a WWOOFer in June 2006, bringing the total number of returned WWOOFer surveys to 188.

5 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODS

This chapter has discussed a broad range of issues associated with researching WWOOFing in Australia. Philosophical issues in approaching such a subject and the impact of the adoption of particular ontological and epistemological stance(s) on the choice of methods available to study this topic have been considered. A case has been made for the adoption of several overlapping research methods in order to produce diverse data, to be handled by an overall grounded theory research approach. This approach offers the opportunity to explore a relatively unknown phenomenon using a wide range of data sources and perspectives, building new theory from the ground up. Such theory is developed iteratively, from increasing familiarity with progressively uncovered knowledge of the empirical 'realities' of the participants in the phenomenon, including in this case, the researcher.

However, challenges brought about by the postmodernist critique of objectivist knowledge have persuaded the researcher to aim to follow a 'constructivist' path in adopting the general procedures offered by grounded theory. This means that the idea of researching this phenomenon from the perspective of a truly objective observer external to events is considered problematic both from the point of view of how theory develops from data and how realities can be represented. Nevertheless, some 'traditional' objectivist statistical information has been selectively sought to contextualise, complement and feed into this research process. Though survey data has been analysed and presented as objectively as possible in this study, the research has been guided by the belief that an individual's personal understanding of the phenomenon of which they are part and the meanings they make and take from it are crucial to any representation of that phenomenon and how it is experienced. This brings us full circle to the need for an empathic gathering and interpretation of participants' perspectives through researcher immersion and participant observation in

the phenomenon and through participant interview methods that allow participants the freedom to represent themselves and the meaning of their experiences.

In the end it is hoped that all sources of data have been both integrated into and have framed and 'validated' a constructed account of what the WWOOFing phenomenon is about in the following chapters.

Finally, previous chapters made clear the need for consideration and representation of both host and WWOOFer perspectives in developing an analytical framework. Even prior to data analysis it was apparent that the WWOOF model of exchange functions more or less successfully on the basis that hosts and WWOOFers each *engage* with the other to a 'sufficient' degree (WWOOF Australia 2008; 2009). In the process of analysis the data was found to support the view that engagement is a key *process* in the act of WWOOFing. It also emerged as a necessary *condition* in order to have and to sustain interactive experiences for both parties that satisfied their motivations. In addition, analysis of interview data also began to suggest that engagement is a concept that is part *motive*, part *experience* and part *outcome* for different actors in the WWOOFing exchange and could be viewed across these broad categories. In fact, there seemed to be great utility in using these larger emergent categories to organise data from both sides of the engagement, which progressively solidified into an arrangement of data and a conceptual framework for working with it.

The 'zone' (spatial, temporal and perhaps temperamental) in which engagement happens developed as a 'natural' or necessary and logical focal point viewed in this way, which as represented in Figure 4, can be considered in terms of *motives* for, *experiences* of, and *outcomes* following WWOOFing experiences. This framework hinges on the idea of a *zone of engagement* which developed as the 'core category' because it provided for a synthesis of, or a nucleus for relating many conceptual elements arising from the data and the literature.

The 'structure' presented here was not preconceived, but evolved through iterations of data collection and analysis, using core grounded theory techniques: coding and node building, constant comparison of incoming data against evolving understandings and interpretations of conceptual relationships, and memoing to record observations and reflections about the evolving conceptual framework. It is presented here in advance of later analytical discussion because it seemingly also helps explain interconnections between data and theory and to provide a way to structure the remaining thesis. That

is, it shows the way in which various generative research questions have been addressed in terms of data sought and collected, for both hosts and WWOOFers, across the broad categories of motives, experiences and outcomes. It shows pre-, during and post WWOOFing/hosting experiences for both parties, the outcomes of which may feedback into motives to undergo further experiences (or not).

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework for Data Arrangement and Analysis

Questions	WWOOFers	Hosts	Discussion
<i>What is the WWOOFing phenomenon about?</i>			Broad 'generative' research question
Background <i>Who is WWOOFing/hosting?</i>	Survey Qs: 2-7, 13-14	Survey Qs: 1-6	Portrait of 'background' of WWOOFers and hosts involved in the research
Motives <i>Why are people WWOOFing/hosting?</i>	Survey Qs: 8, 9, 15	Survey Qs: 14, 15, 16, 22	Motivating factors driving WWOOFers & hosts together (including desire to have particular experiences/outcomes)
Experiences <i>What experiences happen? How often and where are they had? What is a 'successful' experience?</i>	Survey Qs: 10-12, 16, 18, 20, 21	Survey Qs: 7-10, 13, 17-19, 25-29	Frequency, duration and nature of WWOOFing and hosting experiences. Assessments of experiences and factors contributing to these assessments, leading to various outcomes.
Outcomes <i>What have been the outcomes of involvement with WWOOFing/hosting? What is the current and potential role/contribution of WWOOFing to hosts' lives/sustainable production?</i>	Survey Qs: 17, 19, 23, 24-27, 28-30	Survey Qs: 20, 21, 23-24, 30	Amount/type of assistance to hosts; Insights, learning or other developments arising for WWOOFers and hosts from involvement in WWOOFing experiences, feeding back into hosts/WWOOFers motives for repeat experiences.

Finally, the structure presented here also indicates the way in which data from 3 sources (surveys, interviews and participant observation) have been sifted and structured. In the process of analysis, many conceptual categories could be meaningfully or sensibly brought together around this broad structure (the finer details of which are described in Chapters 5-7). As it began to appear that no further empirical field data collection was likely to yield new insights, variations or challenges to the conceptual relationships that had been built, a process of testing for 'saturation' was then facilitated by introducing relevant literature about WWOOFing to the formal data coding process for critical analytical scrutiny. This involved further coding and some reorganisation of nodes and their relationships to accommodate insights contained in that data, however, it became progressively clear that for the purposes of the current study (and given available time and resources), a point of saturation had been reached. This is by no means to say that more data collection would categorically not produce further variations in worldviews that would prompt the need for some conceptual reworking, particularly given the stated assumption that this phenomenon is characterized by the existence of multiple, divergent truth(s) reflecting the unique

understandings of diverse individuals. But following Charmaz (2003), the approach taken in this study has been to state that the researcher, while attempting to use traditional grounded theory tools and processes to generate and deal with data, is ultimately a participant in the final construction, but aware of and acknowledging the limits and the impermanency of the final explanatory construction offered.

On this basis, the following two chapters (5 and 6) are dedicated to establishing WWOOFer and host perspectives, which in turn provides a platform for enlarging consideration of the interactive, experiential zone of engagement between WWOOFers and hosts and their places (Chapter 7), to finally build towards one plausible understanding of what the WWOOFing phenomenon is about.

CHAPTER 5: HOSTING

1 INTRODUCTION

With the exception of a few mixed method research papers focused on WWOOFing in southern New Zealand (2006; McIntosh and Campbell 2001), there has been no published information available for answering some basic questions about WWOOF hosts in Australia: *Who are they? Why have they joined WWOOF? What do they do on their properties and what work are they getting WWOOFers to do? What are their experiences of hosting WWOOFers and what are they getting from that experience?*

Answers to these questions have been sought and reported here to build an understanding of the overall scale, properties and dimensions of the WWOOFing phenomenon from the perspective of hosts and to contextualise their experiences of interacting with WWOOFers. Key findings are generated from analysis of written surveys (see Appendix 5.1) of a sample of hosts completed during May 2006.

As well as serving to answer vital *background* questions about hosts and initiating investigation in to the nature of the *motives*, *experiences* and *outcomes* of WWOOF hosting, analysis of this survey data was also invaluable in progressively guiding the researcher in undertaking in-depth interviews with hosts and WWOOFers which occurred in practice before, during and after the survey period.

The second key function of this chapter is to bring to light insights generated by an iterative, analytical working through of such interviews with hosts. This qualitative perspective is drawn upon as relevant, in parallel or complementary fashion to the quantitative, to integrate and contextualise understanding.

Analysis of *qualitative* material reminds us that there are multiple experiences which represent multiple unique subjects, each constructing and representing *their* realities. Earlier chapters have described the value and appropriateness of adopting varying (ontological and epistemological) standpoints in both constructing and reading this chapter which draws on both etic and emic perspectives. In the context of a large volume of data available and collected, it must be acknowledged that choosing to work *widely* with data means that much scope for exploratory *depth* and interpretive justification in this work is likely to remain, given space and time limitations.

Finally, this chapter should be read as the partner to Chapter 6 which focuses in a parallel way upon WWOOFers, together providing essential empirical-analytical backdrop to the more theoretical *synthesis* in Chapters 7 and 8.

Survey Sample and Limitations

323 completed host surveys were received, comprising approximately 20% of the total estimated host population at the time. The survey was implemented in May 2006 across Australia, and hosts were distributed across states as shown in Figure 5, which also provides a distribution ‘benchmark’ from 2004 data. Sampled hosts were broadly in concurrence with general host distribution, with exceptions being disproportionately high representation in Tasmania and low representations in Queensland.¹

Figure 5: Representativeness of Sample by State: WWOOFers (May 2006) and Hosts (July 2004 & May 2006)

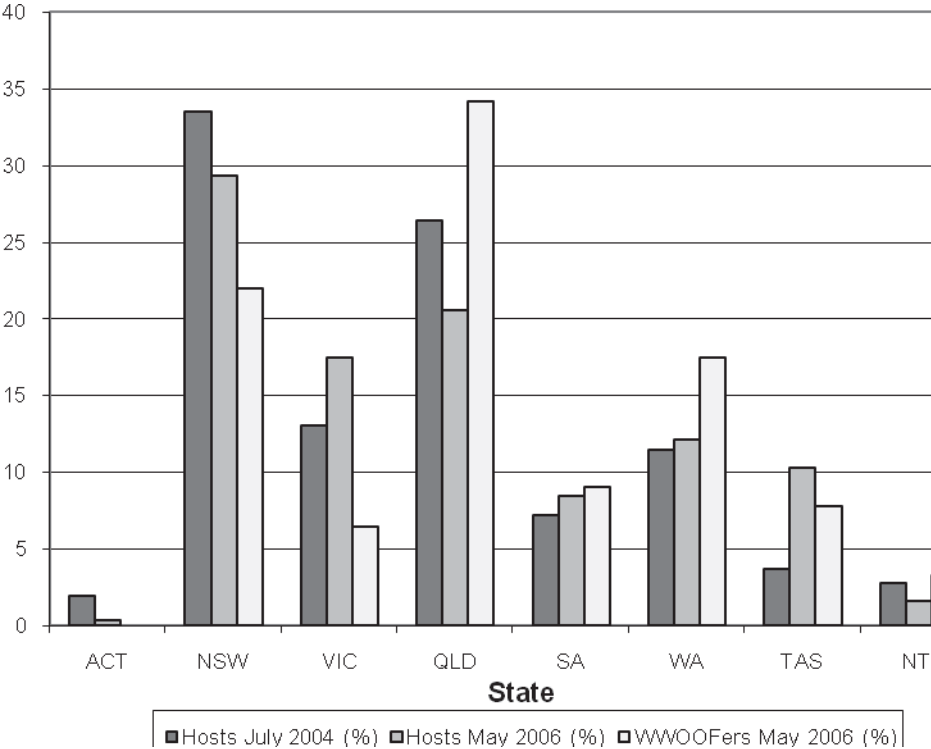


Figure 5 also illustrates the spread of participant WWOOFers in May 2006, which is also reasonably representative in terms of host distribution, perhaps being higher in Queensland and Western Australia and lower in NSW and Victoria than might be

¹ Cyclone Larry in far north Queensland had recently occurred and many hosts from that region made contact to apologize for their inability to participate to due other priorities.

expected on the basis of a simple host distribution by state and may be partly accounted for by 'seasonality' factors (see Chapter 6).

The margins of error, or 'confidence intervals' for the data drawn from Host surveys reported in this research, are ultimately determined by sample size: the larger the sample, the greater the 'confidence interval' of statistics generated by and about that sample (Veal 1997). Appendix 5.2 discusses the issue of the representativeness of the sample used in this research and details on relevant confidence intervals for the Host survey, including the likely variability in considering description and analyses presented in this chapter.

Hosts were instructed that it would be assumed that the person mostly responsible for and involved with WWOOFers would complete the survey. However, in practice, there were several approaches used to complete surveys. Most were completed by individuals, but 9% were completed on behalf of or by a couple. Therefore, particularly in the case of host demographics, data provided were not always directly comparable since it was not always possible to determine which partner had completed the form and therefore, which details referred to whom. Effort has been made wherever possible to provide a method to compensate for incomplete or inconsistent information arising because of this limitation.

2 PROFILE OF SURVEYED WWOOF HOSTS

Drawing on these surveys, but also upon the work of Nimmo (2001b) and McIntosh and Campbell (2001), it is possible to develop a profile of contemporary WWOOF hosts in Australia. Interviews, participant observation and other involvement with hosts has added depth and nuanced understanding to this profiling effort. In particular, this section explores key *demographic* and *psychographic* insights into hosts, as well as the range of property foci and key activities among participants, which helps contextualize and build towards a later focus on *motives* for, *experiences* of and *outcomes* from involvement in the WWOOF program.

2.1 Key Demographic Insights

Key demographic information about Hosts is provided in Table 8, with further details in Appendix 5.3.

Table 8: Demographic Profile of WWOOF Hosts (as at 2006)

Age	
Age range	24-85 years
Mean age	52.5 years
Median age	52 years
Sex of Person Most Responsible for WWOOFers²	
Female: Male ratio	1.5 : 1.0
Host Family Situation	
Nil Children	19.2%
Dependent children	36.8%
Independent & dependent	2.8%
Independent	41.2%
People in Host Households	
Host's partner	72.8% of cases
Host's children	53.7%
Other family members	30.0%
No one else (i.e. a 'solo' host)	14.7%
Employees	13.7%
Property/community shareholders	10.9%
Formal Education Attainment (National Average*)	
Postgraduate degrees	20% (3.2%)
Graduate diplomas and certificates	16.8% (2.4%)
Bachelor degree	20.3% (15%)
Secondary school qualifications	13.9% (47.6%)

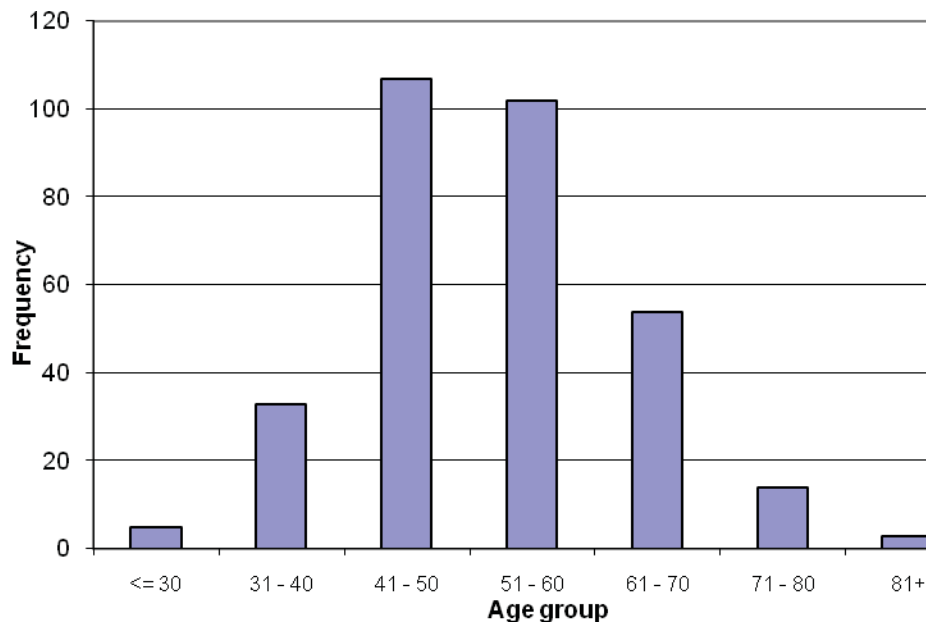
* ABS data (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) various years)

There was an age range of 65 years, with a mean and median age of about 52 years. Two-thirds of participants were aged between 41-60 years (see Figure 6), comparable with that found in the case of New Zealand WWOOF hosts where the figure was considered to correspond with the demographics of farm hosts in New Zealand generally (McIntosh and Campbell 2001, citing Taylor and Little 1997).

56% of respondents were female, 35% male and 9% completed the survey as a couple, again approximating the NZ situation in which WWOOF related matters were also the primary responsibility of females (55%), compared with males (24%) and shared (16%) (McIntosh and Campbell 2001). It was also found in the case of NZ that women were mostly responsible for organic farm duties, though comparable data was not collected as part of this survey.

² This refers to the sex of the survey respondent, who was encouraged to be the person in the household with overall responsibility for WWOOFers.

Figure 6: Age Distribution of WWOOF Hosts (n=318)³



Host households are composed in various ways and WWOOFers accordingly interact with a range of types of people. The life cycle or life stage of hosts and their various relationships with others provides insight into the make-up of WWOOF hosts as a group and into the experience for WWOOFers (see Table 8). About 37% have children at home, again comparable to findings in NZ (McIntosh and Campbell 2001). Nearly three-quarters of hosts have partners at home, while other family members are also a significant group in households (30% of cases). 15% are solo hosts, that is single (with or without children, employees or other property shareholders). As well as friends and relatives frequenting households, 14% of hosts have employees that WWOOFers may interact with on-site and 11% of host properties are part of shareholder or community title (or multiple occupancy) properties.

The host population are a relatively well educated group (see Table 8 and Appendix 5.3, Table 5) when compared with data for formal educational attainment for the wider Australian labour force (ABS). There is again concurrence with NZ data (McIntosh and Campbell 2001), where the figure for all tertiary qualifications is almost identical with Australian data 56%.⁴

³ To compensate for the problem of demographic data provided for and by couples, an average age was used to provide an estimate more consistent with data provided by the majority of individual respondents.

⁴ In considering these proportions, they cited a study of entrepreneurship in New Zealand farming enterprises (Taylor and Little 1997) which found that farmers with diversified farm tourism enterprises have higher education levels when compared with the national average for farmers.

2.2 Key Psychographic Insights

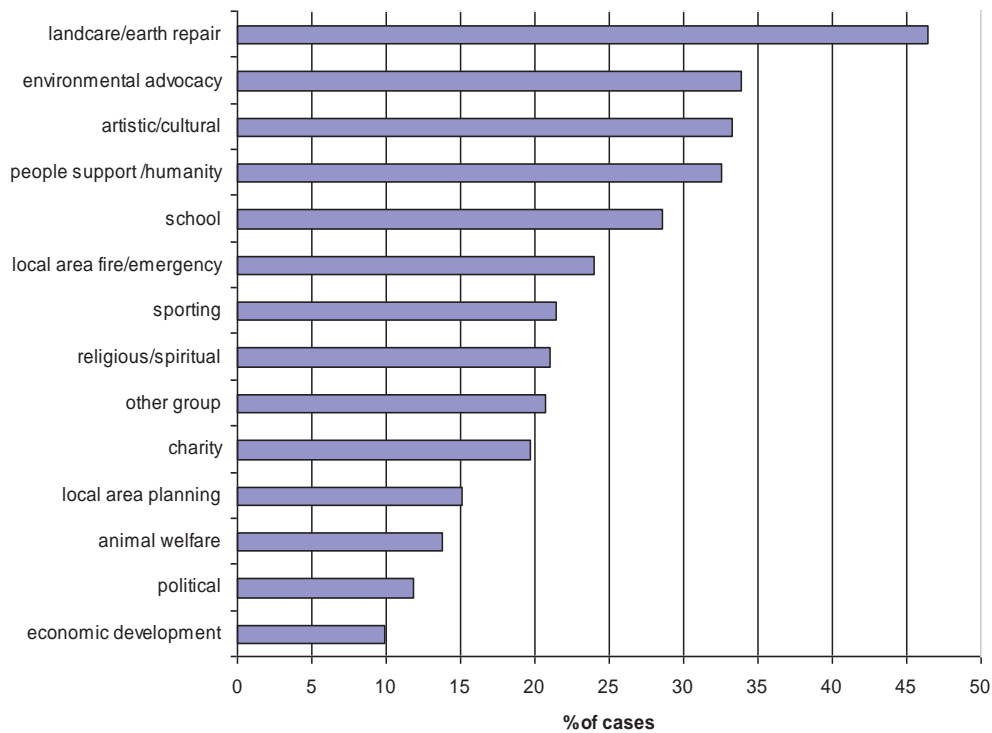
Several survey questions provided some useful background 'psychographic' insights for profiling hosts, including broader connections to community, prior travel and WWOOFing experiences.

Hosts selected/listed community groups they were involved with, which helps characterise an inclination generally towards (pro)actively building 'social capital', defined usefully as "the product of social interactions with the potential to contribute to the social, civic or economic well-being of a community-of-common-purpose" (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000, p23). As might be expected, there was found to be a relatively high proportion of involvement in environmental restoration (i.e. Landcare) and environmental advocacy groups (see Figure 7). While Landcare is primarily about individual landholders and groups addressing local problems which may not be sufficient to address the scale of problems at the "landscape level" (Curtis and De Lacy 1996; Herbert-Cheshire 2000), it can be noted that WWOOFers are often used to help address such issues. Additionally, a range of benefits to rural communities from involvement in voluntary conservation groups, including health, well-being, and social capital benefits including community connectedness (Moore, Townsend et al. 2007, p255), while reducing some of the potentially negative aspects of Australian rural life for some. Involvement in the WWOOF community, which is a strongly social and practical activity, may be similarly connected to a raised quality of life.

WWOOF hosts overall are well travelled in other cultures or countries, with over 52% claiming to have travelled 'a lot', 42% having travelled 'a little', and only 6% had never travelled in other cultures or countries. Interestingly, the high levels of formal educational attainment among hosts mentioned above appears to *correlate* strongly with the tendency of these hosts to travel to other cultures and countries (see Appendix 5.3, Figure 2). Higher levels of formal educational training are likely to afford the opportunity to travel by leading to higher income vocations, or to be correlated with greater opportunity in life generally. Additionally, travel 'broadens the mind' and has strong educative value, a view that has long been held to be one of the promises or benefits of travel (Obenour 2004).⁵

⁵ Over 400 years BC, Euripides claimed that experience and travel "are as education in themselves", while Mark Twain famously wrote that "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness..." (<www.thinkexist.com>). Today, the tourism industry and tourism scholars continue to promote this view of travel (see for example, Brown 2000, p30).

Figure 7: Membership of Community of Groups



Anecdotally, some had chosen to become hosts following their own WWOOFing experiences as travellers, with nearly 24% having WWOOFed at least once before they became hosts.

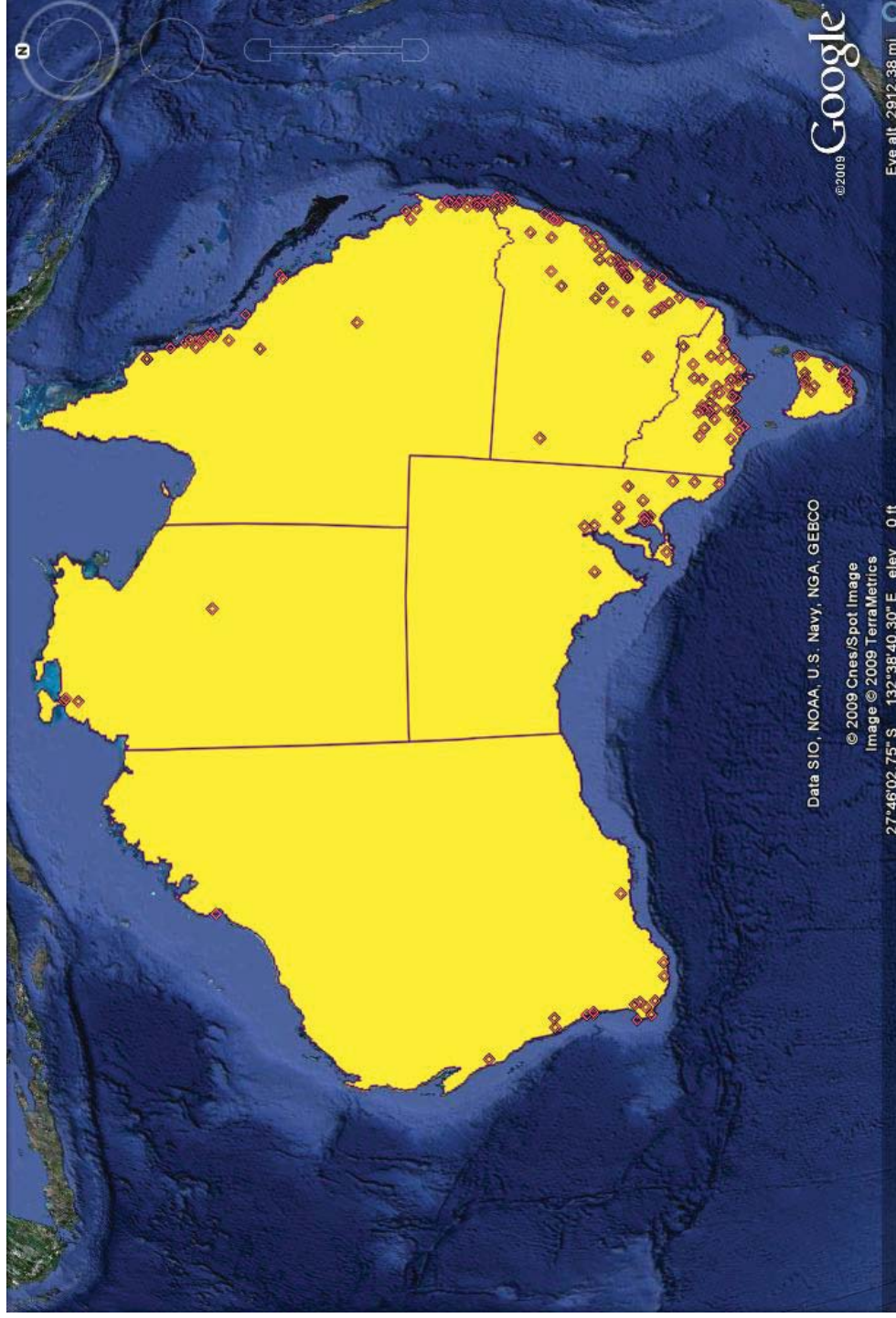
Australia is clearly the place in which most WWOOFing events have occurred for all participants.⁶ There are increasing opportunities to WWOOF in the developing world, but WWOOFing remains largely a developed world phenomenon. This perhaps reflects the origins of WWOOF in the developed world but perhaps also, as discussed later, the importance of the role of personal economics for many WWOOFers in travelling in developed (i.e. 'expensive') countries.

2.3 Host Properties and Focus of Activities

The survey produced important information about the distribution of host properties, the focus of activities and the economic base of host properties, the types of accommodation offered and work done by WWOOFers.

⁶ 53% had WWOOFed in Australia, 17% in New Zealand and 11% in Europe and about 20% in other regions, not including however the Indian sub-continent, South America, the Pacific or Africa (see Appendix 5 for details).

Figure 8: Spatial Distribution of Respondent WWOOF Hosts (May 2006)¹



¹ Note that the point data represented in this figure has been clustered for the purpose of presentation and does not therefore represent a one to one mapping of respondents.

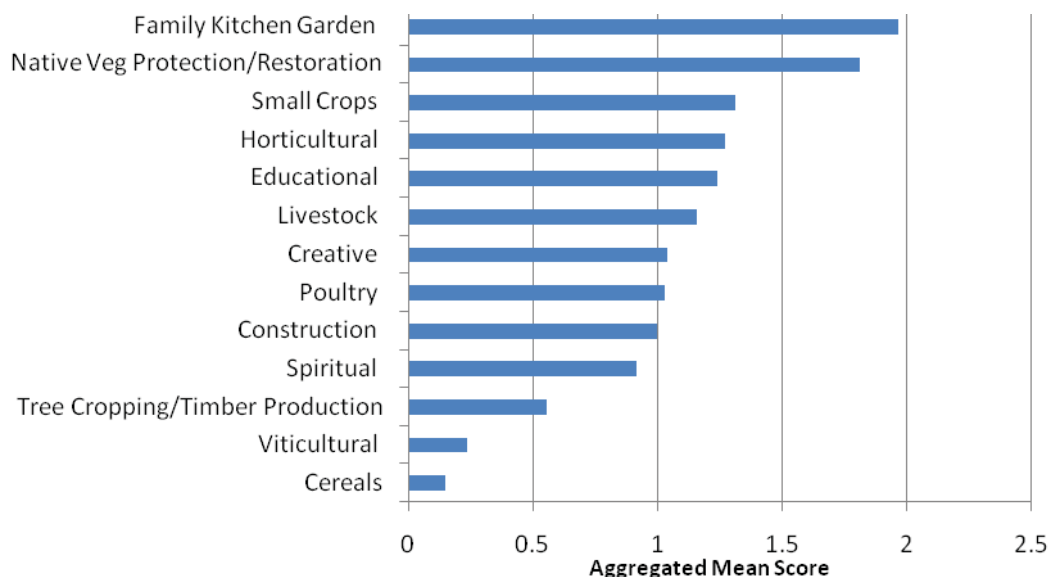
Distribution of Hosts

While there is wide spatial distribution of host properties, there is also a concentration of hosts in accordance with the distribution of the Australian population more generally, to the extent that they are clustered near to main coastal cities and service centres (see Figure 8). 65% of WWOOF hosts live in *country/rural regions* and about 13% live in *villages or small communities* (see Appendix 5.3, Table 8). About 10% live in *remote or isolated areas*, while the remaining 12% are distributed through *towns* and *cities* of various sizes. This pattern of distribution of hosts is close to being the inverse of that for WWOOFers in their home countries and also reflects to a large degree the spatial distribution of WWOOFing activity (Chapter 6).

Focus of Property Related Activities

Out of a selection of property related activities, the main focus of hosts (derived from a mean aggregate score), is shown in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference..**

Figure 9: Focus of Property Related Activities



The strong focus on family *kitchen gardens and self-sufficiency*, followed by *native vegetation protection and restoration* shows that overall WWOOF hosts are not strongly focused on commercial production. Emphasis on these non-commercial activities accords with description in Chapter 2 of hosts sharing a trait of self-sufficiency

and sustainable, sometimes frugal living. It also concurs with relatively limited income generation from host properties (see below).¹

Of those that do have an emphasis on commercially oriented property activities, *small cropping* and *horticulture* were most significant. Properties with an *educational* focus (such as environment, sustainable building (Photo 4), sustainable lifestyle, native wildlife, natural healing etc) ranked more highly than a number of other 'traditional' farming activities such as *livestock*. *Creative* enterprises and lifestyles are also pursued by some WWOOF hosts, often in tandem with some of the other listed foci.

The particular combination of activities on each property, in conjunction with highly diverse property locations, creates a multiplicity of unique WWOOFing experiences, as reflected in any sample of host entries from the WWOOF book.

Photo 4: Mudbrick host home, Hunter Valley Region, NSW Australia



Income Derived from the Property

Only 14% of hosts derived 100% of their income from their properties, or conversely, 86% derived some proportion of their income off-farm (details can be found in

¹ It is worth noting however that at the time the surveys were completed, a number of hosts declined the invitation to participate because in their words, they were too busy with a harvest or other crop or farm related activity at the time. Thus there may have been a bias in sampling away from those with a commercial focus compared with hosts living a less busy, outcome oriented lifestyle.

Appendix 5.3, Table 9). For 76% of hosts, over 50% of their income is derived from external sources, with a median of only 10% of income being property related. McIntosh and Campbell (2001) found 48% of hosts in NZ had off-farm income sources, indicating greater dependence on farm income than in Australia.

Organic Status of Host Properties

The relationship between ‘organic’ practices and WWOOFing is not straightforward, as there is no requirement by WWOOF that hosts be independently certified organic, but they do need to demonstrate in their application for membership some connection with organic production and/or philosophy. As such, only about 17% of hosts are (full or transitional) certified organic or biodynamic producers. Survey data also shows that certified hosts seeking (and paying for) third party market guarantee of their organic status are somewhat more commercially oriented (i.e. obtain a higher proportion of income from their properties) than those with limited income derived from property related activities (see Appendix 5.3, Table 10).

The survey also found that the proportion of organic food typically eaten on host properties varies widely, and that a pragmatic rather than dogmatic alignment with the ideals of the ‘organic movement’ is taken by the host community.

Accommodation and Work

WWOOFer accommodation is unregulated and typically adapted from what is available. There is therefore significant variety, but WWOOFers most commonly occupy a space or room in the host’s home (see Table 9).

Table 9: WWOOFer Accommodation

Type of Accommodation	offered by hosts %
space or room in the family home	65
separate building	36
caravan or bus	27
tent site	14 ²

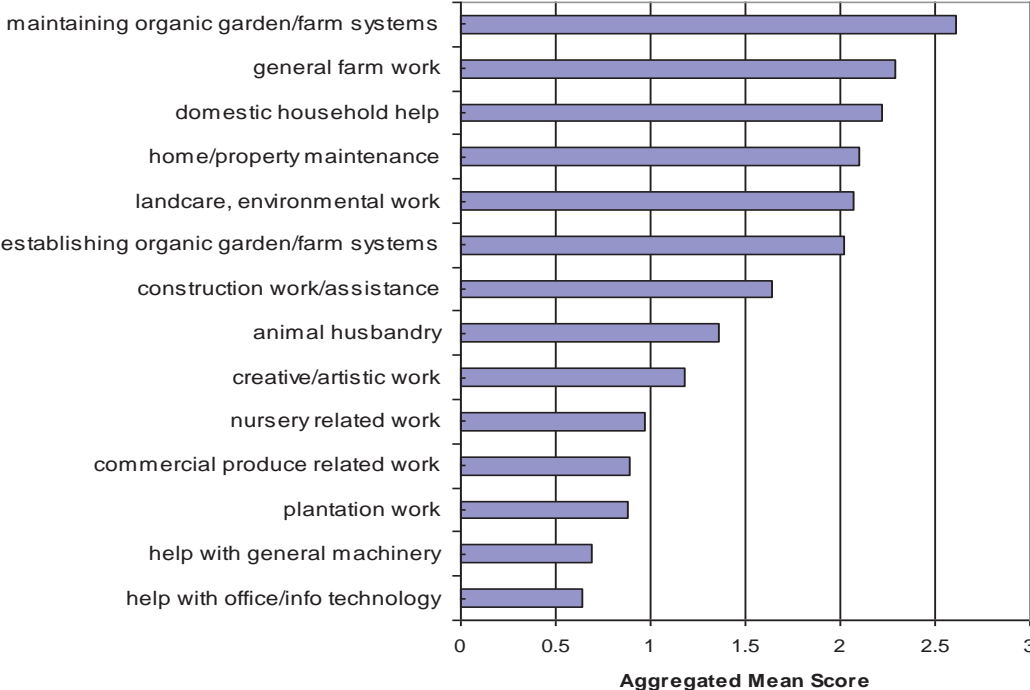
For surveyed hosts, the most important WWOOFer work based on an aggregated mean score is *maintaining organic gardens/systems*, followed closely by *general farm work*³ and *domestic household help* (see Figure 10). *Home and property maintenance* jobs and *landcare or environment related work* are rated as next most frequent. The

² Not offered as the only option.

³ Taken to mean not specifically organic, but other farm related work.

only other regular type of work performed is the *establishment of organic gardens/systems*. These results reflect the above mentioned concern with self-sufficiency oriented production and native vegetation restoration, and while domestic and home maintenance work were ranked more highly than many other types of farm work in terms of frequency, WWOOFers are generally expected to help, in daily chores also in the kitchen, as a member of any household would in an effort to 'fit in', particularly when there is a mutual expectation that living with and having cultural experiences is important to WWOOFers.

Figure 10: Types of Work Done by WWOOFers



3 PROFILE OF HOSTS VISITED AND INTERVIEWED

In the course of this research, 41 days were spent visiting 20 hosts on 13 host properties in both Australia and New Zealand. In a few cases, hosts were approached and visited directly, having contacted and explained the research before meeting, sometimes as a result of participation in the survey. In most cases, hosts were contacted and initially visited by me as a WWOOFer, with the researcher role revealed in accordance with the development of rapport with hosts and other WWOOFers.⁴

Table 10 lists hosts that were part of this research project. Eight were interviewed, forming the basis of most of the interpretive qualitative analysis presented hereafter.⁵ Hosts varied in many ways and naturally all variations and permutations cannot be easily stated. However it is worth describing here a few key host attributes to at least sketch hosts' backgrounds in preparation for the detailed discussion to follow.

Visited hosts ranged in age from late-20s through to mid-70s and included married couples with and without children or grandchildren, young singles and older divorcees. Only one host had previously been a WWOOFer, who was young and fit and benefitted as a host largely from the social dimensions of assistance, since he had chosen to set up a commercial organic production enterprise and thus increasingly live far from the city life that he also enjoys. Two older host households had encountered health problems and were increasingly needing some physical assistance with their properties.

Several hosts had medium to large scale certified organic commercial production enterprises, while another had only a metropolitan suburban backyard with a dozen fruit trees and various kitchen herbs. This is also typical of the many who are "pursuing a simple sustainable lifestyle" (Cosgrove 2000, p40) and most encountered therefore had small scale kitchen gardens and perhaps some other form of on- and off- property based income (see Table 10).

⁴ On three occasions early in the research, my role as a researcher was not stated, allowing me to observe in the manner of a WWOOFing participant, building a feel for the research field and how it would later be approached in a methodological sense. This was also the result of a consideration of local circumstances, assessment of the hosts and the needs of my young family who were in some cases, travelling with me. In cases where researcher identity was not revealed, observations drawn from the field have not been included in a direct way in this research, but were indirectly drawn upon in fashioning the methodology and in general inductive theoretical development.

⁵ In these cases, all necessary informed consent was provided and documentation signed and collected, with copies also given to hosts.

Table 10: Hosts Involved in Research

Name	Date	Region/Country	Age group	Sex	Days Spent	Key foci and/or attributes
Hosts Interviewed						
S1	July 2005	Clarence Valley, NSW, AU	50-60	F	1	Commercial ti-tree farm
N	Jun 2006	Illawarra, NSW, AU	70-80	M	1	Permaculture education
A			70-80	F		Self-sufficiency, Charity
B	Jun 2006	Hunter Valley, NSW, AU	50-60	M	2	Natural building
S2			50-60	F		self-sufficiency
JL	July 2006	Hunter Valley, NSW, AU	20-30	M	2	Small scale commercial crop production
						Self-sufficiency
M	Feb 2007	Hunter Valley, NSW, AU	60-70	F	4	Small scale poultry production
						Self-sufficiency
D	Feb 2007	Kangaroo Valley, NSW, AU	50-60	M	4	Moderate scale commercial crop production
Other Hosts Visited						
C	April 2005	Motueka, South Island NZ	40-50	F	5	Self-sufficiency
A			50-60	M		River fishing tourism B&B/lodge
M	April 2005	Blenheim, South Island NZ	50-60	F	4	Self-sufficiency
J			60-70	M		Small scale livestock production
G	May 2005	Whangarei, North Island NZ	30-40	M	4	Moderate scale commercial crop production
B			20-30	F		
M	Mar 2006	Central Coast, NSW, AU	50-60	M	2	Moderate scale commercial crop production
M	Feb 2007	Mid North Coast, NSW, AU	40-50	M	4	Commercial nursery production
I			40-50	F		Self-sufficiency, Farm forestry
M	Aug 2007	Melbourne City, Vic, AU	60-70	F	5	Self-sufficiency
A	Feb 2008	Northern Rivers, NSW, AU	40-50	M	3	Semi-intentional community/multiple occupancy
C			30-40	F		Self-sufficiency, Sustainability/Permaculture education
Total	-	-	-	10 F:10 M	41 days	

Hosts generally receive limited WWOOFers at a time in conventional, single family situations, while a semi-intentional community containing about 6-8 informal dwellings and 10-15 permanent residents often hosts multiple WWOOFers (i.e. 15 during one visit).

Some hosts visited were relatively and deliberately remote, with one pair home schooling their children not out of necessity, but to avoid the limitations they perceived as typical of conventional schooling, such as peer pressure and mainstream values. This was mirrored in their avoidance of mainstream media and culture in the home and underpinned by a strong philosophy of frugality linked to sustainability:

We're proud of how cheaply we can live... We have absolutely no debts whatsoever. We have money in the bank. And the government insists on paying us money... And none of it has been really asked for... [T]o me, one very good rule of thumb, an indication of how sustainable somebody is, is how little they spend¹ (Hosts B&S).

A focus on sustainable living or production was manifest in the ideals of most hosts visited in varying ways. At least two groups of hosts interviewed had become part of the environmental counter-culture movement in the 1970s and via that pathway, had become WWOOF hosts. One of these hosts, a childless elderly couple who were long-term foster parents, had dedicated (and donated) their semi-rural property to a charity as part of their desire to help disadvantaged people generally. Convinced of looming social and economic chaos and future collapse of the capitalist economic order, apart from the necessity of being self-sufficient, they aimed to “house ‘tearaways’ or... people that had been chucked out of work...” and teach them, and later WWOOFers, about Permaculture and other techniques of sustainable farming and living. The need to be “self-supporting” was essential to them for economic reasons in the past and will be essential in the future if economic collapse means “things get really grim” and people learning about and teaching skills, techniques, technologies and planning for self-sufficiency (specifically citing Permaculture founder Bill Mollison) “are the people that are going to exist”² (Host N).

¹ Maxey (2006, p238) also observed among growers in ‘alternative food networks’ studied in the UK (some of whom are WWOOF hosts) that one of the responses to low income was ‘simple living’, with locally sourced diets and frugal lifestyles being part of ethico-political stance or “critical attitudes towards conspicuous consumption” accompanied by an awareness of the confrontation between increasing neoliberal globalization (and the race to the bottom economics that entails) and the operation of local, minority world sustainable food systems.

² Note that only one of this pair of hosts expressed this view, with the other expressing mocking disagreement during discussion of these matters.

Research in NZ demonstrated that a range of land uses among hosts was common, with some not seeing their work as farming, but as ‘enhancement’ of the land and where practiced, farming was often regarded as “a means of self-sufficiency” (McIntosh and Campbell 2001, p118). One visited host had been long seeking to establish and demonstrate a best practice example of sustainable land management and self-sufficient living on their property, with the assistance of WWOOFers. Host D shared his vision for a form of national service, focused on reparation of Australia’s many labour intensive sustainable land management crises, partly based on but extending the Landcare aspects of the WWOOF model, in the service of the country.

While many hosts may perhaps rightly be regarded as forward thinking, “unsung heroes” of sustainable production and living (Jamieson 2007)³, one host argued there can be grounds for querying the ideas, experience or credentials of some hosts who may promote themselves as visionary practitioners and educators for a sustainable future. Indeed two interviewees were disappointed to find that they seemingly knew more about some sustainability ‘basics’ than some of the hosts they encountered, concluding that some hosts seek to attract WWOOFers for reasons not in keeping with the spirit of the program.⁴

Hosting was a means of fitting a convergence of interests together for one woman, who had known of WWOOF through 25 years of involvement in the organic movement and had been a SERVAS host and had pen-friends since a young age. WWOOF hosting began when she developed some serious ‘health challenges’, but was an extension of a long-term interest in people from around the world. Thus the cultural exchange dimension was central, in some contrast to other hosts interviewed that are quite specifically and very pragmatically focused on getting help:

³ Jamieson (2007) portrays hosts in New Zealand as “quietly working away in their corners of the country producing healthy food without toxins, saving heirloom crop varieties, planting trees, practising self-sufficiency and improving the soil for the next generation” (back cover). Yet she acknowledges that with the ongoing turnover of members, not all hosts truly or deeply identify with, nor practice the principles of organic agriculture and lifestyle.

⁴ These WWOOFers had encountered some ‘strange’ hosts, by which they meant that they suspected the possibility of some ‘negative’ intent. Farrer (1999) observed that “The people you are likely to meet while WWOOFing are usually not your mainstream types”, but “New Age types and free-thinking city escapers” warning that “isolation can do strange things to people” in documenting the short lived WWOOFing experience of some friends with an alien conspiracy theory host in Queensland.

...I'm not just doing it for the fun of it. Or to learn about South Korea or Germany, because, I've had enough WWOOFers, I know about those places... Yes! Getting the work done. I wouldn't do it just for giving them a place to stay! (Host S1).⁵

Another host now limits the range of nationalities he accepts as language differences and communication problems made the exchange less workable given a very pragmatic and production outcome oriented approach.⁶

Such a brief glimpse into selected aspects of the backgrounds of the contemporary WWOOF hosts encountered cannot represent the full spectrum, but combined with further exploration of quantitative and qualitative data concerning *motives*, *experiences* and *outcomes* of involvement in WWOOF hosting, the profile of hosts will be given greater clarity and expression.

Understanding initial and ongoing motives for hosting is a crucial component of an answer to the key question at the heart of this research, since this phenomenon is as much about the involvement of hosts as it is about WWOOFers. The variety of tasks hosts need doing offers some context for their decision to host, and knowing they are relatively well educated and travelled people, some of whom WWOOFed themselves, offers some further insight. But the need for a deeper and more direct exploration of hosts' varying motives remains.

4 MOTIVES FOR HOSTING

This section discusses initial motives for hosting and ongoing reasons for hosting, which naturally overlap to varying degrees and are not always or easily distinguishable: initial motives may be tempered by experience and experience may sometimes exceed or fall short of expectations. This raises two important issues and assumptions. Firstly, one of the key factors affecting motivation for an action is the expected benefit (to oneself and/or to others) and it can therefore be difficult to disentangle motives from expected benefits. While *expected* benefits are therefore at the centre of this discussion on motives, the actual experienced and sometimes overlapping benefits of hosting are discussed later under the broader heading of *outcomes*.

⁵ At the same time her partner was away teaching organic gardening skills to villagers in the South Pacific.

⁶ This host was particularly critical about the qualities of Asian females as WWOOFers, whom he regards as squeamish and who become incapacitated when placed in a natural (and therefore 'dirty') setting by their misplaced faith in and reliance upon technological modernity (Host D).

Secondly, it is assumed that former hosts have mostly not had their motives sufficiently met in terms of desired benefits/outcomes. Being largely unrepresented in this research, what follows is limited to those hosts for whom motives for involvement *are* (at present) reasonably matched with the reality of their *experiences* and *outcomes*. Understanding of these motives is now shaped by exploring directly their stated reasons for being a host, as well as how they view the 'ideal' WWOOFer and how hosts screen or select WWOOFers based on certain attributes.

4.1 Reasons for Being a Host

Surveyed hosts stated briefly in their own words the most significant three reasons for hosting, which were coded into 16 categories (including 'other'; see Table 11).⁷

The 'top 5' of these which account for 68% of all responses, were:

- Social interaction, company & friendship (54% of cases)
- Help with farm & garden related work (45% of cases)
- Help generally (36% of cases)
- Intercultural exchange or understanding (> 30% of cases)
- Having a cultural experience (> 20% of cases)

The [1] social interaction aspect of hosting is a very strong motivator (20% of all responses), however, getting help from WWOOFers is more significant overall when *all* help related categories [2 and 3] are combined. [4] *Intercultural exchange/understanding* and [5] *having a cultural experience* (both connected with [1] *social interaction*), are similar but differentiated on the basis that in the first, the emphasis is upon the importance of an interactive *shared* experience that produces a mutual outcome through an exchange, while the latter is focused more on the *gain* to the host (This distinction arises from the consideration that the WWOOF program fundamentally involves an *exchange* between its participants, who in the process, can *give, gain* and *share*. Host motives can be considered with this distinction in mind, in order to more clearly articulate the working in practice of the central notion of *exchange*. Thus 'raw' categories of data have also been organised and tallied under these broad headings in Table 11 to help to clarify host motivations at a fundamental level in relation to these particular components of *exchange*).

⁷ As with any data of this type, it is acknowledged that comparisons between categories implies that they are discreet and fixed in meaning, when in reality they are more likely to be overlapping and contestable. For example, some categories may well only represent a particular emphasis on a part of a larger concept.

By arranging raw categories under these three broad headings, along with [4] the desire to *promote awareness of the key sustainability related ideas/ideals* at the heart of WWOOFing (important to about 11% of hosts) and [5] ‘*other*’, a manageable conceptual arrangement of data was produced that reduced raw categories into the 9 ‘final’ categories graphed in Figure 11.

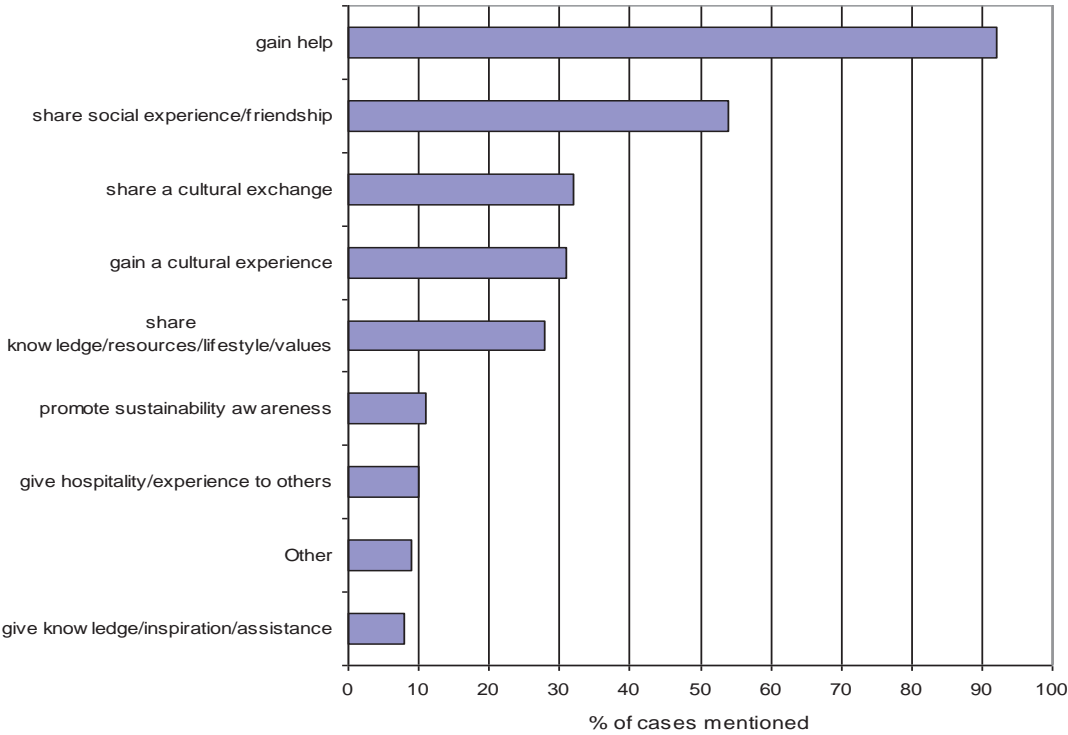
Table 11: Reasons for Being a Host

Raw Category (rank*)	No.	%	% of cases	‘Final’ Category	%
To Gain					
(2) help with farm/garden/property work	143	16	45	gain help	29
(3) help generally	115	13	36		
(5) cultural experience	63	7	20	gain a cultural experience	11
(8) cultural education for kids	34	4	11		
(14) help with affordability of labour	14	2	4	gain help	4
(15) help with landcare	13	1	4		
(16) help to establish/develop property	8	1	3		
<i>Sub total</i>		44			
To Give					
(9) provide hospitality/experience to travellers	32	4	10	give hospitality, experience to others	4
(12) teach skills/inspire/help	26	3	8	give knowledge, inspiration, assistance	3
<i>Sub total</i>		7			
To Share					
(1) social interaction/company/friendship	171	20	54	share social experience, friendship	20
(4) inter-cultural exchange/understanding	102	12	32	share a cultural exchange	12
(6) place ⁸ /lifestyle/experience	44	5	14	share knowledge, resources, lifestyle, values	10
(11) knowledge/ideas	28	3	9		
(13) exchange generally	17	2	5		
<i>Sub total</i>		42			
To Promote					
(7) organics/env'ment/sust'bility awareness	35	4	11	promote sustainability awareness	4
<i>Sub total</i>		4			
Other					
(10) Other	30	3	9	other	3
<i>Sub total</i>		3			
TOTAL	875	100			100

* rank of original category shown in parentheses

⁸ By which it was usually meant a ‘beautiful’ or ‘special’ place as seen by hosts.

Figure 11: Reasons for Hosting



Gaining help is clearly the most important reason for hosting, mentioned in 92% of cases and making up 33% of all reasons given. Yet in total, hosts seek to *gain* from WWOOFers (44%) as much as they seek to *give to and share* with them (49%). Sharing a social experience or a cultural exchange, taken together, was mentioned in 86% of cases, making up 32% of all reasons given (see Figure 11). Thus, through this lens, it is only by a small margin that hosts are primarily motivated to host WWOOFers to gain help, suggesting that it is unhelpful to expect single motivations to explain complex social realities (Midgely in de Young 2000).

Gaining Help

As originally intended, WWOOFers can and do provide labour to those engaged in labour intensive organic practices, particularly but certainly not limited to the endless task of weeding (Pollard n.d.; van Raders 1994). While most commercial hosts do not or cannot rely upon WWOOFers, it has been observed that in general they do willingly help hosts to get things done for which there might otherwise be no time or financial resources to achieve (Kowalski 1993; Pollard n.d.). But some WWOOFers experience negative feelings about working for the commercial gain of others, which can represent unpaid labour and, border on being exploitative. WWOOFer J, who enjoyed her experience on a commercial farm, suggested it could be difficult to overlook the fact

that commercial growers “obviously are more interested in your working than in your personality”. Upon becoming disappointed that “there are really many farms which have nothing to do with organic and which even spray their stuff”, some may perceive that hosts “just use wwoof because its a cheap deal...” (L, WWOOFer on NZ Bulletin Board, 2005).

Naturally, such negative experiences reported to WWOOF helps to remove exploitative hosts from the system, which is vital feedback, given the way it currently operates.⁹. But the key point to be made is that the help sometimes required of WWOOFers can be deemed to be ‘outside’ the scope of the organic production related ideals of WWOOF which can be disappointing, particularly if WWOOFers are keen to learn about sustainable living and production:

They weren’t really into the whole sustainability thing. I think for them it was a way they could get some labour, cos he was kind of quite old... (WWOOFer R.)¹⁰

It is not difficult to find evidence that WWOOFers are commonly used to assist on ‘marginal’ forms of help as these examples (see Box 1) of ‘help wanted’ on the WWOOF Bulletin Board attest.

Box 1: WWOOFer Help Wanted

“Attention all female wwoofers - Delicate hands required

Attention all ladies, If you are good with your hands we need you!! This will be your easiest wwoofing YET!!! I have a little scrumptious boy and a wonderful husband and need help with my jewellery business. I am preparing for a festival in my local town and returning to my home country of Canada in one month and need help to prepare. We have a 15 acre organic farm surrounded by a 300 acre nature reserve. It is beautiful here right now...with a beautiful creek with lovely water holes. Looking for help with simple knotwork for jewelry.” (Host, WWOOF Australia Bulletin Board, 2007).

⁹ Note that Help-X is a similar exchange used by many travellers, which was developed by an ex-WWOOFer. In this system, feedback or user reviews/ratings are able to be posted directly by helpers online, in the manner of much “Web 2.0” based interactive online systems. This type of feedback mechanism is likely to be very effective in improving the performance of hosts and helpers in this system.

¹⁰ These WWOOFers were incredulous at finding that the household relied upon the unsustainable use of disposable plates in preference to washing up.

“Handy person & cleaning angel needed north of [popular tourist town] - near beach

Help urgently needed to help clean up after flood and around the house and garden... Bush living in suburbia! We welcome you to our home on a large block at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac backing on to a bush reserve. We are establishing organic veggie gardens & renovating. We make organic smudge sticks to sell on the internet. Work is varied when available”. (Host, WWOOF Australia Bulletin Board, 2007).

Rother (2009) claims “the jobs are not always as you imagine”, recounting his experience of WWOOFing in Europe: “Romantic notions of farm work” were sometimes hard to achieve.

“I need you to find a broken sewage pipe. It's down there somewhere,” said our host, pointing to a general area of ground where he thought we'd find the reason behind his blocked toilet. “It should only be a couple feet down,” he reassured us (Rother 2009).¹¹

While some WWOOFers might not be keen to be doing marginal or off-target forms of WWOOF work, the assistance of elderly or infirm hosts is clearly part of the WWOOFing experience and the motive of some hosts:

When you are our age you get to depend on young bodies... See we're that old that we need young bodies to fall back on. We're selfish! [laughs]. But we feed 'em well, don't we? (Host N).

Host M also confided that WWOOFers were increasingly helpful in the context of her recent serious illness which along with needing to work offsite for income, had made it very difficult for her to do much of the more physically demanding work she wanted done. WWOOFing also offered her a way to recover from illness and an abusive relationship and to get some help to “create the place that I want to have” (Host M).

Hosts however, may not always have the ideal, or imagined and preferred work available when it suits WWOOFers:

[W]e often get a WWOOFer ring up and we say, ‘Yes you can come’ and then we sit down and think, ‘What on earth are we going to do with this WWOOFer? ... Then before they arrive

¹¹ When they decided to “make our excuses and leave early”, Rother (2009) recalls: “Our hosts were gracious and did not seem to mind that no one would be around to help them refurbish their swimming pool, the next task on the list”.

we try to think of projects that don't really rely on any skills, cos we don't know the person too much. (Host B).

If seasonality of production or weather means there is less farm related work to find for them to do, hosts need to provide alternatives:

But even if there's not work to do, we've got cleaning up to do... but also, on rainy days, we can't work out there and I say, you know, 'and housework'. That's how I get my windows washed. WWOOFers wash my windows. (Host S1).

Socio-Cultural Motivations

The motive of getting work done is important to hosts and the intent and appropriateness of the work varies and is a constant management issue for WWOOF staff. But as Madden (n.d.) found with one host:

It's not just that we need help in the garden, although that's important. Most of the time we live our separate lives like everyone else, but WWOOFers are a catalyst for us all to get together and have a good time.

Thus some regard the work being done as important as socio-cultural reasons for hosting, including *sharing social experiences/friendships*, *sharing a cultural exchange* and *gaining a cultural experience*. For a couple that home-school their children, the cultural education provided by WWOOFing for their children is significant. In their home, WWOOFers are advised to expect to play a particular role in interacting appropriately and they try to make WWOOFers understand "that some of their time ideally, will be spent with the children, and for the children's benefit" (Hosts B and S). Pollard (1998, p72) suggests that opening up children's worldviews is a relatively widespread benefit and motive among hosts. Bringing the world to the doorstep opens eyes "to a whole new world of different lifestyles, religions and cultures", more than conventional schooling could do without actually travelling.

For Host JL in setting up a small scale organic produce enterprise, WWOOFer help was "crucial", but this single host was keen to emphasize that the social interaction aspect of hosting was "make or break" in terms of his ability to remain on his isolated rural property, as well as providing "an added layer of diversity, which you don't get in small towns" (Host JL).

Gaining and Sharing Knowledge

Meeting people is about social interaction, but meeting those from other regions, it can also be important because of a desire to ‘find out’ or learn about people from ‘other cultures’:

I’ve always been interested in people and their countries and their way of life and I felt that that [hosting WWOOFers] was one way of doing it (Host M).

Many have found that they learn at least something practical from WWOOFers as well, such as cooking or language, which can renew their enthusiasm for further hosting.

Learning can be mutual, with one very experienced host reported as saying “We’re students and teachers to each other. We’re working together, living together, growing together”, also expressing her desire to share her “idyllic spot” (Doherty 1997). Such *sharing of knowledge, resources, lifestyle and values* as a motive for hosting, was found in 28% of cases among surveyed hosts (Table 11 and Figure 11, p174):

I usually try to take them and show them around my area because I’m very proud of where I live and I just love this place and there’s, lots of interesting things to see here... I figure that um, that it’s a great place to come to. Um, we’re a very lucky country, we’ve got lots of things here in Australia that a lot of overseas countries don’t have, and I’m proud of that fact (Host M).

B likes it because, you know, he’s teaching them about the birds and the wallabies and the animals that come up here and... he’s got lots of animal stories. And so he likes giving to those people (Host S1).

Elderly host (N) takes the opportunity while hosting Korean and Japanese WWOOFers to “give them a lecture on what the Japs did and what the Koreans did to the Australians” [during the war]. He (half) jokingly continues to say “I’ve created a lot of trouble in Korea”.

Promoting and Sharing Ideas

One WWOOFer participant had encountered hosts that shared their passion for what they were doing on their land and were strongly motivated to pass that on to interested people:

I know especially when we went to Tasmania, they were like, you know 'We really love having, like, Australian WWOOFers' and ... passing on ... knowledge about bush regeneration and sustainable living ... (WWOOFer A).

Promoting an awareness of sustainability issues, as mentioned above, was also a motive to host in 11% of cases. Part of that promotion can be found in the hope expressed that by sharing their resources (places, skills, lifestyle ideas), WWOOFers may benefit in terms of their outlook and understanding, thus affecting the world by absorbing and passing on their experiences, knowledge and (positively) affected outlook:

They are thinking globally and acting locally, and hope to influence visitors to do likewise when they return home (Pollard n.d.).

...in the early years we were more interested in using it for the purposes it really works for now, which was to just I suppose spread our concepts with, to other people, and expose people to the whole idea of sustainability. But we didn't find that it was working then, anywhere near as much as it works now... So without any doubt it gives us an opportunity to ... indoctrinate people [laughs], I suppose. Um, to try and share our view of the world with other people, but to also learn about other cultures (Host B).

However, aware that among mostly urban WWOOFers there is a general lack of interest in or awareness of organic food production techniques in the context of global sustainability crises, one host argued that "You've gotta be very careful, about preaching to people", preferring to respond to interested questions than proselytise. This view was found in New Zealand also:

I used to try to tell them a little about organics, but over the years I've found that they could not care less about organics really; the majority of them are here to just experience a bit of Kiwi people and living, and unless they ask me, I wouldn't say much about organics, because you don't get anywhere by trying to force things on anybody (host quoted in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006).

Providing hospitality and experiences to WWOOFers (10% of cases) was expressed by a small proportion, as part of a desire to contribute to the global pool of hospitality in return for various acts of hospitality they had experienced in their own travels, which had been personally significant.

Giving to Others

Giving knowledge, inspiration and assistance to WWOOFers relates closely to the promotion of sustainability awareness, but includes a broader notion of help and encouragement in general.

Summary of Reasons for Hosting

Among New Zealand hosts (McIntosh and Campbell 2001, p122), the main reasons for continuing to host were “the need for labour on the farm, the exchange of organic philosophies, the stimulation from friendships and enjoyment from the company of other people and the chance for cultural exchange”. This combination of reasons are close to what was found in the present study, although two main differences were identified.

Firstly, Australian hosts did not indicate that friendship was a motive for hosting, although friendships are certainly a common *outcome* of the experience (discussed later).¹²

Secondly, although hosts mention the exchange of ideas and knowledge in varying ways, mention of the “exchange of organic philosophies” in the case of New Zealand was not widely found among Australian participants. Many Australian hosts it seems, are increasingly experiencing WWOOFers with very little or no interest in ‘organic philosophies’. This is not to say that such organically inclined WWOOFers are not to be found at all, but rather, that there is a growing perception (noting also that it is 5-6 years on from McIntosh and Campbell’s study) that WWOOFers in Australia have changed in this regard.

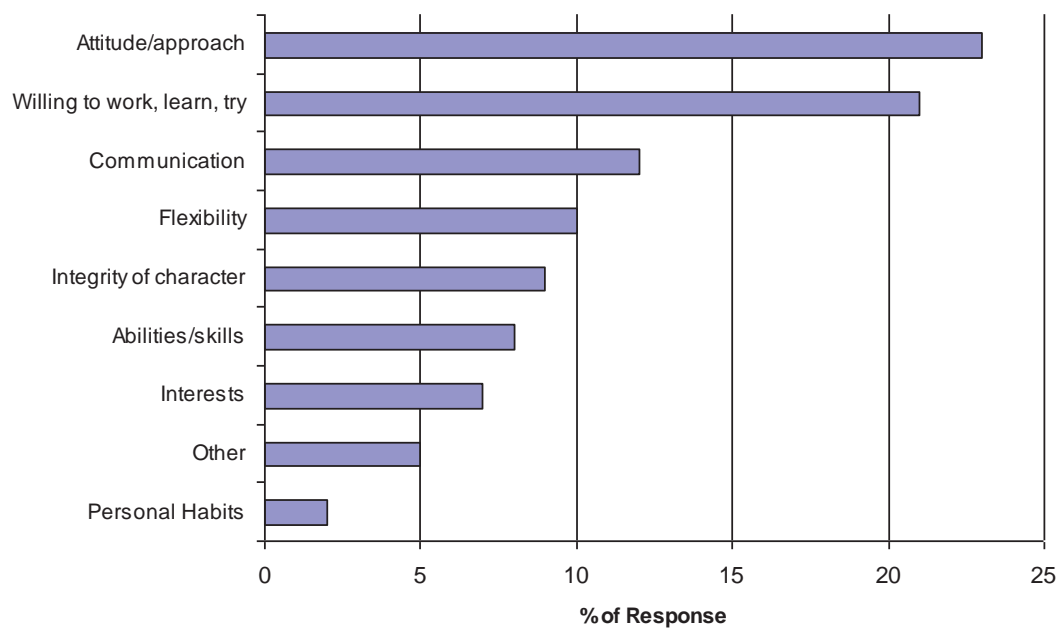
4.2 Other Indicators of Host Motives

The key motives for hosting do not seem to be built upon too many prior expectations of WWOOFers, further emphasised by two other indicators generated by the survey: what hosts regard as *attributes of a ‘good’ WWOOFer* and *how hosts select WWOOFers*.

¹² More experienced hosts - with more experience of the types of outcomes involved in hosting - may be inclined to express themselves differently to those less experienced who may have responded on the basis of idealized notions of possible outcomes. If this were the case - though no break down of responses has been undertaken to confirm it - longer term hosts might generally be more inclined to include the development of friendships for example, as a reason for hosting.

Of most importance to hosts in terms of their experiences and thus ongoing involvement, is WWOOFers' *attitude or approach* to the experience (see Figure 12), which is followed by the related but more focused category of *willingness to work, learn or try*. A willingness and ability to *communicate* well, including to socialize (rather than 'hibernate') are also important attributes, but following instruction clearly (overlapping with their level of English language skills) represents a particular communication issue for some hosts.

Figure 12: Attributes of Good WWOOFers



Related to communication, hosts emphasized in different ways that *flexibility and adaptability* is important in terms of WWOOFers expectations about food, accommodation and 'fitting in' with hosts' home lives, making the experience more workable for them, since their priorities were sometimes fast changing and the unexpected occurred frequently.

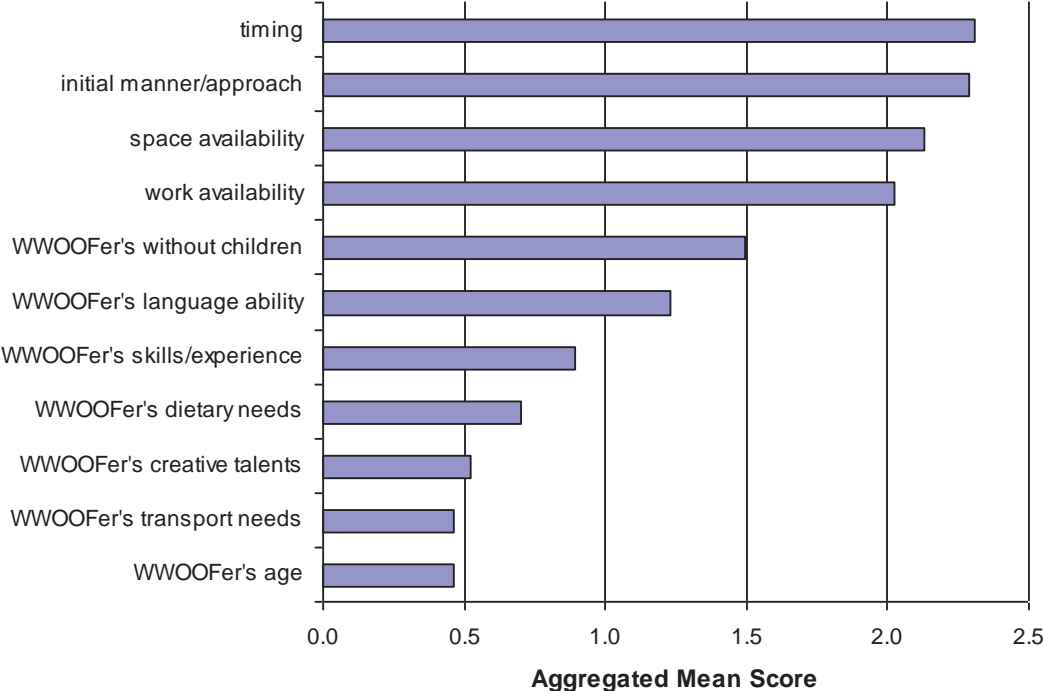
The integrity of character is important as well, including honesty, reliability, sincerity and diligence, ahead of specific *abilities and skills* of WWOOFers.¹³ For some hosts, a shared interest in organics, sustainability and the environment were an important, though not widely held attribute of WWOOFers. While a shared interest in those

¹³ Note that hosts generally train WWOOFers on the job to gain skills and do specific tasks, though creativity, initiative and independence were important related attributes. Physical strength and fitness was important to some hosts as well.

aspects of a hosts' life of value to them can provide 'validation', or perhaps an "egotistical" boost (Host JL), more important is:

the degree to which they engage with what's going on. So, I, somebody who's coming here just to, kind of hang out, as a cheap way of holidaying... isn't going to work for me (Host JL).

Figure 13: WWOOFer Selection Criteria



Two key considerations for hosts in choosing to initially accept someone approaching them to arrange a WWOOFing experience (see Figure 13) are the practicality of timing and the manner of contact. A range of practical issues such as the availability of space and work are naturally important, but it is again, the overall 'people skills' that are most emphasised, with hosts regarding themselves as open minded and pragmatic about engaging with WWOOFers, given an appropriate manner. As the experience unfolds, with sufficient reciprocity and flexibility by both parties, it is likely that hosts will remain motivated to host WWOOFers, but other factors also characterise hosts' experiences, which require consideration.

5 HOSTING EXPERIENCES

To understand and appreciate the outcomes of hosting and the balance of benefits and costs upon which these rest, we need to first understand the nature and diversity of

hosting experiences. Insights are drawn from surveys and interviews, to quantitatively and qualitatively represent hosts characterisation and assessment of their experiences.

5.1 Degree of Hosting Experience

A steady 'turnover' of hosts in the WWOOF system means there is a wide range of experience levels among this group. To understand qualitative views about hosting, it is necessary to be aware of the quantitative dimensions of experiences, as follows:

(1) The **range of experience** among participants measured in years was very large, as one exceptional host had been hosting for 33 years¹⁴, while others had commenced in the same year as the survey. The average number of hosting years was 7 and the median was 6, suggesting that hosts tend participate in the program for a considerable period of time.

(2) Given this range of experience, the **total number of WWOOFers hosted** by participants also varied hugely, from 0 to the exceptional outlying figure of 6,000.¹⁵ Other outliers were found, but 37 hosts had hosted 200 or more WWOOFers. At the other end of the spectrum, about one third of all participant hosts had hosted 22 or less WWOOFers in total, bringing the mean/median figure among all surveyed hosts to 96/40.

(3) An **overall average number of WWOOFers/year** for each host is obtained by dividing [2] and [1] above, indicating a mean of 12.7 and a median of 8 WWOOFers/year.

(4) Hosts also estimated their **current average number of WWOOFers/year**, validating those at [3] above, with a mean of 13.6 and median of 8.0 WWOOFers/year.

(5) Using data from [3] and [4] above, it was possible to construct an **estimated hosting 'trend'** for each host. This figure was aggregated and expressed as the trend

¹⁴ Taking into account previous involvement in the UK since 1973.

¹⁵ This outlying figure was claimed by a Queensland host of 23 years experience, also claiming to currently host 300 WWOOFers per year. Interestingly, this host's property is in fact a yacht moored in Moreton Island, near Brisbane. This is therefore an exceptional circumstance in several ways and these statistics suggests that there is a certain curiosity factor at play. Given that there is also very little WWOOFing work to do or organic production aboard this yacht (Statham, pers. comm. 2006), this data lends strong support to the notion that there are many WWOOFers for whom an interest in organics or the desire to 'contribute' in some of the ways described, is not a strong driver as other factors such as experience seeking, economic pragmatism and convenience.

over time of average annual numbers of WWOOFers¹⁶, showing that nearly half (46%) of the hosts are experiencing an increase in average numbers of WWOOFers/year, while about one fifth (18%) remain static (see Table 12). About one third (36%) have experienced a decrease in average numbers of WWOOFers per year. Overall these figures are consistent with the general growth in WWOOFer membership.

Table 12: Hosting Trend

Annual Numbers of WWOOFers	Freq	%	Valid %
Static	51	15.8	18.1
Decreasing	100	31.0	35.6
Increasing	130	40.2	46.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>281</i>	<i>87.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Missing	42	13.0	
Total	323	100.0	

5.2 Duration of Visits

From the hosts’ perspective, a particular aspect of the experience, but to large degree an indicator of its ‘success’, is the duration of a WWOOFer’s stay. Discussion of factors involved in longer duration experiences is provided in Chapter 7, but to describe the nature of WWOOFing in Australia and the scale of the impact hosting can have upon hosts’ lives, it is valuable to briefly consider here data collected on the duration of WWOOFer stays. Duration is unique to each situation and highly variable, ranging from less than a day to a period of years, including multiple repeat visits.

For approximately 45% of hosts, 2-3 days was the shortest WWOOFer stay, while a ‘typical’ stay for over half of the hosts (54%) was 1 week or less. 29% reported typical stays of 2 weeks, while hosts reporting 3 weeks or less as typical made up 91% of the total.

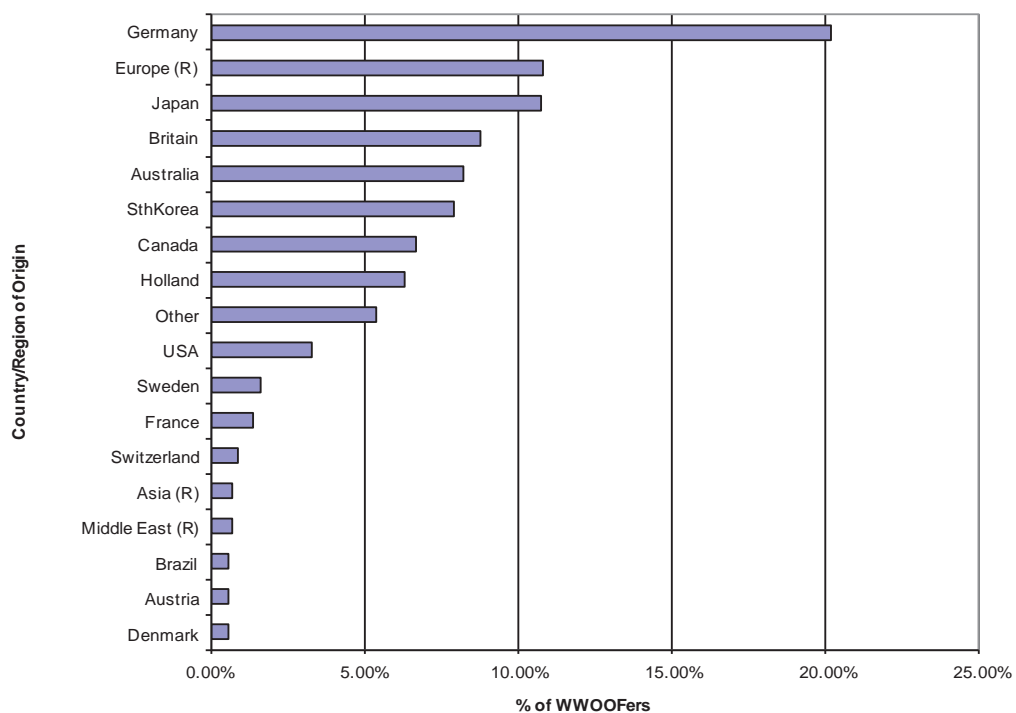
Considering the average numbers of WWOOFers being hosted annually, multiplied by such typical stays, hosts appear to put a relatively significant amount of their time and resources into hosting WWOOFers.

¹⁶ By calculating the difference between (4) current annual average and (3) overall average annual number of WWOOFers hosted, for each respondent.

5.3 Cultural Diversity

Hosting can be a significant cultural experience given the wide variety of nations of origin among WWOOFers,¹⁷ and this is very much a part of the contemporary ‘feel’ of hosting experiences. This research has provided previously unavailable data on the origins of WWOOFers. Details of the relatively complex methodology used are provided in Appendices 5.5 and 6.3, with discussion below and Figure 14 representing a brief summary of findings.

Figure 14: Host Estimate of Origins of 95% of WWOOFers in Australia



Note R = region (see Appendix 5.5 for explanation).

According to hosts, Germans are the most strongly represented WWOOFer nationality in Australia at over 20% of the total. Along with the ‘regional’ category of Europe (11%)¹⁸, Japan is the next most prolific WWOOFing nation (11%). Combining these with Britain (9%), Australia (8%) and South Korea (8%) accounts for two-thirds (67%) of all WWOOFers in Australia.

¹⁷ For convenience, it is assumed here that nationalities are a useful indicator of cultural differences in a global context, while acknowledging that individual WWOOFers vary in terms of their representativeness of ‘other’ cultures and that nation states themselves vary in terms of the breadth of cultural differences they contain.

¹⁸ It is assumed for simplicity that hosts did not include Germans in this category, but if they had, this would make German dominance of WWOOFing more pronounced.

Thus, while WWOOFing is a truly multi-cultural phenomenon, in the view of hosts, it is heavily dominated by Germans and other Europeans (mainly Dutch), Japanese, British, Australians and South Koreans.

Note that surveyed WWOOFers were also asked to state their country of origin, allowing for cross-comparison of data. When the top five ranked countries/regions are compared between these two data sets, there is a very strong agreement, despite the use of and limitations associated with different collection methods (see Chapter 6 and Appendices 5.5 and 6.3 for a full comparison and discussion).

5.4 What WWOOFers Seek

To varying degrees, hosts have then had the opportunity to assess what it is that WWOOFers are seeking. As well as gaining hosts' perspectives on WWOOFers' motives, this exposes the character of the experience for hosts who expect to be able to trust WWOOFers, and that WWOOFers come to them with appropriate intentions, in the spirit of such an exchange.

Hosts rated a series of WWOOFer motivation scenarios on a scale of importance, and Figure 15 expresses responses as an aggregated, ranked mean score. Hosts collectively perceived that foremost, WWOOFers seek to *save money* by WWOOFing, slightly ahead of experiencing *cultural exchange* and *rural and/or natural environments*. The opportunity to *meet people/enjoy social interaction* is also a strong driver for WWOOFers, as is the *improvement of English language skills*. *Enjoying home comforts* and *staying in one place* for a while (as a break from travelling) were also highly ranked.

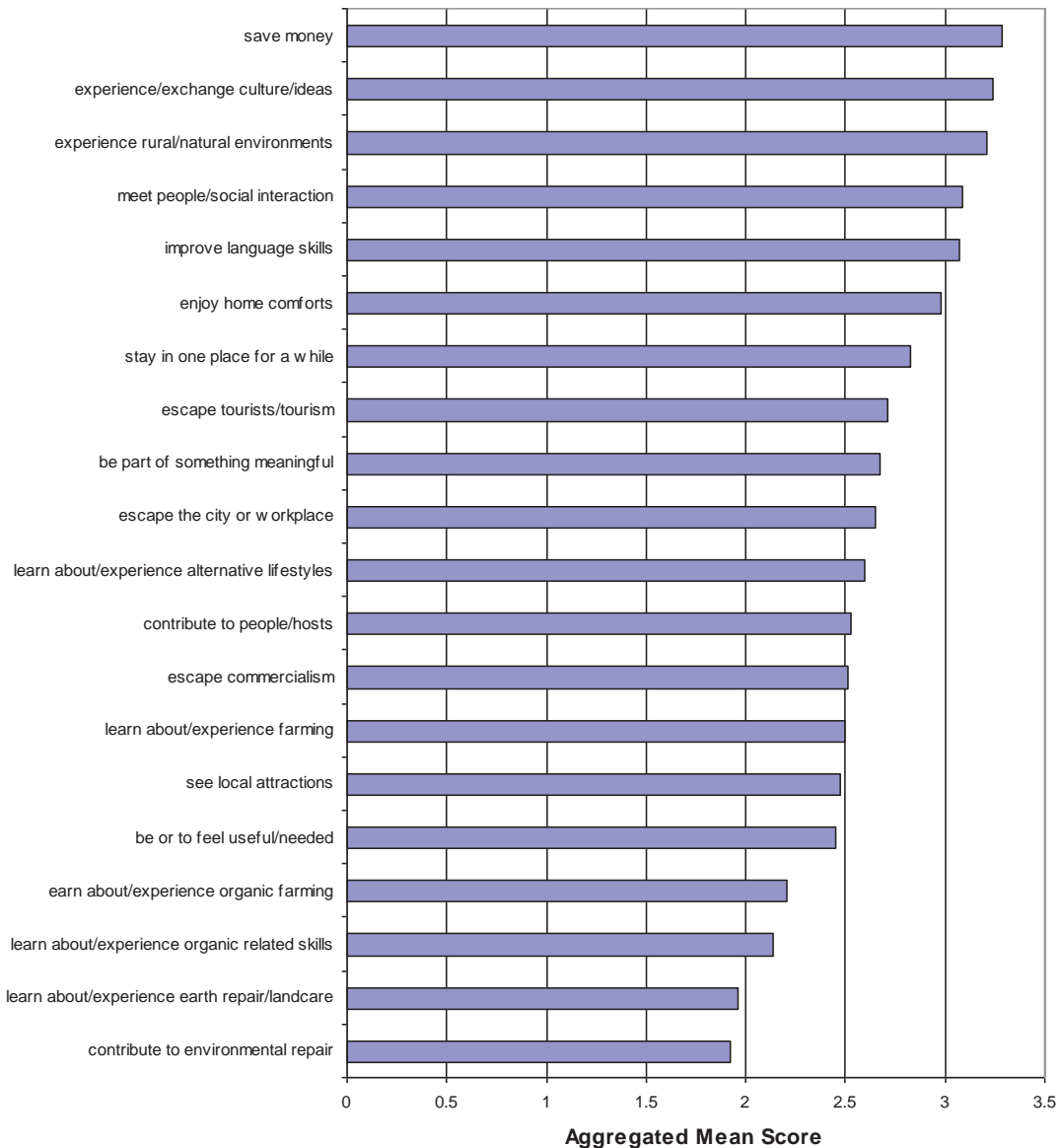
At the other end of the spectrum, hosts viewed interest in *learning about and contributing to environmental repair* and *learning about and experiencing organic farming* and related skills as the least important drivers for WWOOFers.

In short, most hosts regard WWOOFers as relatively self-interested and largely uninterested in the central sustainable primary production land management aspects of WWOOFing (WWOOF's original goals).

Most WWOOFers have little interest in 'agriculture'. They usually fit in though and will have a go. Most see it as a cheap backpacking experience. [It] Should be about promoting organic

movement and teaching/learning about organics, but it is not the case. They enrich our lives and most are a delight to have around (survey respondent).

Figure 15: What Hosts Think WWOOFers Seek



Yet, WWOOFers are seen as keen to engage with hosts in fulfilling important socio-cultural motivations and accessing non-urban environments. Economics may be important to many WWOOFers, but some see it in the context of extending their ability to afford the costs associated with their travels while also meeting other important goals:

[E]ven the ones who are here, not for sustainability, are not here necessarily for a cheap way of travelling. They seem to be more interested in finding out about Australians. And Australia.

So I think there's more of a... deliberate intention to chose WWOOFing because of what WWOOFing has to offer, rather than it being a cheap way of getting accommodation and travel (Host B).

The economic advantages of WWOOFing enhance the possibility of increasing the range of experiences for those with limited resources who are nevertheless keen to experience a great deal in a large country. This signifies a tension in budgeting time and effort expended on WWOOFing experiences and the frequency, intensity and expense of costly 'commercial' travel services and experiences:

They want to get round... see, we've had 'em and they say 'we'd like to stop [for longer] but we want to see as much as we can 'cause we're on 12 month tickets' [Host N].

The perception of a relatively strong degree of self-interest among WWOOFers, and lack of interest in the organic movement, provides the backdrop against which hosts make the decision to offer WWOOFing opportunities in general and some idea of the 'feel' of the experience for hosts. Stehlik (2002) claims to have learned to screen phone calls and listen for 'I want to work' or 'to WWOOF' rather than the words 'I want to stay'. One New Zealand host suggested:

The short stay ones, they don't have the right spirit. They are treating the place like a backpackers [hostel] and I don't feel regarded as a person, for me or our dreams, or our house, or anything (New Zealand host in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, pp95-6).

But recalling hosts' own primary motivation of seeking help, WWOOFer self-interest does not necessarily diminish enthusiasm for hosting, subject to the crucial factors already described, such as the manner in which WWOOFers approach hosts and their attitude to the experience, particularly their willingness to learn, to engage and to work. The proportion of WWOOFers that hosts regard as generally 'willing' to work (to their satisfaction) was relatively high (mean of 85%), so by this measure, regardless of their own particular motives, WWOOFers appear to mostly bring to the exchange what hosts are primarily themselves seeking, namely, help.

[W]e've had Japanese, Chinese, Korean people ... wanting to, develop their English language... I've never found any of them interested in organic agriculture, or organic farming. Um, and that's OK. Cos as I said, if you want a post hole dug, some strong young Korean guy, he's your man. He'll do it. You know? ... But you've gotta make sure that you

get something, in return... And it's OK. They've [hosts' goals] been fulfilled. Cos it's a labour exchange. That primary part has been fulfilled (Host D).¹⁹

Unwilling WWOOFers can also be found, as can hosts disappointed in the value they get out of the exchange. Indeed, as discussed in detail later, the sentiment that 'things have changed' in the WWOOFing world might be relatively common among (ex) hosts:

The face of wwoofing has changed noticeably in the last few years for us. Wwoofers are willing to do less and want more. They want scheduled work hours and set rest hours each day and most seem surprised if asked to help outside their plan. We are a farm for god's sake, things happen all the time! (Excerpt from a letter to WWOOF, provided to the researcher by a disaffected host).

Host N suggested that WWOOFing today is "part of the tourist industry", with Host D more specifically stating it is "one end of the backpacker market and the cultural experience market", with the key difference between regular backpacking tourism and WWOOFing being in the accommodation choice. While these opinions cannot be easily judged for accuracy, and similar views have been expressed by a number of hosts encountered during this research, it has been observed that it is commonly on the degree and character of human interaction that most would distinguish between the experiences of tourists and those of WWOOFers. Hosts with limited interest in WWOOFers as people are more likely to experience them at a greater distance, as many people experience tourists.

The importance, role and character of interaction is given close attention in Chapter 7, but how do hosts assess and describe their experiences?

5.5 The Character of the Hosting Experience

Respondents regard hosting to be a 'positive' experience: 21% described it as 'all positive' and 69% as 'mostly positive'. The remaining 9% described it as 'mixed positive and negative'. In addition, 92% would, or have already recommended hosting to others, while 95% would or have recommended WWOOFing to travellers.

A closer look at the qualities of the hosting experience will help to understand this very positive assessment, beginning with some insights into the particular 'feel' of WWOOF

¹⁹ This particular host was non-plussed about meeting foreigners through WWOOFing, since he had previously travelled enough that this aspect of the experience was not particularly novel. It was more significant to him that he had met some good people and enjoyed their company.

and by exploring a range of attributes that hosts were concerned with in interviews and other conversations.

The 'Feel' of WWOOF

One WWOOF Australia staffer (Schmetzer n.d.) describes WWOOF hosts as “a smorgasbord of alternative Australian lifestyles” and in terms its presence, ‘persona’ or ‘feel’, there is arguably a certain humility and humanity permeating WWOOF, that contrasts with the feel associated with the majority of contemporary human forms of exchange. Larson (2000) claims that the ‘chemical free’ ideological foundation of the organisation underlies an aim to “revive the personality of rural culture - the opposite of the cool, cell phone and sunglasses detachment it sees as all-too-common in contemporary society”. From an outside perspective, WWOOF has been described and endorsed for its unification of hosts nobly pursuing the Romantic positives and ‘secrets’ of the ‘good life’ (Jamieson 2007; Madden n.d.) in the face of modern, unidirectional technological ‘progress’. WWOOFing led Jerums, to:

...fields straight out of a Van Gogh canvas, crammed with huge, drooping, golden sunflowers. A short walk leads to other fields where corn husks peek out of green foliage and row upon row of apple trees meet the road within plucking reach (Jerums 1996).

While some have warned against overly romanticizing WWOOFing (Maycock 2008; Rother 2009), even with its internet presence WWOOF has retained certain ‘folksy’, low-tech feel. In fact, Jerums claims that WWOOF Australia consciously tries “hard to retain their rusticity”.²⁰ The WWOOF book, the descriptions it contains, the website and the organisations’ hard copy *modus operandi* are all somewhat ‘down-tempo’ and in some contrast to that of the highly competitive and hyper commodified/marketed world. One host called it “a big, positive, soft, fuzzy thing” (Host S1), while another described WWOOF’s look and feel relative to the slick modern commercial world as ‘hilariously bad’, claiming:

I don’t think it matters. The system works. And it works for a lot of people... (Host JL).

Various hosts suggest that this, along with its simplicity, is important and effective and a key part of its ongoing success:

²⁰ Here she quotes a WWOOF staffer: “We operate closely in a small community--on sort of a trust, really... If somebody from the U.S. sends for a list and they’re \$10 short, we’ll get them the list and ask them to pay the rest when they can. As far as being in touch with the Earth, environmentally and spiritually, that’s us” (Jerums 1996).

The idea of just listing the WWOOF hosts and saying, you know, here's the list for you WWOOFers. You contact the WWOOF host and organise it. I mean, it's so simple, and yet so effective (Host B).

I think they are doing a darn good job. I think it's simple. And the simplicity is making it work well. I don't think it needs to be advertised any more or fancier in the book (Host S1).

Any potential complexity added in future, whether through the imposition of some government tax on the labour, complexity with Visas, increased paperwork or bureaucratic intervention of any type, would "take the fun out of it" for this host.

Though some hosts could see the benefits for example, of a contemporary 'eBay' style of honesty and improvement system online in which both parties could review and rate their exchange for others to see, this was not seen by any as crucial for WWOOF.²¹

I haven't seen any need for WWOOF to do anything different. And I guess it's partly cos ... it seems to me that it doesn't really live in a commercial world. So it doesn't need to do things, with those same, imperatives (Host JL).

Or as a New Zealand host put it:

With commercial farm stay guests it's totally different. You have to be their servant as they are paying you money to stay here. I'd have to put my day aside to amuse them. I'd have to get formal. The WWOOFers, they've got to muck in (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p96).

Also referring to the non-commercial feel of WWOOF, another host described WWOOF as conferring a certain feeling of community and mutual support:

I compare it to outfits like AA²² or something. You know, which are these kind of fellowships... Umm, so I like WWOOFing for that thing. Cos otherwise, tourism's an industry, you know? And this somehow gets out from underneath that (Host D).

Many hosts are aware to various degrees of other hosts in their own areas, often interested to hear stories from WWOOFers about their experiences with other hosts

²¹ Even though WWOOF clearly now has 'competitors' in the form of Couch Surfing and Help-X which both operate entirely as Web 2.0 entities with such feedback/rating mechanisms.

²² Alcoholics Anonymous

(good and bad). One WWOOFer interviewed explained that her hosts regularly organized a pizza night at the local pub with local hosts so that various hosts and WWOOFers could all get together to socialize. Another host described her interest in the sorts of work other hosts require of WWOOFers, also touching on the feeling of community or fraternity among hosts:

...if a WWOOF host phoned us and said 'Well I saw your name in the book and we're going to be in that neck of the woods, could we stay with you?', I'd say 'Yes! And you don't have to work either!' [laughing] (Host S1).

It is also common to hear of hosts sharing or redirecting WWOOFers to other hosts in their local area if they are not able to take WWOOFers themselves. This also offers some insight into the very great degree of flexibility and spontaneity and thus, *informality* underpinning the experience of WWOOFing and hosting. For WWOOFers, this usually means fitting into whatever is happening at the time they arrive in their hosts' lives:

...they come into my life, and just fit in with what I'm doing at the particular time. I don't change anything to have the WWOOFers with me. They just come in and be part of my everyday life... they're coming into my home and they will just sort of fit into the activities that I'm doing at the time (Host M).

Hosts are in a position 'to be themselves' to whatever degree they feel inclined. They may vary in terms of their general desire to 'entertain' specific WWOOFers on and off the farm, but compared to commercial farmstays, B&Bs or other commercial tourism type ventures, hosts need not be:

putting on a show for people that have paid you money to be in your home. With WWOOFers that's the difference, they are staying, but as members of the household. You feed them well, you look after them well, but you don't run around after them. I don't do B & B anymore because I really hated having everything spotless and perfect' (host quoted in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p96).

WWOOFers may choose to continue with an experience or not, but for hosts, the experience involves a strong degree of power retention in the WWOOFing space they create as well:

In most cases I sort of give them the option, I explain to them, especially in summertime if it's really hot I explain to them perhaps we might start a little bit earlier ... and we'll work for a couple of hours and come over and have some breakfast and then go back again and if it's too hot and they can't finish off there, we'll work later in the afternoon when it's cooler (Host M).

WWOOF Australia provides broad behavioural guidelines for both parties, but there is great scope within that for WWOOFers and hosts to freely co-create their experience, as elaborated in Chapters 6 and 7.

In summary, the 'feel' of WWOOF, for hosts and WWOOFers, including its low key 'marketing', is largely one of 'sincerity' (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006), built upon a decommodified, notional '*authenticity*'. Some see this as part of a revived 'retro trend', or a 'new realism', with the popularity of organic retail shops, reading groups and homemade foods evidence of disaffection with much of conventional Western life, exposing a growing craving for human connection (Boyle 2003). While it is unlikely to be that simple, this notion does fit well with the conjecture of one host who attributes the strength and depth of feeling about WWOOFing experiences among travellers to the fact that WWOOFers "have seen real people not tourism operators" (in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p96).

Novelty and Enjoyment

Because hosting is about meeting unknown people, an important aspect of the experience is *novelty* and this is itself a strong hosting motive for many. It has been observed that it is possible to learn something new from all WWOOFers in sharing experiences. One elderly host couple for example, related their experiences of new food being prepared in their kitchen:

Host N: Now these two blokes come out for the Gay Games. They were Basque terrorists [laughter]!

Host A: Oh and they made omelets! Oh and this kitchen was full...

Host N: 13 eggs! [astonished]

Researcher: Spanish omelettes?

AV: ... full of oil and fumes. But they were lovely omelettes...

Researcher: Do you get many cooking for you?

Host N: Oh yes, we had a Dutch pastry cook here for a while...

Closely connected to the novelty of new people, and seemingly an important aspect of the experience also, is the *enjoyment* it brings. Enjoyment through social interaction was noted by Madden (n.d.) to be a “catalyst for us to get together and have a good time”, echoed by several interviewed hosts also:

This Irish geezer and his girlfriend - they were great! Oh they were just great people, you know? They were really, they made really good friends with the kids, and stayed 6 weeks or something, you know. We did amazing stuff and raged around. Yeah (Host D).

I had a couple from Hong Kong. They were a husband and wife. And we just clicked. It was just so good and they had such a good time. ... But, no, I love the experience and, I think I've become a better person for it. It's something that I just like to share and I tell people about it (Host M).

One host (in Pearsall n.d.) claims that they:

enjoy having help on projects which would take a very long time without the help, and often would not be so good without the skills, knowledge and wisdom of the WWOOFer.

At least one pair of WWOOFers also indicated their need for hosts to *enjoy* their presence:

WWOOFer A: ... when we stayed with K and J. Like they'd both been... having WWOOFers for you know, 10 plus years or something, and it was just something that they really enjoyed...

WWOOFer R: ... I'm not sure what they would have got from us... hopefully a fun kind of positive experience.

In the situation where WWOOFers are conscious of and act on the need for host enjoyment of the experience, some hosts are likely to try to put the effort back into the WWOOFers to make it interesting and enjoyable for them. This is especially likely where they appreciate that WWOOFers have helped them to get things done that they might not otherwise have resources to achieve (Kowalski 1993). Given this mutually reinforcing situation there is great scope for positive interaction to bring more positive interaction.²³

²³ This is often the case in human interactions bound by notional structures of reciprocity (discussed in Chapter 7). Equally, there is significant scope for negative interactions to bring negative reinforcement as well.

Appreciation

One of the ways in which positive feedback loops are created and maintained is the feeling and expression of *appreciation* between parties, which can be considered an important element of the experience of hosting among some hosts. In explaining her desire to continue hosting, Host M said:

Yeah, I just think it's a win-win situation for everyone. I'm very grateful for the effort that they've put in and for the work that I get done, and I'm always happy with what they do ... even if it's just putting trees in ... you know, I really appreciate it (Host M).

WWOOFers may be aware of the feeling of appreciation experienced by hosts when the help they provide is of value to them:

...your muscles ache. And you have to do a lot of stuff and you're standing the whole day just bending over and ...yeah... I think it can be really frustrating if you have people who like, don't want to do it and after one hour they say like, "oh my back is so sore, I have to go back. So, I think they appreciate it that they have help and it's really helping (WFer J).

But communicating this appreciation to WWOOFers is an important process in the exchange. One host elaborates on the statement that 99% of his WWOOFers "have been bloody brilliant!":

And I thank them sincerely at the end of the day, Um, cos they've worked bloody bloody hard. I've worked bloody hard, but they've worked along with me, hard. And I just, find that, incredible (Host JL).

In the particular case of two French WWOOFers helping him to build stairs for an elevated composting toilet, this host made much of this connection between achievement and appreciation and its role in supporting the interaction as a whole:

... we just made it with material that we had on hand. We didn't go to the shops or anything. So I was just so impressed! And, it would have come across, to them. And so, I sincerely thanked them, because they really have helped in a significant way, and also realizing that it's important to thank people. To point out how it's contributed" (Host JL).

This realization has been gained by the fact that this host has also been a WWOOFer and thus:

...the way I am as a host has enabled, has resulted in the WWOOFers putting in extraordinary amounts of energy (Host JL).

McIntosh and Bonneman also found that where WWOOFers felt that their hosts were worthy of their respect, they were more willing to work:

So as long as I felt like the people who own the property were worth working hard for, then I would do just about anything. I would not wear a watch or anything, I would just work and enjoy it (in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p91).

A Cross Cultural Experience

As seen, hosting is very much a cross-cultural experience. While some hosts keenly embrace and enjoy the experience of novelty through learning from, exchanging and sometimes accommodating cultural differences between themselves and WWOOFers, for others, the emphasis is upon *accepting or tolerating* the differences of others. One such host describes wide gaps in culture between his own and Asian WWOOFers' culture as a particular challenge that he has learned to accept in his desire to host:

... they can't even wash up! Cos they think it's dirty and they think you've gotta have everything done in washing machines and stuff... You know, you bring this bucket of vegetables and carrots with, dirt all over them and you wash 'em in the sink and everything and there's a lot of them just don't like it.... I mean, they're very wrong of course, 'cos they wanna know that all this stuff [laughing] comes out of the ground. Yeah, it's a bit of a shock to em.

But as suggested earlier, rather than try to preach in this situation, this host argues:

You just can't do that, because I just think there are cultural gulfs and it's not my place to, tell 'em that... Or to apologise that we're living in the middle ages [laughs] ... And there's just things that you can't do anything about, like wearing shoes inside, you know, it's um, we do it! Yeah. So... I don't take it on myself to try any of that sort of stuff out... (Host D)

As representatives of "the English language market", with no interest in organic farming, he has learned to anticipate and manage his and their very different expectations of the experience:

...don't assume they know what weeding even means, or why you do anything... they don't even know what you're talking about with organic gardening. They think that gardening is just fertilizers and chemicals and just, water or something. They've got no idea of how this is different, or ... But, that's OK with me... As I said, I'm happy to take anyone. (Host D).

The experience of cross-cultural situations can both reduce differences to human commonalities, or, particularly in less 'engaged' contexts like conventional tourism encounters, enhance negative stereotypes through more 'superficial' experience of other cultures (Leiper 2004; Reisinger and Turner 2003). So in some contrast to the cultural gulf identified above, some hosts stated that the character of WWOOFers they had encountered gave them a source of optimism about the future, finding that a "love of the planet is a bridge between ages and cultures". The presence of an underlying 'goodness' in all people, shared values and occasional enthusiasm for the host's lifestyle was affirming and thus beneficial for some hosts. This statement partly represents also those hosts that expressed their sense of "the universality of human experience", appreciated through hosting people of different ages and cultures. Others focused instead on their appreciation of diversity among people: "the wonderful range of humans out there" or "the great variation in experiences, skills and interests of people depending on their background, culture and personality." Some hosts concluded that one "cannot judge by nationality" and that "all people must have a chance to prove their worth", while others felt they had learned to be more patient or tolerant of these differences.

WWOOF Australia does a great deal to prepare hosts and WWOOFers for the experience in the form of guidelines and advice before and during membership, but statements emphasising large gaps between theory and practice in the general willingness of WWOOFers may underscore something broader that a number of hosts have highlighted with concern. Namely, that the character of WWOOF and thus the experience of WWOOF hosting has changed over a period of time.

WWOOF Hosting: A changing experience?

Various management decisions by WWOOF and certain broader cultural trends may have effected certain changes producing a predominance of certain 'types' of WWOOFers²⁴, but there is no *clear* agreement among today's hosts on this matter. As

²⁴ It is useful to think here in terms of Nimmo's (2001a) two types of WWOOFer: one "specifically interested in environmental issues, usually accompanied by a political analysis of, and a need to escape from, industrial urbanised societies and their economic systems." The other "are more like 'mainstream'

flagged in Chapter 2, a deliberate phase of expansion into the backpacker market by WWOOF was undertaken in the mid–late 1990s, explained by its founder as follows:

In about 1989 the backpackers discovered the network and what they liked about it was they could get close to an Australian family and see how Aussies live, as opposed to always being in a hostel with other travellers... We've started to slant it quite heavily towards them in recent years and up to 60 per cent of our numbers come from the backpacker fraternity (Pollard in Doherty 1997, p17).

Changes to its promotion were rationalised at the time as being part of the expansion of the overall 'good' that WWOOF brings about (Pollard 1998).

I feel that our broader approach to membership in accepting people merely on their desire to go WWOOFing, is justified in that we expose more people to organic approaches and alternative thinking ... It has always been our hope that some of our visitors go home at least with some seeds of change in their minds (Pollard 1993, pp81-2).

This however appeared to alter the make-up of WWOOFers in terms of nationalities, but for some hosts, it also led to more fundamental changes as the types of people WWOOFing began to change:

Wwoofers are less teachable, and they seem to be losing common sense. We've noticed the biggest change among the Asians, who once were the happiest and most reliable wwoofers, now really just want a free holiday and do not have the care or interest anymore. They are less interactive and lock themselves away on their laptops, geez you can do that in a bedroom in Korea! Why come all the way to Australia to do that? The latest generation of them are afraid of everything, especially work and the dark. Overall wwoofers these days will tolerate doing what they have to do, and no more, to get free accom and food. Lately wwoofers have become work for us not help. Not to mention carelessness with tools lost and broken equipment. It's been good over the years, we were one of the first to join, one of your few certified farms. We've maintained many friendships. The spirit and goodwill have gone. The vision has been lost (excerpt from a letter to WWOOF, provided to the researcher by a disaffected host).

Although the universal validity of this opinion cannot be assessed, similar comments were uncovered in the course of this research, for example, in the WWOOF Newsletter:

backpackers, because they emphasise a preference for recreational activities, or the desire to experience novel activities" while still distancing themselves from mainstream backpackers who were generally uninterested in "learning about other cultures."

Unlike the past 10 years; the attitude of wwoofers/travellers now appears to be one of looking at hosts as a free meal ticket and bed where they are not really responsible to reciprocate in a whole hearted manner. It seems to be a gathering trend which may or may not be 'just' a social attitude.²⁵

WWOOF Australia's founder stated in the late 1990s that compared with the original (and according to Pollard 1993, more 'conservative') European groups, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand organisations cater more "for the growing army of overseas tourists who are seeking cultural exchange by way of meeting people living in the country" (Pollard n.d., p20). As WWOOF had also begun to include a broader range of hosts than pure organic farmers which has been controversial for some of the membership (Doherty 1997), Stehlik (2002, p221) observes:

At the same time, WWOOFing has become for many young people an alternative way of travelling while taking a working holiday, and an inexpensive form of accommodation with the added benefit of the chance to live as part of the host family and experience local customs and lifestyle rather than being isolated in a hotel or crowded with other travellers in a backpacker hostel.

It is not surprising therefore that some hosts have come to regard changes in/by WWOOF with some misgivings. There seems to be good reason to think that WWOOFers are 'not like they used to be', given a range of converging factors: pre-packaged arrangements for membership in various countries; the expense of travel in Australia; the emerging 'experience economy' and related ideology that you have to try everything once.

In defending the charge from disgruntled hosts that, as an example, young backpackers "leave a lot to be desired in terms of work ability, skill and experience or maturity", WWOOF's founder bluntly and publicly replied (Pollard 1997b, p46):

Within limits those very words are a definition of a young person, and they are not going to develop ability, skills or maturity without getting some experience. If a host does not wish to provide such an opportunity then he or she should amend their entry to exclude those young people.

²⁵ Note that similar host complaints can be found from the early 1990s as well: "A lot are using it as free accommodation and they don't like to work" (Navarre 1994).

This raises the important point that despite negative experiences and the suspicion for some that WWOOFers are changing (for ‘the worse’), hosts do ultimately retain the ability to modulate their experience and of course can choose participate or decline. In other words, they retain the power over their macro and micro level of involvement in the program.

Despite its origins as a “circuit for people to travel around and learn about organic farming”, Host D believes that since his long involvement, the view of WWOOFers as “apprentice farmers” (English 2007) has been far removed from the reality, which is more connected with the backpacker, experience seeking and English language markets. Provided he gets suitable return in the form of labour for his investment in hosting, he does not experience disappointment like other hosts.

Another pair who had initially hosted in the mid 1980s, dropped out because they found many WWOOFers were merely “using the system to get cheap travelling”, but had rejoined in the past 5 years. In contrast they had been pleased to find a *greater* interest in sustainability among WWOOFers they thought, because “sustainability is a more generally understood concept than it was 20 years ago” (Host B). Today:

Obviously, hosts’ experiences and observations about the system are relatively individual, varying with unique perceptual filters, demographic, psychographic and other factors. But since November 2005, WWOOFing has undergone further important change, with the introduction of federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) allowances for some international travellers to extend working holiday visas by WWOOFing full time for three months on selected WWOOF host properties²⁶. While not specifically targeted in the research, there is some evidence that this step towards embracing a more formal realm of tourism and labour market management has led to the perception of further change impacting on the hosting experience. WWOOF urged hosts with concerns that “WWOOFers are treating the WWOOF Program as a holiday and still expecting to be able to apply for the 2nd Working Holiday Makers Visa” to remember that they do not have to sign the Work Declaration for the Visa Application if they are not satisfied with the WWOOFers’ efforts. One WWOOFer interviewed who had sought to WWOOF for this very reason found that:

²⁶ In general, this means those that demonstrate a certain level of commercial focus.

...some [hosts] replied with very short, to the point emails, some seemed very friendly, some said about the visas, some said we weren't interested because of the visa situation (WWOOFer M).

Time will tell if or how the introduction of this system impacts on the quality of the hosting experience.²⁷ One test of this will be host membership numbers, which at the time of writing, continue to expand. Regardless, this discussion has highlighted that hosting may not be all positive.

5.6 Costs of Hosting

Data was collected on the frequency of host terminations of WWOOFers' stays with them due to some form of conflict of expectations or behaviour, for example, unwillingness to work. 15% of WWOOFers are regarded by hosts to have been 'unwilling' to work to their level of satisfaction:

...this bloke was a dead loss! Austrian. He'd never worked in his life. Never worked before. ... his family sent him out - thought it would toughen him up I'd say... He'd never slept in a caravan. He'd never slept on his own before and he was terrified. So we took him into [the local town] and put him on the train the next day... (Host N).

Many of the young [WOOOFers are] straight from school/uni [and] must have been molly coddled by their mothers and have no concept of being a guest in someone's place. As a result we introduce rules of behaviour (survey participant).

Inter-personal conflict or more subtle but important forms of unworkability are also sometimes found. 44% of surveyed hosts had never terminated a WWOOFer's stay, but almost 25% had done so once and 20% twice, while 3% had terminated WWOOFers' stays between 6-20 times.

²⁷ One host contacted me 12 months after our interview, specifically to discuss the impacts of the Second Working Holiday Visa system, because he had noticed that the majority of his hosting requests were now motivated by visa extension and that the experience had thus "changed". He described it as now being more like a "transaction", with WWOOFers seeking to "rack up days" towards their extended visa. He also observed that other visa extension options such as commercial fruit picking were considered by his recent WWOOFers as too much hard work, with WWOOFing seeming like an easier choice, despite the lack of pay. Despite this though, he was very positive about his experiences with these WWOOFers: the detailed requirements associated with the Visa extension system and the longer hosting period produced a "really good experience" in which he was able to plan for and get a range of things done, given his own commercial imperatives. He claimed that the feeling of *transaction* gave way to one of *exchange* by the end of the 3 month period.

Some of the costs of hosting were highlighted by McIntosh and Campbell's (2001) study in New Zealand, including:

- longer hours spent farming *and* hosting (82% of hosts); and,
- sharing time between management of the farm, the family and WWOOFers was difficult, resulting in less personal time (51% of hosts).

Many hosts have separate WWOOFer accommodation, which means that “you don't have to have them every night” in your ‘private’ space (Host D). This view corroborates findings among New Zealand hosts who reported that loss of privacy, increased physical and emotional fatigue and sometimes strained family relationships could be associated with hosting. The degree to which they choose to alter their lives around WWOOFers and feel obliged to entertain them varies, but again, the present research confirms findings in NZ regarding disappointment with the attitudes of a proportion of WWOOFers²⁸, which the researchers suggest, concurs with observations about tourists by farm stay operators more generally.²⁹

Conversely of course, some hosts simply see the exchange in less personal terms. This may be apparent by not involving WWOOFers closely in day to day family activities and maintaining relatively distant connection in terms of accommodation and sometimes eating arrangements. The hostile view of young WWOOFers by a host running a “self catering establishment” that they “eat everything and take all the food with them when they leave” (survey participant) seems to overlook the fact that most WWOOFers are seeking to meet and be involved in the lives of people. The following hosting approach puts this into appropriate context:

I have always treated them as part of the family and I think this is the way to go. I think they appreciate this and there is room for them to be separate if they wish (survey participant).

Other costs of WWOOF hosting noted during the research include:

²⁸ The following is an illuminating quote from one of their respondents that echoes some of the comments in the Australian survey: “We joined because we needed the help, but expected far more ‘organically-orientated’ people and an exchange of organic/bio-dynamic information. But this has been limited and very disappointing” (McIntosh and Campbell 2001, p120).

²⁹ For these researchers, this reinforces the importance of “understanding the difference between the expectations and motivations of hosts and visitors to farm tourism ventures” in order minimize conflict. The solution offered is to consider “modifications to the WWOOF hosting experience, or the implementation of mechanisms to ensure a better degree of compatibility in the experience provided; for example, by requiring visitors to work fewer hours per day, or perhaps introducing screening mechanisms to ensure a better host/guest fit” (McIntosh and Campbell 2001, p120).

- **monetary/resource costs** in terms of food and fuel to feed, transport and manage (especially unhelpful or inefficient) WWOOFers³⁰;
- **time costs** involved in ‘training’ new WWOOFers in tasks, or in some cases, mentoring WWOOFers³¹;
- **costs of mistakes** made by usually well-meaning but unskilled WWOOFers, in the form of broken equipment or work needing to be redone (if possible)³²;
- **personal energy costs** (or emotional labour cf Hochschild 1983) involved in hosting WWOOFers, particularly those that are not very independent, such as the young³³, those with very limited language skills (Pollard 1998) and those needing life counselling³⁴; and,
- **violations of trust** on some occasions, in the form of theft, misuse of phones, internet and other resources, resulting in personal costs of various kinds.

There is clearly scope for unsatisfactory hosting experiences, but the final balance is an individual affair and as noted by one host (quoted in Smithson 2009, p39), WWOOFing is a “sometimes challenging learning experience” for both parties.

Yet since over 90% regard their experiences as mostly or totally positive and 92% and 95% would recommend WWOOFing to other potential hosts and travellers respectively, it is clear that some very highly valued outcomes from these experiences are occurring.

6 OUTCOMES OF HOSTING

The term *outcomes* is taken here to mean changes resulting from experiences. Outcomes are personal constructs which are sometimes physical or material in nature, sometimes reflective or cognitive and sometimes about orientations to the future.

³⁰ Host N related a story about a chain-smoking vegetarian WWOOFer from the UK that used a toaster all night to keep warm.

³¹ One interviewed host had prepared an “Induction Sheet” explaining the fragility and function of resources available such as water, power and the composting toilet. Being “off the grid... resources need to be looked after carefully, and everything’s non-standard. It’s not fair to expect people to know how to do it” and “it is exhausting to explain things over and over” (Host J).

³² As one disaffected host put it: “Lately wwoofers have become work for us not help” (Letter from a former host).

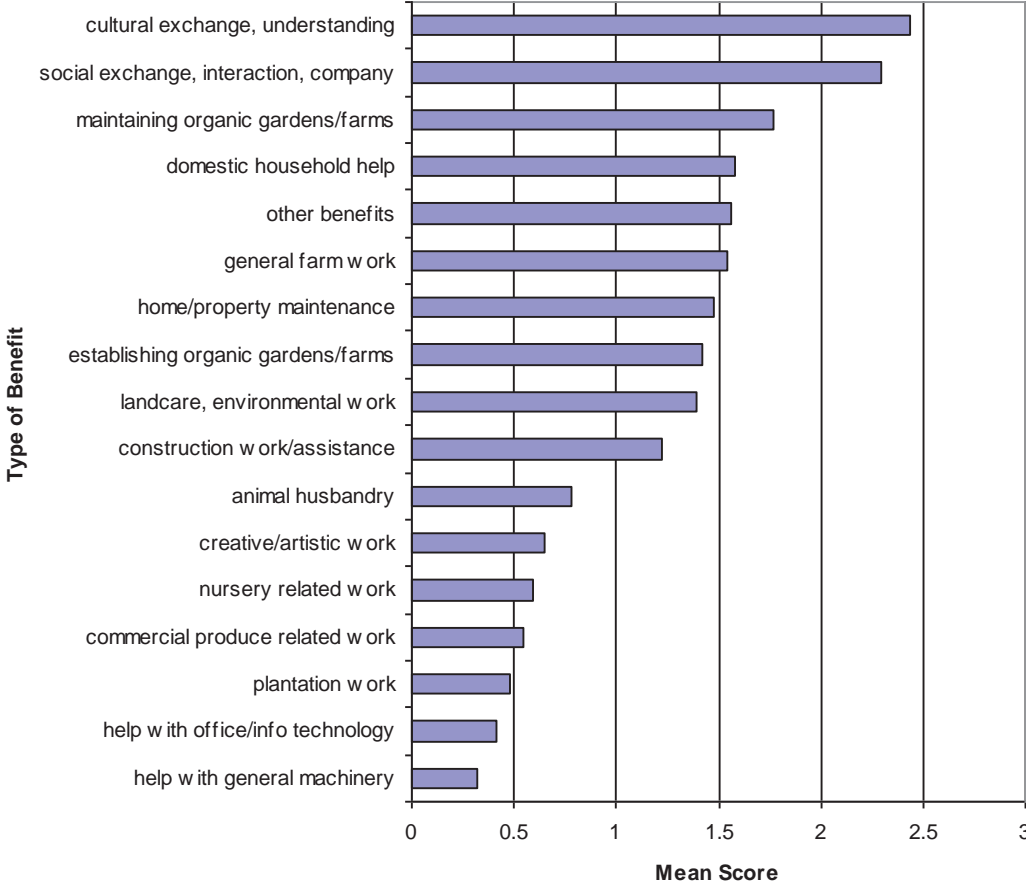
³³ “I mean we take them young anyway, but if they’re 18 we might say ‘oh sorry, no’. Because for one thing they’re, a lot of the 18 year olds they’re big and strong and happy to work with you if you’re there beside them - but sometimes, I’m not there beside them and then they, slack off, and, break things” (Host S1).

³⁴ “...you know, you don’t wanna be the, ah, psychologist or psychiatrist. You just want it to go smoothly then and there. Treat ‘em all nicely. I mean some of them might have problems, but I wouldn’t know it. [laughs]. And they don’t come and talk about their home life (Host S)”.

Understanding outcomes helps understand the impacts of participants' hosting experiences.

Surveys directly focused upon *benefits to hosts*, the *significance of WWOOFers' help* and *the most significant gains* from hosting more broadly. Deeper interpretation of hosts' views is derived from analysis of interviews.

Figure 16: Types of Benefits Derived from WWOOFers



6.1 Types of Benefits Derived from WWOOFers

At least part of the very positive assessment of hosting can be assumed to be connected to the various benefits it brings. A *benefit* is dependent on individuals' specific views and needs, so the importance of various types of benefits would be expected to be closely tied to motivations for hosting.

From a set of listed benefits, surveyed hosts indicated collectively that the most important benefits to them related to human interactions (Figure 16): *cultural exchange* or *cultural understanding*, gained necessarily through or by social interaction, and the

interaction itself, in the form of *social exchange, interaction and company*. Each of these types of benefits scored significantly higher overall than the various individually listed help-oriented benefits. It must be acknowledged that the selection or grouping of categories could have been more finely or coarsely composed, which may have produced a different result. But as will be made clear, this emphasis on social and cultural outcomes is echoed across the range of data collected and discussed below. While this does not mean that help is of trivial benefit, there is a case supporting the view that socio-cultural benefits are the primary form of benefit to most hosts.

Cultural exchange, awareness and understanding

In New Zealand it was found that a 'heightened cultural understanding' was the most significant benefit of hosting (McIntosh and Campbell 2001), followed by the generation of a *sharing experience for the family*, providing an *improved quality of life* and *increased intellectual stimulation*. Hosting generally offered more social experiences and a feeling of community support for hosts' enterprises as well. Though questions and responses are not directly comparable between studies, observations about the benefits to Australian hosts of socio-cultural interactions accord with the conclusion in New Zealand that the "benefits of WWOOF hosting appear to be social and ethical rather than financial in nature" (p121).

As a WWOOF host also working in the field of adult education, Stehlik (2002) notes there are two key interrelated socio-cultural benefits of hosting, namely, *learning from the unknown* and the *expansion of horizons*. WWOOFing creates a situation in which both WWOOFer and host (can) put themselves "into a completely new and unknown situation which can be one of the most powerful learning experiences *if one is open to new things and willing to learn*" (p224; emphasis added). To produce these sorts of outcomes, Stehlik says what is required is a "willingness to engage". In the case of his family, such engagement has produced broadened horizons, through the introduction into the home of "different accents" and worldviews. These have challenged some assumptions about ethnicity and culture and have allowed them to look at Australia through the eyes of others. Naturally, much of the learning is about other cultures and countries and hosting can "heighten understanding between people from different cultural, social or ideological backgrounds" (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p96).

Photo 5: WWOOFer using new tools for the first time, Australia



But depending on the depth or mutuality of engagement between hosts and visitors, some cultural stereotypes may also be reinforced through this encounter, with a broadened horizon sometimes a reference to becoming “more tolerant”, rather than fundamentally changing one’s worldviews to become more ‘accepting’ or even embracing of difference. Given that hosts want to get some work done, there is need for some tolerance of inexperience (Photo 5) and in dealing with communication problems and for some, *increased tolerance* is itself an outcome of hosting:

I’ve always been a tolerant person but I think this is, because of the language difficulty at times, I think its made me become more tolerant and accepting of people and sort of their limitations and what they can do, in the spoken language as well as, in the physical part of working out on the farm. I mean I accept the young ones, because they’ve come out of university and, haven’t had, much physical work, even though I’m probably 3 times older than them and you know, could do a lot more than them physically, I accept that. (Host M)

One host claims to have become more tolerant of the over-exuberant reactions of WWOOFers to the relatively exotic nature of his property, particularly with its native wildlife:

When people see a snake or something, it’s a big thing... and it’s like, ‘I don’t wanna know about fuckin’ snakes’, you know? ... You learn a bit of tolerance really, about, cos it’s very different, very exotic, for a lot of people (Host D).

Increased tolerance implies some level of change has occurred on a scale from begrudging acceptance through to embrace of difference. For one pair, increased tolerance was brought about through understanding, borne of direct experience, instead of continued ignorance borne of segregation or isolation. WWOOF hosting reduces the chances of being “cut-off” from the contemporary world (Hosts N&A), particularly through exposure to other cultures and generations:

...it's quite refreshing seeing a lot of the young people that travel through here that are... much more together in what they want from life and ... much more confident and adventurous and prepared to, split their comfort zone (Host S2).

This host's partner has gained confidence through hosting that:

...there are people out there that are going to give us a future. You know? Rather than all being war mongerers (Host B).

The exposure to other cultures and ideas for hosts and for their own children via WWOOFers, has been described as a *motive* and an *experience*. But Hosts S2 also confirmed through learning of the dislike of school among young WWOOFers, that the decision to home-school her children was "the right thing". Pollard (1998, p72) affirms that for many, hosting has opened their children's eyes "to a whole new world of different lifestyles, religions and cultures" more than conventional schooling could do, without actually travelling. This is affirmed by a WWOOFer in New Zealand who grew up in a WWOOF hosting family in Europe:

...we enjoyed the company and assistance of fascinating world travelers with stories to tell. As my three siblings and I were educated at home, this time with Wwoofers gave us a great awareness of the world at large and the different people and cultures in it (Wfer Alex, in a posted comment on the NZ WWOOF Bulletin Board, 2005).

Learning is a key outcome in itself which can *expand* knowledge as above, but also deepen knowledge, which might therefore make it *enriching* (Redwood 1998). Hosting "is an enriching experience" because each WWOOFer contributes "something unique to the exchange" (Anon. 1998), while Stehlik (2002, p224) argues that both WWOOFer and host "are enriched by the encounter, materially as well as personally", thus building social capital. As will be explored in Chapter 7 in some detail, the degree of enrichment may vary with the effort invested, despite the risks:

...the more I risk, the more I get. And there's parts of me that have been fearful of things that might happen, hitchhiking, or having WWOOFers. But the more I've dismissed those fears and been more open, the more rewarding the experience has been (Host B).

This host had experienced WWOOFers who had gradually revealed their 'difficult' childhoods, experiences of alienated urban street life, drug addiction and suicide

attempts. These had been difficult hosting experiences which may not have happened at all “if you knew all these things before they came” (Host S2). However, these experiences also yielded the greatest rewards for these hosts, when through interpersonal perseverance and tolerance, “the human spirit is able to come through and shine”.

For these and some other hosts, WWOOFing is very much part of a deliberate strategy for the enrichment of their lives. A very experienced long term host provided glowing written ‘reviews’ from his WWOOF ‘brag book’, explaining that through hosting, he has had a much “enriched outlook” and an “enviable lifestyle”. Part of this he attributes to having relatively constant company from “interesting people” from around the world, emphasising the significance of social interaction. While social interaction is explored in depth in Chapter 7, there is need to briefly consider its value from the host perspective.

Social interaction

Some hosts in interviews and conversation reflected on the fact that WWOOFers are often the same age as their now independent and sometimes distant children, while others expressed their enjoyment of contact with the younger generation. This may also be a reflection of the types of people that WWOOF hosts are, for example, community or people oriented. One host in particular, who very much regards hosting as a patriotic and ambassadorial role, takes great care to ensure that all WWOOFers meet her extended family as part of the exchange, an outcome of which is the production of a degree of personal pride:

[My family have] sort of accepted it now, that Mum will often have WWOOFers there, and I even have them at Christmas time and take them to our Christmas get togethers and things like that. Because ... that’s part of my life and they’re wanting to find out just what Australian life and culture is all about. So I want to show them that. And to show them how proud I am to be an Australian... (Host M).

Of course, living in rural or more remote areas can also be socially isolating, and for some hosts this makes the company of WWOOFers a welcome aspect of the experience, with important outcomes. For this host who had finally moved permanently to his property from the city after years of part time hosting:

I think if there wasn’t WWOOFing, I would find coming up here, um, a completely different prospect. I don’t think I might be quite so willing. Cos I like the city. [laughs]. I’m not trying to

escape the city. I am trying to escape the crap things of the city. That being said, I don't wanna create crap things up here ... like isolation (Host JL).

The experience of social interaction can sometimes involve connecting on a deep level and as some have found, lead to longer term outcomes in the form of connections, relationships and networks. Connecting can occur on a range of levels or depths and can involve sharing difficulties, which can produce strong feelings that may forge a lasting memory or longer term personal connection:

... the better WWOOFers are WWOOFers that ... can ... share painful bits, and feel comfortable with it. Like D, sat at the table there, with tears rolling down his eyes saying, "Oh! I've never cried in public like this before... Oh good! (Host S2).

Hosts in various forums tell stories of long lasting connections including return visits from WWOOFers and exchange visits to past WWOOFers:

I have got some really good friends who live in Wellington and I first got to know them as WWOOFers here, when they came to our place. They come back now as friends, not as WWOOFers (host quoted in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p96)

I form close friendships with many WWOOFers; I do get photographs when they have their babies or when they get married. Some have come back here, like one Japanese guy and his wife are now coming to my son's wedding, all the way from Japan (host quoted in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p96).

The stay can vary from two days to months, even a year. (I know of several marriages which began through WWOOFing!) (Pearsall n.d., p72).

I have plenty of excellent friends around the world, many of whom also pursue an organic lifestyle, which they have been inspired to take on due to the experience gained in New Zealand" (Pearsall n.d., p72).

There is a strong suggestion in such claims that there is something special in the relationships sometimes formed between hosts and WWOOFers. In fact Pearsall claims that the "WWOOF network allows a depth of relationship to develop which is much less common for the average traveller", which McIntosh and Bonnemann attribute to the 'sincerity' of the experience (2006, citing Taylor), at the interface between WWOOFers and hosts, which is explored in depth in Chapter 7.

Gaining Help

Figure 16 (above) demonstrates the relative importance of the various forms of help provided by WWOOFers. The *maintenance of organic gardens* and *domestic household help* are ranked highest, followed by 'other benefits', including friendships and networks made, generation gaps bridged and cultural exposure for children. This may reflect the fact that the majority of hosts have self-sufficiency rather than commercial property focus. The minority of hosts with a more labour intensive commercial focus and/or greater property-based income dependency might be assumed to be more likely to emphasize the help related aspects of hosting, as well as seek to make use of WWOOFer input in a more income/outcome oriented way.

This is not to say however, that the help offered by WWOOFers is an insignificant benefit of hosting to the wider population of hosts. The significance of WWOOFer help is a complex issue that requires more detailed exploration.

6.2 Significance of WWOOFer Help

Whilst not the most significant of the *benefits* of hosting, gaining help is the primary *overall reason* for hosting. As such, *maintaining organic farm systems* and *general farm work* are the most important or most frequently performed types of work by WWOOFers (Figure 10, p166), providing relatively important benefits to hosts (Figure 16, p204).

It is well known that there are areas within rural Australia where primary producers depend heavily upon the supply of temporary labour for seasonal work. However, there is a widely reported reluctance among Australians to engage in such harvesting work, related to wage conditions, accommodation and other uncertainties associated with this work, resulting in a chronic shortage of Australian seasonal rural workers.³⁵ In this context there is apparently a preference among many producers for international backpackers as workers, while producers in some areas are said to *rely* upon such workers, now having built a system of 'harvest trails' marketed specifically at the backpacker sector (Cooper, O'Mahoney et al. 2004; DEWSRB 2000). As described, to

³⁵ The National Farmers Federation is reported to have identified a shortfall of farm labourers in Australia of 96,000. In 2008 it called on the Federal government to relax immigration laws "to allow Pacific islanders to come to Australia on a seasonal basis and pick fruit and vegetables". Further it was reported that "some experts fear this labour force shortage could add to food price inflation, if it means crops cannot be planted, harvested or picked in time" (Migration Expert 2008).

address such labour shortages, the Australian government introduced legislation allowing travellers on a Working Holiday Visa to extend that visa by undertaking 3 months of full-time work in primary production, either as paid workers or as WWOOFers.

Meanwhile, Maxey (2006) noted in his study of deliberately 'alternative' (i.e. more organic, local and therefore sustainable) food producer networks in Canada and the UK, that practitioners interviewed commonly drew on voluntary labour, including WWOOFers, creating a type of external inter-dependence in relation to labour. In his exploration of barriers to sustainable food production, Maxey draws our attention to the fragility of some of these commercial organic producers within the global corporate agri-food context, thereby raising the question of the role of WWOOFers in generating resilience within this larger labour market picture.

The significance of the various types of help provided by WWOOFers to (mostly) rural hosts in this general Australian rural work context can now be considered, (while bearing in mind the ratio of commercial producers to other WWOOF hosts). The overall impression provided by surveyed hosts is that WWOOFer help is indeed valuable as follows:

- 30% found it to be *sometimes helpful*;
- 57% found WWOOF help to be *very helpful*; while
- 13% stated it was *crucial* to their property related aims.

No hosts suggested that WWOOFers (overall) had been *unhelpful*, however, it is obviously important to know which hosts find WWOOFers most helpful.

Hosts in the majority group that find WWOOFers to be *very helpful* appear to be mostly concentrated at the end of the spectrum where minimal income is generated from properties, but is also relatively high among those with the highest levels of income derived from their properties (see Appendix 5.3, Table 9 for details). Some commercially oriented hosts have commented that it is not possible or sensible to rely on WWOOFers to achieve regular ongoing tasks due to their unpredictable arrival, the time needed to explain and 'train' and the short term or variable duration of their stay:

...you wouldn't pay your annual \$25 or \$20 or whatever it is to be, a WWOOF host. You just wouldn't. If you were relying on Australians only. Put it that way. It wouldn't be worth it (Host D).

This was noted by Pollard a decade earlier:

Once you get to be a large scale commercial operator you need to be able to organize your labour requirements and WWOOFing is too casual to enable that to happen (Pollard in Doherty 1997, p17).

While WWOOFers therefore make an important contribution to the various hosts that use them, this data reaffirms the view that more commercially oriented hosts appear to rely less upon WWOOFer labour and consider it more of a welcome addition than an “essential part of it” (Doherty 1997, p17). Yet there is good evidence for the claim that WWOOFers are “making life easier for farmers throughout Australia” (Navarre 1994), because as well as routine production tasks, WWOOFers often work on some of the many other jobs that need completing, but which are hard to find the resources or time to do.

It really appealed to me ... I don't have the extra cash to be able to pay someone to do things. I mean I do certain things - but, um, if you have someone who's sort of coming in and helping you to a certain extent, even if its just putting trees in ... you know, I really appreciate it (Host M).

Farming families do not have time to do everything so the help of WWOOFers stabilizes the panic of not being able to do all the organic processes you desire to do (survey participant).

Various examples can also be found in general media reports on WWOOFing. For one Biodynamic farmer, hosting “allowed him to get jobs done that otherwise would not get done for financial reasons” (Kowalski 1993), while Pearsall quotes another as enjoying “help on projects which would take a very long time without the help, and often would not be so good without the skills, knowledge and wisdom of the WWOOFer” (Pearsall n.d.). In another case, a skilled tradesman WWOOFing long term was able to complete a range of tasks for a host that “may previously have been out-sourced” (Devlin 1998, p31). On properties known to the researcher, much WWOOFer effort has gone into managing weeds for the purpose of habitat restoration (i.e. Landcare), something which is either very labour intensive, or cost intensive if professional bush regenerators are contracted.

It was observed in interviews and conversation that some older and less physically able hosts found WWOOFer help particularly useful for managing property related tasks.

Though none of the hosts over 70 claimed WWOOFer assistance was ‘crucial’ to managing property related tasks, survey data collected does show limited support for the notion that older hosts were more, or most dependent on WWOOFer help (refer to Appendix 5.5, Table 15 for detailed data).

Almost 15% of hosts describe themselves as ‘solo’ hosts, indicating the level of help available (or otherwise) from others on host properties. As a proportion of their responses, solo hosts gave greater emphasis to the helpfulness of WWOOFers than ‘non-solo’ (i.e. partnered or other) hosts. Both groups of hosts found WWOOFers to be *sometimes helpful* in about 30% of cases, but solo hosts gave much greater emphasis to WWOOFer assistance as being *crucial* rather than *very important* (see Appendix 5.5, Table 15).

One interviewee described the crucial role of WWOOFers in the situation of a neighboring solo host:

They’re helping her keep her farm going. She’d have to sell up I think and move out if it weren’t for WWOOFers (Host S1).

In summary, the degree of reliance on property related activities for income, host age, and relationship status appear to all have some impact on hosts’ views about the significance of WWOOFer help, though a finer level of statistical analysis would provide greater insight into the subtleties of these relationships.

6.3 Most Significant Outcome of WWOOF Hosting

Hosts stated the most significant three things *learned, appreciated or changed* as a result of hosting produced 30 different categories of outcomes (including ‘other’)³⁶. This diversity underscores that hosting is a unique experience for a variety of people. Exploration of this diversity of outcomes is insightful, but it is noted that one third of all responses (34%) could be coded to just 4 thematic categories (not including ‘other’), while over half (53%) fitted into the 8 categories shown in Table 13 below.

³⁶ After being reduced from an initial 40 through redistribution of related categories. See Appendix 5 for all response types.

Table 13: Most Significant Outcomes of Hosting (53%)

Most Significant Outcome	%	% cases
1. Significance of the cultural exchange or experience	13	19
2. Learning about effective communication	8	12
3. Increased patience/tolerance in relation to WWOOFers skills/abilities and cultural differences	7	11
4. Greater appreciation of human differences	6	10
5. Awareness of human commonalities	5	7
6. Increased appreciation of own lives/place/good fortune	5	7
7. Meeting people and sharing experiences and company	5	7
8. Improved awareness or understanding of requirements for creating enjoyable WWOOFing experiences	4	7

See Appendix 5.6, Table 16 for full detail

1. 19% of hosts stated in various ways the significance of the cultural exchange or experience, often commenting upon the increased understanding or learning about other cultures for themselves and their children this entailed. Many stated that this enriched their lives.
2. 12% of hosts have learned from experience the importance of and techniques for communicating clearly with WWOOFers, particularly where English language abilities are limited. Some observed that they had learned that there are many non-verbal ways to communicate as well.
3. 11% of hosts learned to be or had become more *patient* or *tolerant*, references to approaching cultural differences or overcoming perceived 'limitations' of some WWOOFers in terms of work skills or other aspects of the exchange. It was also made in respect of dealings with people more generally.³⁷
4. 10% of hosts have grown to better appreciate differences among people, relating closely to increased tolerance and patience for some hosts (as above).
5. 7% of hosts focused their insights about people differently, emphasizing instead the commonalities among all people that underlie the differences, revealed by their interactions with WWOOFers.

³⁷ This category emerged to accommodate specific use of this terminology, but it is closely connected to several others, including increased cultural understanding, ensuring a good WWOOF experience, self-understanding/development, appreciation of difference, interpersonal skills, avoiding judgement and the need to be flexible/adaptable.

6. 7% of hosts had gained an increased appreciation of either their own home/place, their local area/region, or the nation as a whole as a result of interaction with WWOOFers, sometimes expressed in the form of an affirmation of their own lives and as a realisation of good fortune. Connected to this (but categorized separately), some stated that interested WWOOFers gave them a welcome reminder of the validity and worth of their 'alternative' lifestyle or organic/sustainability focus.
7. 7% of hosts found significance in meeting people and having the opportunity to interact and share experiences and company with diverse people.
8. 7% also emphasized an expanded awareness of what was required to ensure an enjoyable WWOOFing experience, both for WWOOFers and for themselves, having observed from experience particular characteristics of good interactions or exchanges that offered them a basis for maintaining such experiences in the future. This category as a whole relates to some of the above, such as communication, appreciating difference and its inverse, avoiding judgement, but emphasised other aspects such as the value of trust and openness, offering friendliness and good will, communicating expectations about how to make it work for both parties, being flexible, providing specific experiences that WWOOFers respond to and avoiding being exploited.³⁸

Combined with these, a further 7 responses make up over 75% of *all* responses concerning hosting outcomes:

- valuing the friendships and relationships formed through hosting;
- gaining skills, knowledge and ideas from others;
- an appreciation of the help given;
- the insight that people are mostly 'good' (and able to be trusted);
- some degree of self-understanding and/or self-development;
- an awareness of the need to be organized to host effectively; and,
- gaining the insight that the majority of WWOOFers are willing to work, to learn or to try.

³⁸ Drawing from interviews and conversation with hosts and WWOOFers, other aspects of this category might also include setting achievable tasks and a variety of work as well as inclusion in family life where appropriate or possible, not just at the level of the work and meals.

Having glimpsed the breadth of significant host outcomes, Table 14 shows a condensed version of *all* responses to reduce overlaps and capture the impact of hosting experiences at a fundamental level. This conceptual taxonomy follows from an iterative process of data interpretation through detailed knowledge of the survey material upon which it is based and direct and close experience with hosts.

Table 14: Overall Significance of Hosting Experience to Hosts

Overall Significance to Hosts	%
1. gaining inter-personal benefit	31.8
2. increased knowledge about people	20.1
3. increased self understanding & personal development	18.0
4. improving the exchange	17.3
5. gaining physical assistance	3.7
6. better appreciating the nature of the exchange	3.5
7. other	5.6
Total	100.0

(1) **‘Gaining inter-personal benefit’** was highest ranked, including such significant human interaction based categories as ‘cultural exchange, experience and understanding’, ‘friendships and relationships formed’ and ‘skills, knowledge or ideas gained’ through interaction with other people.

(2) **‘Increased knowledge about people’** through hosting was ranked next, including appreciating differences among people, or conversely, seeing similarities among people from different places and age groups. The knowledge gained can be considered to be neither true nor false and included views about WWOOFers and ‘young people’ as a whole, that were both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’. However, the various statements in this aggregate category illuminate the existence of a perceived increase in understanding about people through hosting.

(3) **Improved ‘self-understanding and personal development’** contains categories of statements in which an awareness of self and a perceived positive developmental change resulted. This is distinct from (1) gaining inter-personal benefits (above), which are less permanent in nature.

The next most significant group of categories connects a range of comments focused on (4) **improving the exchange** between hosts and WWOOFers, learned through experience. Examples include the need to be flexible or improved communication.

The last two groups in Table 14 (not including 'other') accounted for only a small percentage of all comments offered (7.2% combined), but were considered distinct types: (5) **gaining help** and (6) **better appreciating the nature of the exchange** (e.g. that it is 'symbiotic' in character, or that the non-monetary aspect of the exchange is valuable to both parties).

It is clear from all of the data presented above, that key outcomes for individual hosts are derived by or through personal interaction and exchange with people that the WWOOF mechanism creates. The interpersonal interactivity at the heart of WWOOFing is part *motivator*, part *experience* and partly a *generator* of a range of *outcomes*. It is difficult to conceive of the outcomes from hosting described here as typical of a tourist-host interaction, to the extent that those are motivated by and based on the exchange of money for the provisions of services such as food, accommodation and/or information. As one surveyed host suggested, the WWOOF exchange allows one to see "how rich life is between humans when no money stuff is involved".

Chapter 5, supported by a wide range of data, has shown that it is the actions at the interface *between humans* that is the core category that emerges in an analysis of motives for, experiences of and outcomes of WWOOF hosting. Analysis of this *zone of interaction* is taken up in detail in Chapter 7.

7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter has drawn principally upon the findings of data collected in Australia in order to characterize the perspectives of Australian WWOOF hosts. It has also made some use of data drawn from key New Zealand studies which offers the opportunity for some trans-Tasman comparisons, as well as to reflect upon valuable insights not necessarily captured by data collection efforts in the present study.

Australian WWOOF hosts are diverse individuals, spanning the age spectrum, commonly living in rural and regional areas, engaged in various scales and forms of agricultural production. They are relatively well educated and claim to be well travelled, reporting a high degree of involvement in environmental repair and advocacy groups.

Many have a limited commercial focus at present, but organically certified and strongly commercially oriented hosts are involved as well. There are many reasons to host

WWOOFers, and the experience of hosting among the current generation of hosts is largely a positive one overall, in spite of the existence of a number of costs.

WWOOFing experiences depend critically upon the interactions between WWOOFers and hosts and from this interactivity the most valued aspects of the WWOOFing exchange are derived. Thus, cultural exchanges, cultural experiences and increased cultural understanding, all achieved through the creation and exploration of an interactive interpersonal space, make the experience of hosting WWOOFers most beneficial for most hosts. The social interaction, friendships and company brought about through hosting is also highly beneficial and for many is rated ahead of help related outcomes.

Yet WWOOFers are still considered to be 'very helpful' and occasionally 'crucial' to getting work done on properties ensuring the help remains a significant reason for hosting.

As they *are* mostly willing to work and they are a significant form of help to producers at different scales in Australia, they play an important role, at least in the margins of the Australian organic food sector, which has been steadily expanding over several decades (see Chapter 2). While commercial producers may not rely upon WWOOFers, hosting can help maintain an "interest and commitment to organic methods", according to one participant. It is partly servicing this growing and labour intensive sector that the concept of WWOOFing was initially intended to serve, even if many participants view that as less important than some of its other attributes. Hosts suggest that few WWOOFers share the concerns of environmentally focused hosts about the need for growing and consuming local organic produce or engaging in earth repair activities through Landcare and related initiatives. To many surveyed hosts, a lot of WWOOFers are primarily looking for a cheap way to travel, to experience aspects of rural life, and to save money. Some have commented that the more recent generation have become less interested in organics and sustainability issues than a decade or more ago. But on the whole, hosts are positive about the role played in their lives by WWOOFers, and in spite of commonly lacking shared interests, hosts are able to "gain much by them showing us their lives" (survey participant).

In spite of, or because of the often self-interested motivations of both parties involved, it is seen as a mutually beneficial arrangement by its nature.

Koreans' main aim is to practice their English skills on the cheap. Which is fine as it is a symbiotic relationship in a way.

Through this 'symbiotic' process, both parties gain sometimes surprising outcomes or benefits. Some hosts felt satisfaction to have assisted or inspired someone, or least to have shown them some alternative ways of thinking and living that may translate into a greater awareness of rural realities, but also of 'alternatives' and the implementation of local and/or general actions arising from these.

I have had WWOOFers who have told me that their experience on this land has changed their lives for the better. This makes me very happy...

Friendships, understanding and personal development are all possible 'side-effects' of the exchange as is a renewed appreciation of the value of trusting strangers. Hosts indicated that people "are similar all over the world and it is good to demonstrate trust and to trust people", reinforcing the idea that as a host your "kindness gets repaid with kindness".

Hosting is not without its costs for most hosts, but the clear message from participants is that despite these, it provides many positives that outweigh these. Finally, the involvement in WWOOF for some individuals has been very powerful:

Being a WWOOF host has been THE most wonderful thing I have ever done in my life!!! We all seek happiness and meaning in life. I have found it in the delightful company of WWOOFers. The joy, love and friendship they bring me is immeasurable. In addition I have found my future partner - what more could one ask?

Though not frequently stated directly, an explanation of the seemingly broad and powerful effects of hosting were offered by some in terms of an exchange removed from the effects of monetary interchange, discovering the "wonderful commonalities of humanity" through this:

alternative exchange of labour and services based on trust and not restricted/influenced by the capitalist monetary system.

It is not that WWOOF is the only avenue for this type of non-monetary exchange, nor that conventional monetary exchanges of fee for service in the tourism realm entirely prohibit a recognition by the 'host' and 'tourist' of the commonalities of humanity.

However, in-built into the WWOOFing exchange for both parties, is an array of human interaction based 'events', dependent on an initial minimum level of trust or good will offered by the participants, rather than a fee for service. As the exchange proceeds and 'concludes' (sometimes with lasting and profound friendships), it commonly produces effects on its participants which many regard as unique to this exchange and many of which are difficult to measure.

Despite such immeasurability, this chapter has attempted to describe indicators of the direction and magnitude of some of these qualities of the hosting experience. The 'balance sheet' shows that it tallies as a 'positive' one for the current generation of hosts. Chapter 6 now explores some of the views and attitudes of WWOOFers to their experiences through the surveys and interviews undertaken as part of this research.

CHAPTER 6: WWOOFING

1 INTRODUCTION

Previous chapters emphasized that only limited published analysis of the phenomenon of WWOOFing in Australia exists, despite its apparent and growing popularity among contemporary travellers. While some work does illustrate the character of WWOOFers in the New Zealand (NZ) context (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; McIntosh and Campbell 2001; Nimmo 2001b), there has only been one unpublished study of WWOOFers in the Cairns area (van Raders 1994) from which to answer some basic types of questions about WWOOFers in Australia. For example, *who are they? Where are they from? How are they travelling? What are they seeking? Why are they WWOOFing? What is WWOOFing like? How much time are they spending WWOOFing and what are they getting from their experiences as WWOOFers?* Answering such questions is crucial for building a grounded understanding of the WWOOFing phenomenon.

The first aim of this chapter therefore is to report upon research that helps answer these questions, providing insight into the current generation of WWOOFers and contextualising later discussion of their experiences of interacting with hosts. Key findings are generated from analysis of written surveys (refer to Appendix 6.1) of a sample of WWOOFers during 2006. As well as serving to answer vital *background* questions about WWOOFers and initiating investigation in to the nature of their *motives, experiences* and *outcomes*, analysis of survey data was invaluable in progressively guiding the researcher in undertaking in-depth interviews with hosts and WWOOFers which occurred in practice before, during and after the survey period.

The second key function of this chapter is to bring to light insights generated by an iterative, analytical working through of interviews with WWOOFers. This qualitative perspective is drawn upon as relevant, either in parallel with or complementary to the quantitative data, to integrate and contextualise understanding. Analysis of *qualitative* material reminds us that there are multiple experiences which represent multiple unique subjectivities, each constructing and representing *their* own realities. Earlier chapters have described the value and appropriateness of adopting varying (ontological and epistemological) standpoints in both constructing and reading this chapter which draws on both etic and emic perspectives. In the context of a large volume of data available and collected, it must be acknowledged that choosing to work

widely with data means that much scope for exploratory *depth* and interpretive justification in this work is likely to remain, given space and time limitations.

This chapter should be read as the partner to Chapter 5 that focuses upon hosts, as together, they provide an essential empirical-analytical backdrop to the more theoretical *synthesis* in final chapters.

Survey Sample and Limitations

With the assistance of participating hosts, WWOOFers contributed to the research by completing a detailed survey. The total sample size was 188, which comprised 1.6% of the estimated population (at that time) of approximately 11,500 annually registered WWOOFers in Australia.¹ Overall, while the sample represents a minor proportion of the total *annual* WWOOFer membership, this sample only represents a one month snapshot of the activities of members throughout the year. Further, in undertaking quantitative analyses of a sample of a larger population, the key issue is the absolute quantum of participants (see Veal 1997). Appendix 6.2 discusses the issue of the representativeness of the sample used in this research and details on relevant confidence intervals for the WWOOFer survey, including the likely variability in considering description and analyses presented in this chapter.

The survey was implemented across Australia, and as with the host sample (see Chapter 5) the spatial distribution of respondent WWOOFers broadly concurred with the general distribution of all host properties by state jurisdiction (as at July 2004). There was however, a notable over-representation in the northern states relative to total host properties nationwide, which numerous hosts suggested was likely to be due to seasonality, with the onset of winter typically marking a movement of WWOOFers from south to north in pursuit of warmer weather, possibly also fuelled by the likelihood of more active WWOOFing opportunities in warmer climes.

Hosts assisted in administering surveys to WWOOFers and thus, only hosts receptive to the research were perhaps enthusiastic enough to encourage participation by their WWOOFers. There may therefore have been additional interested WWOOFers unable to be reached by this method of survey administration. Conversely, despite researcher attempts to ensure hosts did not *enforce* WWOOFer involvement, some participant WWOOFers may have felt themselves coerced into survey participation by hosts,

¹ It is difficult to state accurately what this proportion signifies, since membership as well as frequency and 'depth' of participation are fluid and ambiguous for WWOOFers and in comparison with hosts

potentially affecting their responses, although this is not a factor that can be detected or corrected for.

The confidentiality of WWOOFers was ensured by requesting that hosts allow space and privacy to complete surveys and by offering WWOOFers the opportunity to send surveys independently. Occasionally a pair/couple of WWOOFers completed a survey on behalf of both parties, entering dual demographic and other information. Such responses were split and treated as independent surveys where possible.

It should also be noted that some non-responding WWOOFers may have viewed WWOOFing as an insignificant experience and thus the sample that is analysed below might tend to be over-represented by WWOOFing enthusiasts. Again, this is not a factor that can be detected or corrected for, but should be borne in mind in later analyses and in making general conclusions.

2 PROFILE OF SURVEYED WWOOFERS

Drawing on these surveys, but also upon the work of van Raders (1994), Nimmo (2001b) and McIntosh and Bonneman (2006), a profile of contemporary WWOOFers in Australia is offered. Interviews, participant observation and other involvement with WWOOFers has added depth and nuanced understanding to this effort. Key *demographic* and *psychographic* information and the general *travel profile* of participants helps contextualize and later build towards detailed consideration of *motives* for, *experiences* of, and *outcomes* from WWOOFing.

2.1 Key Demographic Insights

Key demographic information about WWOOFers is provided in Table 15 below, with details in Appendix 6.3.

WWOOFers ranged in age from 17-65 years but the vast majority were young, with 50% between the ages of 19-24 and 73% aged 28 or less. This figure is very close to those studied in NZ where it was suggested WWOOFers are a form of youthful backpacker given the mean of age of visitors to broader rural tourism enterprises was double that of WWOOFers (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p88).

Over two thirds of survey participants were female, which may or may not be indicative of the larger population of WWOOFers, but there is no reliable way to determine this since such information is not collected. These figures may instead represent the relative willingness/reluctance of females/males to be involved in such research. Notably though, females and males were represented in very similar proportions (67:33%) in the ATLAS/International Student Travel Federation international (ISTF) 'global nomad' survey in 2002 (Richards and Wilson 2004). Thus grounds exist for suggesting that females are generally more strongly represented in independent travel circles worldwide, if not merely more cooperative when it comes to participation in research.

Table 15: Demographic Profile of WWOOFers (as at 2006) (n = 188)

Age	
Age range	17-65 years
Sex of Person Most Responsible for WWOOFers	
Female: Male ratio	2:1
Relationship Status of WWOOFers	
Single: Partnered ratio	3: 1
Percentage WWOOFers with children	5%
Country of Origin	
Percentage of domestic WWOOFers	8.1%
Germany	Rank 1
South Korea	Rank 2
Britain/UK	Rank 3
Japan	Rank 4
Australia	Rank 5
Dwelling Characteristics	
large or small cities	43%
large or small towns	31%
small village and other communities	27%
Formal Education Attainment	
Postgraduate degrees	5%
Graduate diplomas and certificates	12%
Bachelor degree	26%
Other Tertiary/Trade	35%
Secondary school qualifications (only)	17%
Other	4%

NZ researchers also found a very similar breakdown for gender, speculating that women may be more likely than men to undertake volunteer work and stay with a host family as travellers (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006). They cite Riley's (1988) observation that among long-term budget travellers, "women were more likely than

men to need company and ‘nurturing’ when travelling alone” (p89), something several hosts also identified.

Almost 75% of WWOOFers were not in steady relationships, with the 25% of WWOOFers married or partnered being more concentrated in older age groups, in keeping with the broader population. Relatedly, only about 5% of WWOOFers had children.

WWOOFers nominated 24 countries of origin, with Germans representing nearly a quarter (24%) of participants. Two-thirds (67%) of WWOOFers surveyed came from just 5 countries: Germany, South Korea, Britain/UK, Japan and Australia. 96% came from 12 of the 24 countries represented by surveyed WWOOFers as Table 16 below illustrates.

Table 16: Surveyed WWOOFers Countries of Origin

Country/Region	WWOOFers surveyed	%	Country /Region	WWOOFers surveyed	%
1. Germany	44	23.7	13. Italy	3	1.6
2. Sth Korea	26	14.0	14. Denmark	2	1.1
3. Britain/UK	22	11.8	15. Ireland	2	1.1
4. Japan	17	9.1	16. Mexico	2	1.1
5. Australia	15	8.1	17. Switzerland	2	1.1
6. Holland	12	6.5	18. Austria	1	0.5
7. France	7	3.8	19. Cambodia	1	0.5
8. Canada	6	3.2	20. Finland	1	0.5
9. Sweden	6	3.2	21. Israel	1	0.5
10. Hong Kong	5	2.7	22. New Zealand	1	0.5
11. Belgium	4	2.2	23. Norway	1	0.5
12. USA	4	2.2	24. Taiwan	1	0.5

Separately, hosts nominated 34 countries and 7 regions (frequently using ‘other’) in describing the origins of their WWOOFers. While not directly comparable because collection methods differed, these data sets have been melded as much as possible (with details of the methodology for doing so in Appendix 6.3, Tables 20-22). A significant level of agreement about the top ranking countries of WWOOFer origin has been found. In both cases, Germany is the largest contributor of WWOOFers to Australia, the ‘top 10’ countries are the same but for one and some ranking differences, and the ‘top 5’ countries are the same (though not in rank) by both methods (as shown at Table 15).

Notably, the composition of WWOOFer origin in Australia and NZ are quite different, particularly in respect of North American WWOOFers, who make up a significantly higher proportion of WWOOFers in NZ (22%) compared to Australia (5%).

Further comparative analysis was undertaken by comparing (A) WWOOFer and (B) host data sources with ranked data on (C) international visitors to Australia and (D) 'backpackers' to Australia.

Table 17: National Groupings in terms of WWOOFing & Travel in Australia

Label	Traveler Origin
1. Big on Travel, Big on Backpacking, Big on WWOOFing	South Korea, Britain/UK and Japan
2. Big on Backpacking, Big on WWOOFing	Germany and Canada
3. Big on WWOOFing	Holland, France and Hong Kong
4. Big on Travel	Singapore, China, 'Other' Asia, 'Other' Europe, 'Other' Countries

Using methods elaborated in Appendix 6.3, four 'groups' of nations (Table 17) can be described in terms of their absolute (not relative) tendency to travel to, to 'backpack' in, and to WWOOF in Australia.

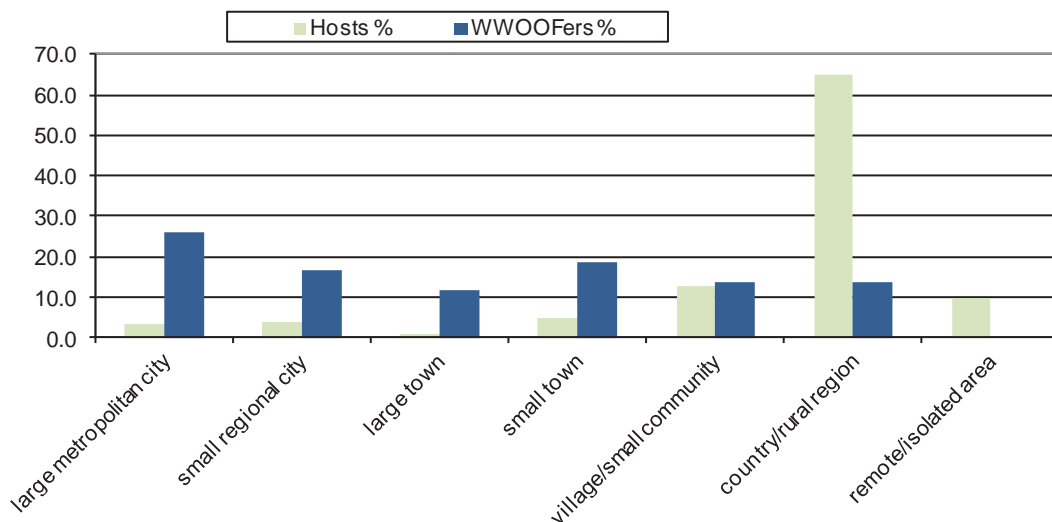
Photo 6: Nationalities of WWOOFers on host whiteboard, Central Coast, NSW Australia



South Korea, Britain/UK and Japan are ranked in the top 10 according to all four data sets, suggesting that visitors from these nations (C) travel to Australia frequently, (D) backpack in Australia frequently, and (A and B) WWOOF frequently. They may be represented highly as WWOOFers because they are highly represented as a proportion of visitors generally and of backpackers generally. They are big on travel, and therefore big on backpacking and WWOOFing (see Appendix 6.3 Table 22 for more detail).

WWOOFers are largely urban inhabitants, with over a quarter living in large metropolitan cities and 43% living in large or small cities combined. 31% live in either large or small towns and only 27% live in small village and other communities, or country/rural regions. Conversely, Figure 17 shows that the large majority (87%) of hosts reside in country and rural regions, villages and small communities, and/or remote areas. Hosts might therefore offer most WWOOFers opportunities to experience and be accommodated in areas unfamiliar to many.

Figure 17: Comparison of WWOOFer and Host Residential Context



Surveyed WWOOFers' overall educational 'attainment' levels (Table 15, p224) suggest they are a highly educated/qualified group. 48% had attained a college certificate or university bachelor degree, while a further 19% had advanced diplomas or graduate

diplomas. Collectively, 72% of participants were college or university trained.² The ATLAS/ISTF international ‘global nomad’ survey in 2002 found that 34% of independent travellers had gained a higher education degree, described by the authors as a “relatively high” level of education (Richards and Wilson 2004). The comparatively higher level of educational attainment among WWOOFers accords with the findings of the limited, unpublished comparative study of WWOOFers and backpackers in Cairns by van Raders (1994, p5), who suggested that WWOOF members generally “reached a higher level of education than backpackers”.³

Respondents were largely returning to full-time paid work (39%), or resuming being a student (36%), generally in keeping with the age (i.e. life stage) profile of most WWOOFers as illustrated in Table 18.⁴

Table 18: Time Occupied at Home

Time spent at home	Freq	%	% of Cases
full time paid work	71	31	39.2
student	64	28	35.4
part time/casual paid work	40	17.5	22.1
seeking paid work	34	14.9	18.8
other	8	3.5	4.4
home care	6	2.6	3.3
retired	4	1.8	2.2
child care	1	0.4	0.6
semi-retired	1	0.4	0.6
Total	229	100.0	126.5

Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Fitting the profile of many students, 22% would be doing part-time or casual jobs, while 19% will be seeking work. Detailed analysis of professions was not undertaken and WWOOF Australia does not collect such information. But it is notable that almost 30% of WWOOFer applicants in NZ in 2001 were employed in either professional or semi-professional occupations, which McIntosh and Bonnemann (2006) suggested is similar to the profile of backpackers in general (citing Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Moran, 1999; Toxward, 2000).

² 17% had senior high school qualifications only, and 53% of these were between the age of 19-21. It is likely that some of these young WWOOFers were ‘gap year’ (i.e. pre-tertiary study) travellers (Klaushofer 2007; Maycock 2008; Simpson 2004; Thornton 2003).

³ That study further claimed on the basis of self-identified responses, that while “most backpackers (78.2%) come from a working or middle class background ... 81.6% of WWOOFers profess to a middle to upper-middle class background (ibid, p6)”.

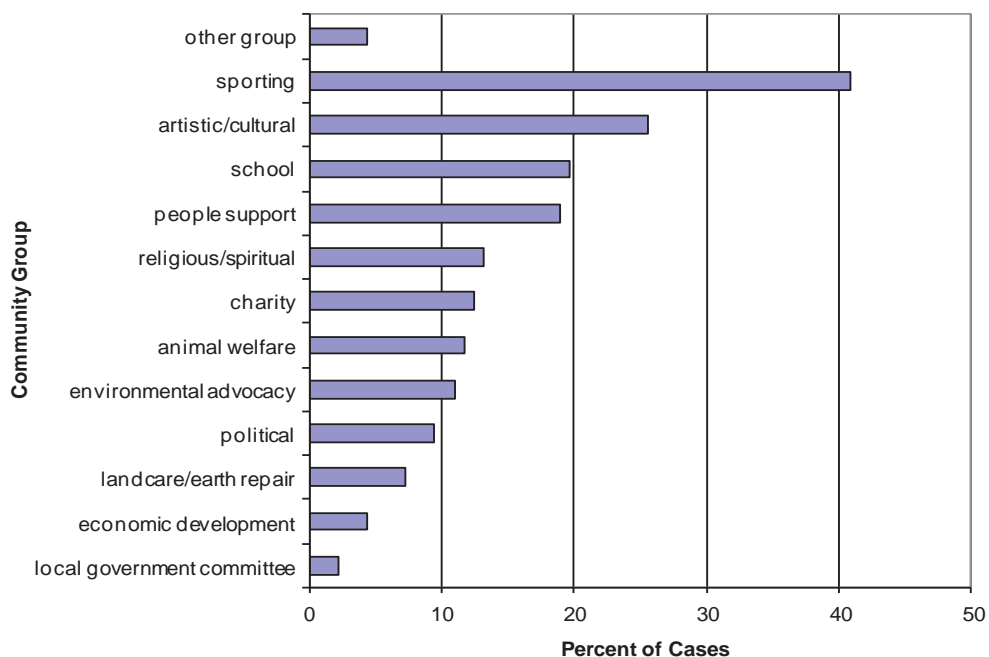
⁴ This compares closely with the 43% of WWOOF applicants in NZ that described themselves as students (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006).

2.2 Key Psychographic Insights

Several survey questions provided useful background ‘psychographic’ insights, particularly those relating to connectedness in home communities and broader travel priorities and expectations.

Outside the WWOOFing context, involvement in community, broader ‘interests’, and a tendency or inclination generally towards building ‘social capital’ (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000) is taken to be represented by the community groups involved with at home (see Figure 18).⁵

Figure 18: Community Group Involvement



The most common involvement was with sport, arts and school based groups. People support, spiritual and charitable groups were the next most highly represented, while animal and environmental welfare/advocacy as well as local political groups made up a third and least represented grouping. Though no comparison is made to non-WWOOFers, they look to be involved in their communities with (1) a primarily individualist concern, then with (2) a broader but human-centred concern, and lastly, with (3) a more ‘expanded’ concern for the environmental and political landscape that

⁵ Note this indicates the range of groups, not depth of involvement.

shapes human and non-human lives and physical landscapes. This observation is worth bearing in mind during later consideration of the motivations of WWOOFers.

As they are largely international visitors, it is of interest to explore the ways WWOOFers tend to travel in Australia.

WWOOFers mostly travel alone (60%), or with one companion (22%), concordant with the high proportion of solo WWOOFers reported above and consistent with research on WWOOFers in NZ (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006). This was also found to be consistent with earlier research on travel behaviour of backpackers and long-term budget travellers (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Riley 1988). Similarly, van Raders (1994) found that 67% of WWOOFers generally travelled alone. However, she found that only 47% of non-WWOOFing backpackers travelled alone, suggesting (bearing in mind the age of the data) that WWOOFers tend to be more independent travellers than backpackers.

This majority group of WWOOFers travelling solo is made up of about 70% female and 30% male, near identical to the ratio of male to female survey participants overall (see Table 15, p224). That is, the proportion of those who mostly travel solo is the same among males and female WWOOFers, at around 60% for males and 61% for females.

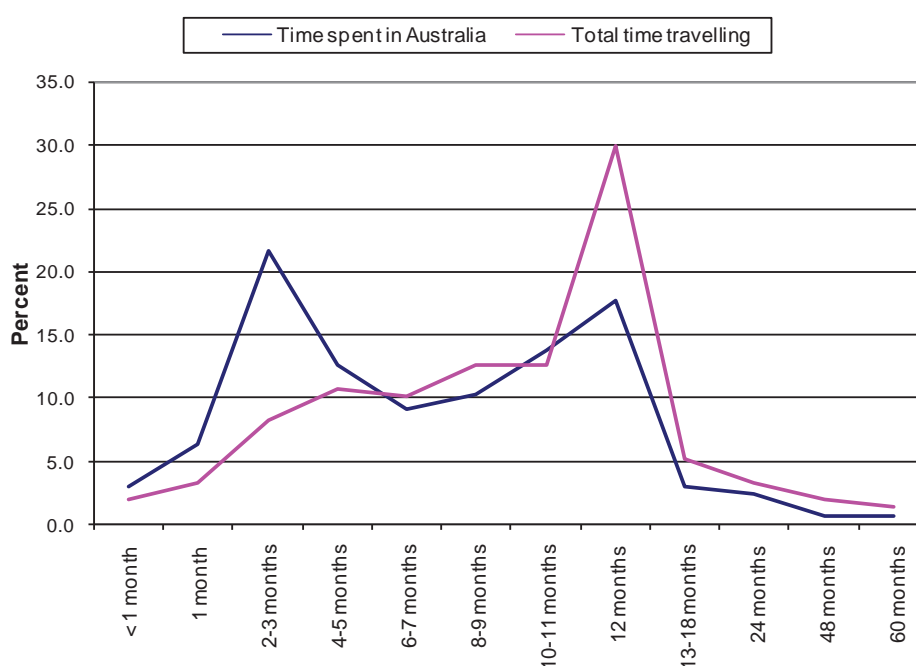
Travelling WWOOFers, like travellers generally, use a variety of forms of transport, varying according to the region they are in, time and budget available and the various phases of their journey. Local public transport and private vehicles were the two most significant forms used, while tourist coaches, air transport, hitchhiking and cycling are also used (see Appendix 6.3, Figure 5). 49% of WWOOFers in Australia are picked up by hosts from a nearby pick up point, while the other half arrive independently. Van Raders' (1994) found that WWOOFers tended to make use of private cars significantly more than backpackers (44:16%), providing them with "the opportunity to explore more and to get off the beaten track", reflecting their desire to "get away from other backpackers and tourists". This and other comparative characteristics (such as WWOOFers relatively limited use of hostels, longer overall stays and apparent desire to engage in 'real' experiences), led her (in 1994) to suggest that WWOOFers could be thought of as seeking the escape from tourism, which Riley (1988) had earlier described among low budget travellers.

Table 19: Time Spent Travelling by WWOOFers

Time Travelling	Range	Mean	Median
Travel in Australia	3 – 60 weeks	8 months	7 months ^b
Travel in Total	3 – 60 weeks	10.3 months	10 months

Respondents indicated the time they were to spend travelling in Australia and in total (see Table 19), with a wide range and distinct peaks at 3 and 12 months (see Figure 19 below). Data for all ‘backpackers’ shows that the average mean length of stay (in 2006) was about 2.3 months (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). Subject to the limitations of the methodology used in defining backpackers⁷ and acknowledging there will be some overlaps of categories in practice, comparison of these data sources suggests that WWOOFers are more inclined to stay in Australia for greater periods than is ‘typical’ of backpackers.

Figure 19: WWOOFer Time Spent Travelling



Van Raders (1994) also found that WWOOFers and regular backpackers were different in terms of their length of stay in Australia. To summarise available evidence, WWOOFers stay in Australia on average more than 3 times longer than ‘typical’ backpackers. WWOOFing appears to provide an important mechanism for undertaking

⁶ This data includes one Australian who indicated they had been travelling in Australia for 48 months. It is assumed they were currently resident elsewhere and revisiting their country of origin.

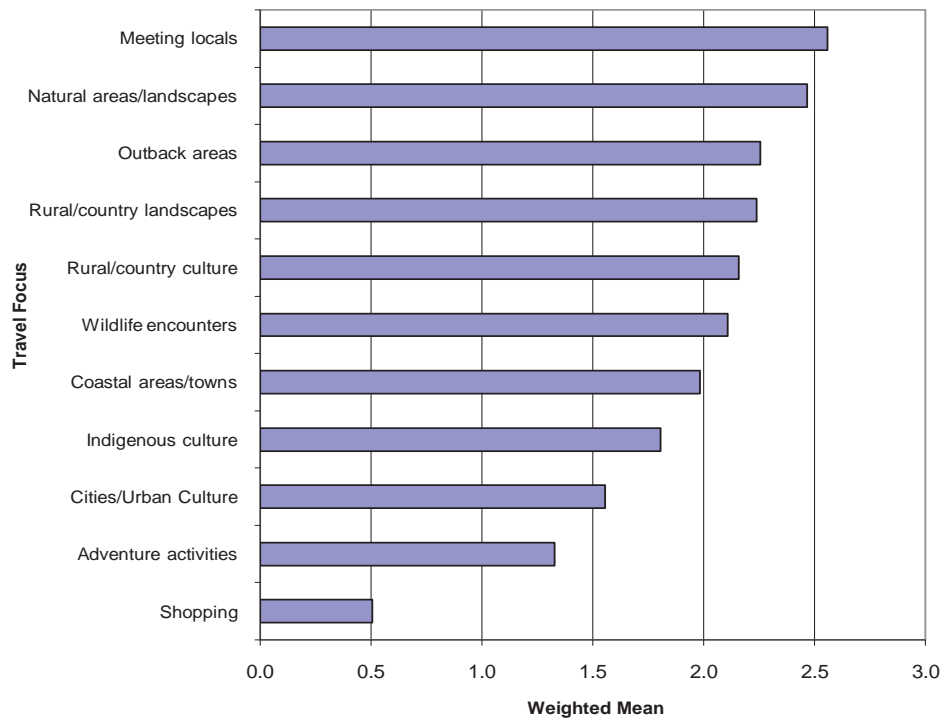
⁷ Defined by the ABS in terms of accommodation used rather than purpose of visit.

relatively longer stays in Australia, as well as a focal point for a more immersed (Nimmo 2001a), or 'slower' forms of experience, something identified as increasingly important by tourism scholars and others (Franklin 2003a; Gillespie, Burgess et al. 2008; Matos 2004; Woehler 2004).

WWOOFers reported a wide range of total intended travel time (i.e. Australia and beyond, in Table 19), with a distinct peak at 12 months (Figure 19) and an average of over 10 months. The ATLAS/ISTF international 'global nomad' survey found that the average length of travel was significantly less at 2 months (Richards and Wilson 2004). Though WWOOFers in Australia travel for longer periods of time than is the average for other types of travellers, it is difficult to say from the data generated by this survey alone whether WWOOFers travel longer *because* they WWOOF, or they WWOOF *because* they want to travel longer: In other words, it can be both a mechanism and a reason to extend travel time.

WWOOFers spend 78% of their total travel time in Australia and (noting its distance and isolation) few tend to visit other countries/regions on these trips. With Australia as a primary focus, key attractions, experiences or general travel foci are shown in Figure 20. *Meeting local people* and *having experiences in natural, outback and rural areas* and with *wildlife* were all highly ranked reasons for wanting to travel in Australia. This indicates the importance that WWOOFers place on wanting to experience those parts of Australia that are away from urban places and culture. Notably, this is how WWOOF promotes itself, pointing again to a close fit between the key touristic aims and the potential value of WWOOF in fulfilling them.

Figure 20: Relative Importance of Travel Foci of WWOOFers



To conclude this profile of WWOOFers in the context of broader travel motives such as these, reference is again made to Van Raders' (1994), who suggested that WWOOFers are psychographically distinct from 'regular' backpackers on a range of issues as outlined in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Key Differences between Backpackers and WWOOFers

Difference	Backpackers (%)	WWOOFers (%)
Australia recommended by others as destination	50	8
Desire to see tourist attractions	84	33
Importance of cultural difference	47	93
Travel as a need to 'escape'	50	74
Importance of relaxation as a traveller	60	40

It was earlier mentioned that in 2006 Tourism Australia launched a campaign to attract global 'experience seekers', as their own research suggested that these were the ideal form of visitors moving forward into the future (discussed further below). Many of the travel foci for this 'ideal' 'target group' occupy the same relative level of importance as found for WWOOFers in this research (Tourism Australia 2006). The mechanisms for

delivering such experiences are of course different, with the former operating on an exchange basis that has direct commercial and national economic interest at heart, while the latter operates in a different domain. As taken up later, though the *motivations* of such 'experience seekers' may be similar, the *experiences* themselves and also *outcomes* of the experiences are greatly divergent.

3 PROFILE OF WWOOFERS INTERVIEWED

Thirteen host properties (20 hosts) in Australia and NZ were visited as part of this research. Chapter 4 outlines the ways by which WWOOFers were reached through hosts as research subjects, while Table 21 lists WWOOFers that were in varying ways, part of this research. Eight agreed to recorded interviews, providing the basis for most of the interpretive qualitative analysis presented below.

Two were interviewed as a couple while one WWOOFer (JL) was also a host, able to reflect on previous WWOOFing experiences. One first time WWOOFer was also opportunistically interviewed, though not formally included in analysis on the basis of insufficient experience for inclusion (Chapter 4).

This sample of interviewees was relatively representative of the gender and nationality profile for WWOOFers presented above and of the relatively youthful profile of WWOOFers generally (21-33 years). Three were in steady relationships and none had children. They were also seemingly representative of surveyed WWOOFers in respect of their places of dwelling, longevity of travel and modes of transport used.

Naturally WWOOFers converged and differed across a range of key issues and diverse occupations and orientations to WWOOFing were found. While explored in more detail later, basic knowledge of these can assist with comprehending the interpretive processes used to analyze interview data.

Table 21: WWOOFers Interviewed in Research

ID	Date	Origin	Age	Sex	WWOOFing Experience	Occupations	Key Issue Orientation as WWOOFer
J	Mar 2006	Germany	26	F	2-4 weeks	Independent jeweler/artisan	Experiencing life in alternatives to regular tourism
T	Jun 2006	Japan	26	F	4-6 weeks	Sustainable agriculture oriented NGO worker and researcher	Seeking specific knowledge for volunteer activism and career in environmental advocacy
Y	Jun 2006	Japan	23	M	4-6 weeks	Reluctant Accountant/student	Avoiding expected path, seeking clarity and alternatives
M	July 2006	UK	27	F	12-36 weeks	Hospitality worker	Visa extension to remain with boyfriend
JL	July 2006	Australia	32	M	12-36 weeks	Sustainable agriculture educator and organic grower/entrepreneur	Seeking sustainable building knowledge with purposeful alternative to conventional travel
A R	Aug 2007	Australia	27 33	F M	6-12 weeks	Environmental educator Sustainability consultant	Seeking to gain and offer specific knowledge related to sustainable production/consumption
E	Feb 2008	USA	21	F	2-4 weeks	Sustainability studies student	Achieving field work related to studies
TOTAL	-	-	-	5 F:3 M	-	-	-

Table 21 provides a snapshot of WWOOFer attributes, including a condensed representation of their usual main occupations and their *key issue orientation* as WWOOFers. Though simplistic, it is usefully noted that in terms of Nimmo's two-tiered typology of WWOOFers, the sample of interviewees would be regarded as strongly weighted towards her '*Type 1*' WWOOFers who are driven by an apparent "political analysis" of and desire to escape modern industrial society, with deliberate intent to "seek out farms that pursue alternative lifestyles and employ organic farming techniques" (Nimmo 2001a, p19).¹

Hosts' observations in the previous chapter and initial findings about WWOOFers above suggest we might expect a more quantitatively representative sample of WWOOFers to be composed of a greater number of Nimmo's *Type 2* WWOOFers who resemble "'mainstream' backpackers more concerned with the pursuit of recreational activities and/or experiencing novelty".

While these issues are taken up later, the main point here is that this sample of interviewees was not able to be, nor should it be expected to be selected as statistically representative (refer to Henderson 1991). The WWOOFers interviewed provided a range of qualitative perspectives borne out of a range of unique backgrounds, the breadth and depth of which cannot be explored fully here due to space and time limitations. However, further exploration of data below will add more focused expression to this profile as the discussion unfolds.

4 MOTIVES FOR WWOOFING

Motivations have been the subject of a great deal of attention within the tourism studies field, and while there are many theoretical positions, perspectives and some motivational scales devised and tested (Beard and Ragheb 1983; Brown and Lehto 2005; Caissie and Halpenny 2003; Chantal and Vallerand 2000; de Young 2000; Henderson 1981; Iso-Ahola 1982; Locker-Murphy 1996; Maslow 1970; Mieke 1994; Pearce 1993; Richards and Wilson 2004; Ross 1997; Ryan 1997b; Ryan and Deci 2000), it has also been generally concluded that the area is highly complex and that no simple rendering of motives is ever likely to be produced that accurately captures the intentions of all individuals (Ryan 1997b).

¹ Indeed, some very knowledge focused WWOOFers interviewed expressed critical judgement of some of the hosts they had encountered on the basis of their disappointment they seemingly knew more about some sustainability 'basics' than some hosts.

To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something (Ryan and Deci 2000) and from this basic starting point, conceptualisation of motivations of WWOOFers has been progressively built through numerous analytical iterations.

There are several important points to note about this exploration of WWOOFer motives. Firstly, an observation made by Pearce about the motives of travellers and his recommended methodological approach, are also adopted in this investigation of WWOOFers:

...travelers exhibit changing motivational patterns over life stages and with mounting levels of travel experiences. The pattern of motives is dynamic, reflecting both individual and larger social change. Tourist behaviour is accounted for by more than one single motive. The framework for examining the tourist here mixes emic and etic accounts (Pearce 2005, p188).

Secondly, as Pearce suggests, many human behaviours are multiply determined and to overlook the fact that humans have many simultaneous needs and therefore motivations is, as Midgely notes (in de Young 2000, p510), “a misplaced and futile sort of economy”. WWOOFers have multiple extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, as can be seen in an unsolicited letter of introduction from an intending WWOOFer (motives underlined in Box 2).

Thirdly, motivations for an action are frequently connected with expected benefit(s) to oneself and/or to others, and it can be difficult to disentangle motives from expected outcomes. While expected benefits must be considered, the actually experienced and sometimes overlapping benefits are discussed in more detail separately, for convenience and clarity, under the broader heading of *outcomes*.²

² We should also be mindful that some WWOOFers might conform less to the ‘so-called ‘rational actor model’ of exchange and instead simply be more responsive to the consequences of past actions “without conscious weighing of alternatives, and often without maximizing outcomes — especially if short-term and long-term benefits are at odds” (Molm 2010). This means also that some WWOOFer motives may be presented in light of hindsight, with indeterminate impacts upon the data reported here.

Box 2: Introductory Letter, WWOOF Bulletin Board, April 2008

Subject: New WWOOFer looking for a host

Hello all! I am looking for my first host as I am a newbie to WOOFing. I have taken part in a similar scheme in Europe but not before in Australia, so here goes....

I am a 24 year old female from Wales in the UK. I graduated in Law from the University of Sheffield and have completed a Masters degree. I am training to become a barrister but have decided to take a year out to gain some valuable life experience and have some good times before settling into adult life! I am currently in Sydney but am desperate to escape the city for a more tranquil setting and to experience some of the real Australia.

I love being outdoors, am hard working and find fun and joy in everything I do. I adore children and love to be around them with all the energy and excitement they bring. I am more than willing to help out with child minding and general household duties as well as any other outdoors work. I am open to the possibility of any type of work that may be on offer.

I love good food (I do eat meat but steer towards a vegetarian diet, I'm not as picky as this may make me sound!) and banter with interesting people. I am a non-smoker but do enjoy the occasional glass of wine

I would ideally like a place where there are other WOOFers as I am travelling alone and interested in meeting other backpackers as well as the aussie folk.

If you are interested or would like to know anything more about me please feel free to get in touch:

e-mail ; XXXXXXXXXX@hotmail.com; mobile ; XXXXXXXXXXXX

I hope to hear from some of you soon.

Kind Regards

XXXXX

4.1 Becoming a WWOOFer

To avoid the presumption that WWOOFing is simply a type of backpacker activity, some basic questions were asked about the factors that motivate people to WWOOF, including *how they learned of WWOOF*, their stated *reasons for joining*, *what they are seeking* when they chose hosts and several other perspectives.

Learning of WWOOFing

WWOOFing was discovered in four main ways, but chiefly through ‘word of mouth’ sources such as friends and relatives and other travellers which is a significant part of the WWOOFing phenomenon, as Table 22 outlines.

Table 22: Discovering WWOOFing

Source	Percent (%)
Word of Mouth	52
Ads/references in guidebooks, articles, hostels and pamphlets	16
Internet searches/links	16
Other forums, associations, travel agents and travel related groups	14
Other	2

The online WWOOF bulletin board publishes accounts of experiences and some can be picked up in travel blogs. But to the extent that WWOOFers are often independent young travellers that move within backpacker circuits, they are likely to be ‘on-the-road’ story swappers (Kain and King 2004; Richards and Wilson 2004). Nimmo found that 70% of her research participants in NZ had learned of WWOOF via word-of-mouth, “a time honoured means by which backpackers find out about travel destinations and activities” (2001a, citing Riley 1988 and Murphy 2001, p78).³

Stated Reasons for Joining WWOOF

Van Raders concluded that WWOOFers are similar to backpackers in various respects, but differ in their motivations for travel. They utilize WWOOF as a means of accessing particular interests or achieving particular goals, especially what she called ‘cultural change’, or ‘finding something new’. WWOOF assists with meeting local people and at the same time, satisfies the apparent desire among some tourists to avoid the ‘touristic’. In short, van Raders (1994, p8) characterized WWOOFers (in 1994) as a type of backpacker that uses WWOOFing as a means of having “a ‘real’ experience”.⁴

We have seen that WWOOF and its membership have undergone some changes since this time, and though prevalent, not all WWOOFers are backpackers. In this light it is

³ The ‘blogosphere’ is doubtless increasingly part of contemporary notions of ‘word of mouth’.

⁴ Interestingly, van Raders, herself a host of many years, has suggested in hindsight that WWOOFers may have changed since 1994: “There could be quite a few differences between then [1994] and now in the way people perceive WWOOFing and the reasons for going that path. The WWOOFers we have had lately are different. They seem to travel more as a couple or in groups.... WWOOFing and WWOOFers are changing. ...I also wonder if they are still the long-term travelers we saw them as in '90. They seem to be in a hurry and hardly ever stay longer than 5/6 days at the most” Van Raders (pers. Comm., Dec 2007).

valuable to revisit the current generation of WWOOFers and explore survey and interview data generated by this research to attempt to understand the critical question of why people become WWOOFers.

WWOOFers indicated a cluster of important issues in choosing to WWOOF. WWOOFer J joined because:

someone told me it's a really, really good experience... Yeah, you're in the real life, it's not like living in a hotel... most of the times you're not living in the city, you're in the rural country... Yeah, it doesn't have to do anything with the usual tourism stuff you do.

Surveyed WWOOFers gave many reasons for joining. The 'top 10' reasons arising from this interpretive exercise accounted for almost 70% of all responses (see Table 23. Appendix 6.4 Table 27 provides full detail).

29% of *all* responses relate to 'meeting local people' or 'experiencing Australian life/culture', with 'meeting local people' stated as a reason for WWOOFing by 34%. Meeting locals (also connected with (9) 'live with people/family') ranks as the most common reason people seek to WWOOF and was also the highest ranked response regarding the experiences sought while travelling in Australia (above). *Living with people/family* is clearly a mechanism by which to do these things, facilitated by WWOOFing. Japanese WWOOFer T claimed that regular travel is essentially a 'commercial' experience which is "not so exciting... compared with WWOOFing" because she "couldn't learn about that culture".

Table 23: WWOOFers' Top 10 Reasons for Joining WWOOF

Reasons for Joining WWOOF	Freq. n = 188	%	% of Cases	Cumulative %
(1) Meet local people	60	15.2	34.1	15.2
(2) Experience Australian life/culture	54	13.6	30.7	28.8
(3) Save money/cheap travel	43	10.9	24.4	39.6
(4) Life experience	20	5.1	11.4	44.7
(5) Learn about organic growing	19	4.8	10.8	49.5
(6) Improve English	18	4.5	10.2	54.0
(7) Alternative way to travel	16	4.0	9.1	58.1
(8) Experience farm life/work	16	4.0	9.1	62.1
(9) Live with people/family	16	4.0	9.1	66.2
(10) Experience Australian landscape/places	13	3.3	7.4	69.4

Nearly a quarter (24%) of all participants indicated that saving money or being able to travel cheaply was a reason for joining WWOOF, which made up of 11% of all responses given, commonly in the context of 'being on a tight budget'.

Other reasons in the top 70% were that WWOOFing provides opportunities to:

- have a new or 'good' life experience generally
- learn about organic growing
- improve English language skills
- travel in an alternative way
- experience farm life and farm work
- live with people/family
- experience Australian landscape/places.

Other briefly notable motives (refer to Appendix 6.4 for a full listing) were:

- learning about or experiencing alternative lifestyles
- escaping the tourist trail
- being involved with or assisting people/communities.

A mixture of motivations for travel among international independent travellers is common and backpackers in particular are often eager to experience as much as possible, compared with (self-identified) tourists who are more likely to be in search of relaxation (Richards and Wilson 2004, p25). As with the present study of WWOOFers, the 'global nomads' research also found that a small proportion indicated they were travelling in part to contribute something to the places they visit, but the strong emphasis on experience seeking accords with the characterisation of a new global trend among tourists generally:

There is a significant trend for people to want to understand the lifestyle of others and how it has been influenced by environmental factors. Similarly there is a world trend to seek to grow as an individual, to being healthier, to experience freedom and reconnect with family (Tourism Australia 2006, p4).

It is not just backpackers, but in fact the "ideal visitor" to Australia is painted as an engaged and interactive 'experience seeker', who might say "We don't want to feel like a tourist. We want to settle in ..." or, "It's not just about collecting photos" (Tourism Australia 2006). The idea of 'sensation seeking' tourists (Wymer, Self et al. 2010) within a maturing 'experience economy' (Ahuja 2006; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Rifkin

2000) suggests the context in which some are shifting from material to more symbolic and experiential forms of consumption generally represented by 'embodied' tourism forms (Franklin 2001; Franklin 2003a).

It is in this broader context that we must consider reasons people give for WWOOFing which offers a type of experience that brings people in close proximity to the lifestyle of others and possibly sets them apart (at least on these particular instances) from tourists on different rungs of their 'travel career ladder' (Pearce 1993), if not from tourists of a different (and perhaps diminishing) era. This interpretation of WWOOFing as a type of 'alternative tourism' for experience seekers underpins McIntosh and Bonneman's (2006) study in NZ, who also found a predominance of socio-cultural and educational reasons for joining WWOOF.

Certainly WWOOFing is in clear contrast with holiday package tours containing a high relaxation element. But WWOOFer J argued that:

...if you travel for one year it's getting really boring just lying on the beach and doing nothing... You don't have a lot of experiences and you don't learn much about the country if you are just lying at the beach and don't do anything else.

There is need though, to be aware of the possibility that for some WWOOFing might be distinct from tourism of any kind. WWOOFer JL made the specific point that by WWOOFing and choosing specific hosts that could teach him about building, he was *exiting* from his *role* as a tourist:

I knew I was going to ... buy a property and build something, so I wanted to learn how to build. So I deliberately chose some places that were building. So, I guess that's not tourism.

In contrast, WWOOFer E considered that WWOOFers are "still backpackers and like, just stepping into a different group, [or] classification". But regardless of whether one is actually transformed from being a tourist into some other form *by* WWOOFing, it is readily agreed that WWOOFing provides a "good tool to use and experience when you're travelling" (WWOOFer M). It is an adaptable *tool* to be used by people, including tourists, to put them into various situations that might satisfy particular intrinsic and extrinsic motives that paradoxically seem to be beyond the reach or interests of most 'tourists'. Several other perspectives on WWOOFer motives will be considered before exploring this conundrum further.

4.2 Additional Perspectives on WWOOFer Motives

Several other useful indicators of motivations for WWOOFing were collected in this research, including the views of hosts.

Host views of WWOOFer Motives

Hosts view WWOOFers primarily as tourists seeking to *save money*, while also *experiencing cultural exchange* and *rural and natural environments*, among other motives. A strong driver for WWOOFers was also thought to be the opportunity to *meet people/enjoy social interaction*, as was *improvement of English language skills*. *Enjoying home comforts* and *staying in one place* for a while (as a break from travelling) were also ranked relatively highly by hosts. In short, hosts tend to view WWOOFers as relatively self-interested, while nevertheless being generally keen to engage with hosts and largely willing to work (Chapter 5).

However, WWOOFers are thought by hosts to also be largely uninterested in the central sustainable primary production and land management aspects of WWOOFing. One WWOOFer with a dedicated focus on learning techniques of sustainability found that:

a lot of hosts did say to us that they really appreciated that you guys are into gardening and organic gardening, 'cos most WWOOFers aren't (WWOOFer R).

Interest in Organics and Sustainable Agriculture

It has been observed that WWOOFers may have been changing over time and/or that today a genuine, informed interest in, or “sympathetic view toward” organic production (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006) and recognition of its value in the scheme of global sustainability crises may be quite limited. Though not the experience of all hosts and observers, exploration of survey data does tend to suggest that consciously sustainability oriented WWOOFers such as those identified by some writers (such as Keedle 2008; Maycock 2008) are relatively few.

For example, WWOOFers rated their level of prior knowledge about a range of sustainable agriculture and sustainable living related techniques and methods likely to be found among or employed by hosts (as loosely described at the beginning of the WWOOF book). *Organic growing methods* and *alternative communities* were best

known, with mean scores amounting to less than 'basic knowledge'. These were followed by *sustainable building methods*, while more 'esoteric' activities and methods of *bush regeneration* and *Biodynamic growing* were much less commonly known. *Permaculture design* principles and techniques were least understood, with 76% having neither heard of it nor possessing knowledge about it.

In short, there is strong evidence that WWOOFers generally have little insight into the techniques, aims or focus of hosts prior to WWOOFing, however this does not apparently deter them from becoming WWOOFers.

Surveys also demonstrated that WWOOFers consume less organic food than do hosts, as would be expected given that hosts are (supposed to be) in the business of producing organic food, but it appears that any passion for organics is at best only a very small part of the motives of participants.

Selection of Host Properties

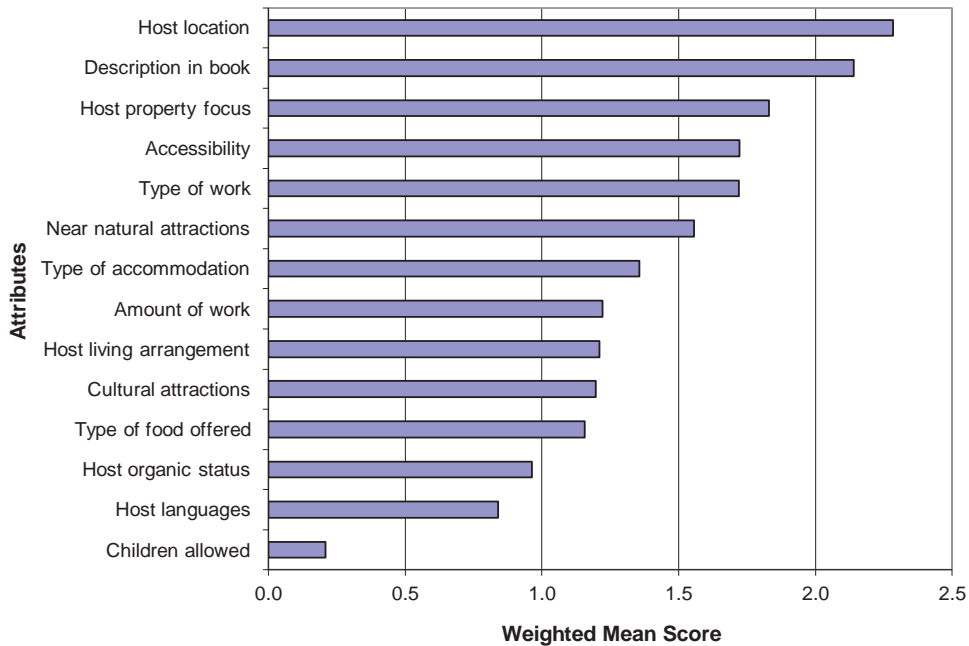
The ways that WWOOFers select host farms also offers perspective on motivations. While there was an overall spread of interests and concerns in choosing a host as can be seen in Figure 21, the key issue was *hosts' location*, which in most cases is likely to relate to broader travel plans.

Figure 22 illustrates the weighted distribution of WWOOFers nationally at the time of the survey is shown, suggesting close connection between the intensity of WWOOFing activity and proximity to generally recognised tourist centres (particularly noting WWOOFing 'hotspots' such as Byron Bay - Lismore – Nimbin (NSW), Margaret River – Bunbury (WA) and Cairns (Qld)). It was also flagged earlier in this chapter that data, anecdote and the observations of WWOOF staff all indicate the existence of a distinct temporal dimension associated with the overall spatial distribution of WWOOFing activity, connected closely with seasonality (i.e. a movement away from colder places in Winter months). A seasonal pattern of movement was noted also by Nimmo (2001a) in the case of WWOOFers in NZ, generally supporting her view that WWOOFing is very strongly the domain of backpackers in general.

Additionally, studies of backpackers and their travel routes in Australia (Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003) show there are defined and much used routes, as well as close correlations of movement with seasonal agricultural work opportunities for the 53% of

backpackers that work in Australia (Cooper 2001; Cooper, O'Mahoney et al. 2004). This again supports the widely held view that there is significant overlap between WWOOFers, backpackers and seasonal agricultural workers.

Figure 21: Importance of Host Attributes to WWOOFers



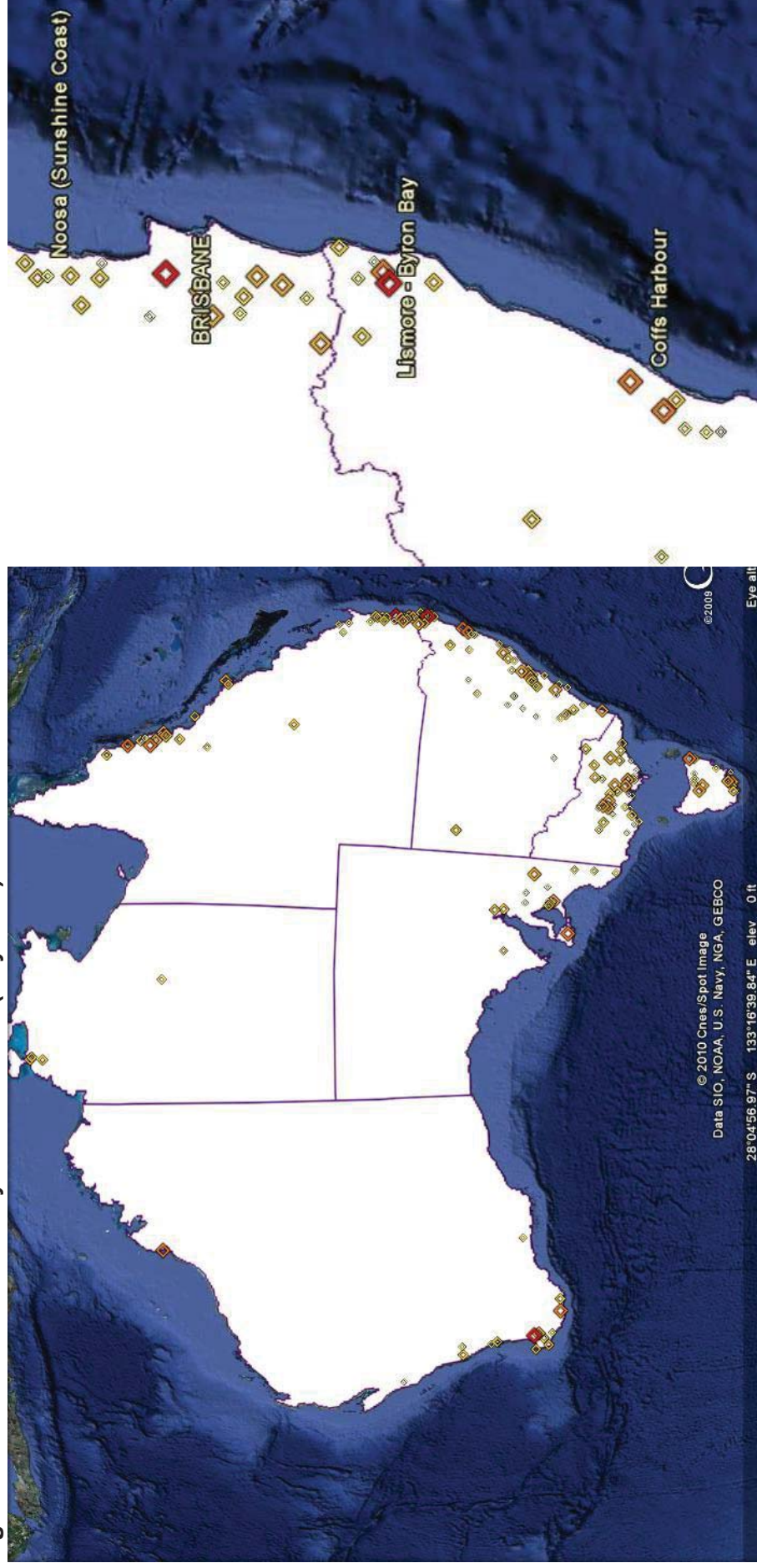
After location, the overall *description of the host property* and the *host property focus* as described in the WWOOF book were significant and combining these factors is common to the approach to host selection:

That's kind of how we looked at it. Like, oh, 'where are we heading to?' and you know, 'who's on that path?' And you know, we'd go through the book and put little stars next to ones that we thought sounded good and, yeah, that was kind of how we went about [it]... (WWOOFer A).

For sustainability focused WWOOFers, the focus of the property owners was very important, as it was for WWOOFer JL:

... you've got this great book with all these descriptions, I could go round identifying... yeah, so I was WWOOFing with purpose... I wanted to learn how to build. So I deliberately chose some places that were building. (WWOOFer JL).

Figure 22: Distribution of Surveyed WWOOFers (May 2006)¹



¹ Notes: 1. Host responses regarding estimated annual WWOOFer visitations were combined on the basis of regional grouping of hosts' postcodes, into six quantitative ranges: 1: 1-5; 2: 6-10; 3: 11-25; 4: 26-50; 5: 51-100; 6: >100. These were then mapped using Google Earth, with the 6 tiers of WWOOFer visitation translated into visual symbols, such that increasing frequency WWOOFer activity was represented by larger and more deeply coloured (i.e. pale yellow through to rich red) symbols. 2. The East Coast between Coffs Harbour (NSW) and The Sunshine Coast (Qld) is shown to demonstrate the relatively high frequency of WWOOFing activity in this corridor, with a particular hotspot in the Byron Bay – Lismore - Nimbin ('Rainbow') region where numerous hosts are located.

In addition to location, *accessibility* of properties was of course important to all WWOOFers, especially those without their own transport, which make up at least 75% of WWOOFers. Hosts know the value of convenience and accessibility to WWOOFers:

... I always put [in the WWOOF book] that I can give a lift from Sydney. If it suits, so, um, a lot of people go 'Woo-hoo, cheap lift out of, you know, good saving and... it's a good way to get out of Sydney. And I guess for overseas people they don't have to learn how it is, what numbers they have to ring. You know? It just cuts out one level of hassle. (Host JL).

In the context of the many unknowns that present themselves to WWOOFers choosing hosts, and given that working for hosts is at the core of the experience, it is perhaps not surprising that WWOOFers are inclined to pay relatively close attention to the type of *work expected of WWOOFers* in the descriptions in the book, including the tone used to describe it. This may be one of the few variables over which they might gain some sense of control of their destiny and match any pre-existing interests, even though variability of tasks and the need for flexibility is generally emphasised by hosts and WWOOF.

Proximity to other natural attractions was also considered an important host selection criteria, including those already known by WWOOFers near well described tourist centres, as well as those that hosts might promote in describing their properties. As mentioned, one of the key aspects of the WWOOFing experience can be the access that hosts sometimes provide to natural attractions little known by any, other than locals. For those seeking 'real' experiences with Australian people, away from commercialism, this can also be an important reason for WWOOFing itself, which most hosts seem aware of in describing the natural attractions of, or near to their properties:

A winter creek runs through our 20 acres of partially cleared Jarrah/Marri bushland and an abundance of wildflowers (seasonally), birds and other animals (especially kangaroos) can be seen. There are several bridle/walk trails ... 46 kms north of the world famous Pinnacles and 15 kms south of the Mt Lesuer NP, with 900 known species of flora. Pristine beaches along the Turquoise coast are close by, famous for its Western Rock Lobster & great fishing (WWOOF host listing).

This highlights the desire of many to avoid the beaten track, yet while being able to access well known attractions. Figure 21 suggests that a range of considerations are factored into

host selection, but the key message is that WWOOFers are mostly pragmatic in the effort to fit WWOOFing into the achievement of broader goals related to intended travel routes and personal interests.

Relative Importance of WWOOFing to Travellers

Knowing that WWOOFers in Australia are largely international travellers, it is not surprising that WWOOFing seems to be generally made to fit into other plans. Even so, the majority (71%) rated it as an 'important' part of their travel experiences, and another relatively large group rated it as a 'major focus' of their travel experiences (18%). Only one in ten (11%) suggested WWOOFing was a 'minor' part of their experiences. An approximate mean of 12% of total travel time is spent WWOOFing in Australia, which taken together suggests that WWOOFing has a significant impact on participants.

This degree of relative importance of WWOOFing underscores the earlier suggestion that there is an apparent match between having particular sought experiences and the anticipated likelihood that WWOOFing will help to achieve some of these experiences. The view that emerged from survey data is that via word of mouth, travellers seeking to meet local people, experience natural and rural landscapes and rural culture (refer to Figure 20) are motivated to gain WWOOF membership in the belief that it is likely to provide an adaptable, affordable and direct mechanism for delivering such experiences.

While analysis of the views of interviewed WWOOFers tends to corroborate this interpretation, the range and meaning of such motives, and their relationship to each other, are yet to be considered. In other words, it remains necessary to provide a conceptual map of the character and 'structure' of WWOOFer motivations.

4.3 Character and 'Structure' of WWOOFer Motivations

Detailed analysis of a wide range of qualitative data resulted in the conceptual map presented in Figure 23 below. Data was closely coded into themes on the basis of specific meanings, which were revisited and continuously checked and revised against other data as it came to hand. This iterative process of coding and revision of data and themes, progressively developed over numerous cycles into a consistent and saturated (Strauss and Corbin 1994) set of related concepts, mapped in terms of WWOOFers' motives, experiences and outcomes of those experiences.

Figure 23: The 'Structure' of WWOOFer Motivations

MOTIVES		
'SELF'-ORIENTED	Achieve anticipated outcomes	'OTHER'-ORIENTED
AVOID/ESCAPE	SEEK/GAIN/EXPERIENCE	SHARE/GIVE
Confusion	Clarity about self	Knowledge/ideas/creativity
Aimlessness	Purpose/meaning	Support/solidarity
Predictability	Adventure/excitement/unknown	
Sameness/normal life	Difference/otherness	
Commercialism	Authenticity/reality	
Tourism bubble alienation	Connection with people	
Beaten track	Exit from travel circuit	
	Visa extension	
	Economic benefits	
	Experiential learning*	
Guilt	Reverse guilt/feel good	Contribute/assist

* Farmlife/animal plant production; Rural/natural landscapes/environs; Local people/culture/lifestyles; Organic skills/methods; sustainability focus; language learning; no specific focus (general life experience)

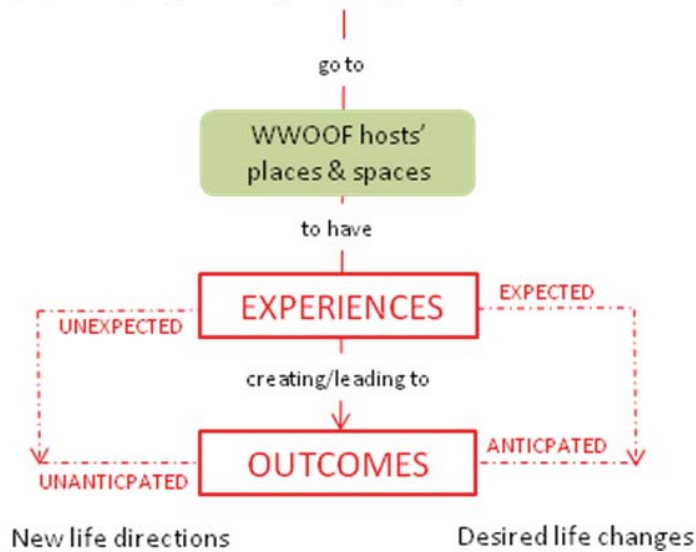


Figure 23 provides a clarifying structure in which to situate the discussion of motivations for WWOOFing (with the text below highlighting the concepts represented in bold). Like later conceptual maps provided, it is ultimately to be taken as an interpretive construction of the researcher, who “cannot be separated unproblematically from the object of inquiry in the process of knowledge construction”, as noted by Guba and Lincoln (in Ayikoru 2009, pp72-3).

Motives are connected with the anticipated *outcomes* or benefits of undertaking this activity, while undertaking WWOOFing *experiences* represents the vehicle for achieving these outcomes.¹ The choice to WWOOF appears to be mostly 'self'-oriented, but is in some cases 'other' oriented, by which it is meant that some appear to look beyond themselves to the interests of others in choosing to WWOOF.

Self-Oriented Motivations

There was a degree of symmetry among the expressions of WWOOFers, with motives being a means of *avoiding or escaping* certain situations, places, feelings and states of being, or a means of *seeking, gaining or experiencing* such things. Thus, **escaping from confusion** is also expressed by its opposite or corollary, which is to gain **increased clarity** about oneself. WWOOF employee Schmetzer (n.d.) wrote that WWOOFing is "very suitable for young high school graduates or university students who may not yet have decided what they really want to do in life or how to achieve it ..." This describes WWOOFer (Y), who wanted to realise more about himself and where he stood in his confused crossroads in relation to his family, his culture and his life choices, by connecting with people doing inspirational things with their lives and how they lived:

It's about confusion ... I was always trying to get away from Japanese society, so it's kind of like... A part of me, a small part of me still wants to like, be, wants to be in the society, and wants to stand out of the society and just... fit in society... trying to ... But, another part of me is just, just, being yourself, and um, I think that those feelings mixed together and just. Okay! I wanna, I wanted to do something different (WWOOFer Y).

That WWOOFing was predicted to provide a vehicle for the twin goals of increasing clarity and reducing confusion seems to be anchored in a belief in the value of WWOOFing in helping to also **reduce a sense of aimlessness**. Such a sense was commonly expressed by WWOOFers as being associated with 'regular', relaxation oriented tourism:

Once, we went to the Dominican Republic... So we went there and spent two weeks lying and walking on the beach. Two weeks! One day we had like, a trip outside of the hotel area. And even if the beach is wonderful and perfect and like in, on TV, like you see it, it's really beautiful but is so getting on your nerves if you are not doing anything else... (WWOOFer J)

¹ In some cases, having experiences is an outcome in itself.

WOOOFer JL puts it differently:

So, travelling overseas got incredibly frustrating, cos it felt purposeless. It felt, distanced... it just became ... very frustrated, which I now realise, was due to the aimlessness of just, tourism. Just [gasp/laugh], it just drives me nuts! ... And so, all of that for me meant that the WOOOFing thing became even more of a ... wonderful experience (WOOOFer JL).

It was already shown how this WOOOFer had a very strong focus to his WOOOFing in learning to build, but also as a current host he notes that some WOOOF to increase their sense of purpose when travelling, even if the focus of the work they do for example, is for the host's direct benefit rather than their own:

A lot of the WOOOFers come here I think ... hoping that they might bump into what it is they, their vision for themselves is. Which makes them a little less directed. That's, that's just where they're at (Host JL).

Reducing aimlessness is more desirable for some travellers than the **predictability** of much of the tourism circuit, as noted in promoting the idea of WOOOFing in Japan:

Ask yourself to what extent will you have genuine and meaningful experiences in Tokyo or Osaka amongst the McDonalds burger joints and tourist traps with a million other lost foreign travellers? (Statement on WOOOF Japan website <www.woofjapan.com> accessed September 2010).

Thus avoiding predictability for the global urban traveller, particularly of global urban places [or 'non-places' (Ritzer 2004)], but even of natural tourist 'attractions' is a theme that can be counterposed with another key motive for WOOOFing: seeking **excitement and adventure**, through engaging with the many unknowns presented by WOOOFing experiences. As a WOOOFer, "you have to be prepared as you have no idea until you arrive what the people are like or what the place is like" (Navarre 1994). This remains resonant with WOOOFers today:

You rock up and, you know? You don't know what you're getting, and that's part of the attraction. Yeah, and that made it exciting. That made it the adventure that WWOOFing is and that's probably part of the attraction... (WWOOFer R).

The unpredictability of WWOOFing compares favourably for some, to the qualities of more touristic experiences:

Actually, before this I did just have a sightseeing in a commercial place, but it's not so exciting. It was not so exciting for me, compared with WWOOFing... I don't know why... I went to Great Ocean Road.... Just I felt, mmm, just, so far, there are lots of tourists, and the Great Ocean Road is a famous place, but, mmm, maybe, so travelling for me, some, something, to have, feeling, from that. How to say?.... So..... mmm. Yeah, it was not so exciting (WWOOFer T).

Here there is a hint that normal, predictable life, which for most tends to be conducted within the constraints (and opportunities) of the urban commercial realm, offers few surprises and a great deal of **sameness** (Hughes and Stitt 2008). Escape from and even the temporary inversion of 'normal' lives has itself long been regarded as a motive for travel away from home in general, as has the associated **difference** produced by leaving the familiar (Craik 1997; Bauman in Franklin 2003b; Ryan, Trauer et al. 2003; Urry 2002; Wearing and Wearing 2002).

Of course, some people WWOOF less out of choice than others, with an escape from the normal into difference being undertaken primarily in order to improve material circumstances in their lives. There are some anecdotal stories of unemployed and/or homeless people², or 'retirees' making their pensions go further through WWOOFing and a number of hosts have described occasions in which older WWOOFers have brought significant delight into their lives (see Redwood 1998), as well as achieving a range of tasks in accepting such WWOOFers.

However, for many of the more typical young, urban globe travelling WWOOFers, the act of WWOOFing does seem to be part of a deliberate choice to bring them into contact with

² In the course of the research I met a young homeless man, near a community where I was WWOOFing, hitch-hiking into the local town from where he was camping. He had heard of and was considering WWOOFing, to improve his material living circumstances and to 'get on his feet' and possibly open up other opportunities, including eventually, paid work.

difference and uniqueness, a key dimension of which is the contrast between urban and rural modes of lifestyles. Farrer ventures that though urban life might be widely seen to be where the action is, it “can wear thin after a couple of decades”, which is where WWOOFing steps in:

WWOOFing is a cheap but reward-rich way to experience alternative ways of life, views of the world and to swap cold, fluorescent lighting for warm, vitamin D-filled sunshine (Farrer 1999).

Thus, two WWOOFers interviewed by a regional Australian newspaper (Anon. 2006) saw themselves as the first among their Generation X peers to “make the break from the city”, while their friends were starting to consider it. Compared with their fast lane urban lives at home, WWOOFing was:

almost a relief... There is something really comfortable and calming about living close to nature. The business we were working in, it's all about superficial things. it's fun and exciting, but it doesn't give you much back.

The contrast to the city and an escape from this normality was a motivator, but difference of course is multifarious and unique to individuals. Given the focus and aims of WWOOF, difference in this context by and large refers to the non-urban and the non-touristic. Recall WWOOFer J's reason for joining was that by WWOOFing:

You're in the real life, it's not like living in a hotel... most of the times you're not living in the city, you're in the rural country, so it's like really... Yeah, it doesn't have to do anything with the usual tourism stuff you do (WWOOFer J).

Within the rural spaces and places of hosts, there is a vast expanse of opportunity to immerse oneself within *difference*, including amongst alternative philosophies, practices and ways of living, all of which were stated motives of WWOOFers interviewed. WWOOFers A and R set out “to see how an intentional community operates” and to explore “different places and different communities and different ways of living”. WWOOFer E undertook an internship at a community with a view to learning from a different context:

What are these people doing out here? What's working? Um... socially, economically and what do they have that's holding them together? And would it work in America? (WWOOFer E).

Experiencing difference through the range of aspects thrown up by WWOOFing may not always be what was expected or hoped for, but nevertheless, it offers insight into the realities of other's lives, for better or worse. Host S suggests that by WWOOFing:

you are certainly getting to see what its like to live in Australia. And that might be their intent. Maybe that's what they really wanna know - what life is like in Australia, and not trying to see all of the, landmarks... That this is somebody's family and this is the way they do it. And especially with families, with children at home I think its um, exciting - just that! To go in and see how the parents and the children get along and who does the jobs... (Host S).

This idea of engaging in '**real**' **experiences** has been already raised by several WWOOFers, who equate this to a desire to avoid or escape the commercial realm in which most lives are lived. In general, and in the tourism context specifically, this realm is readily and frequently regarded as staged and thus less meaningful in terms of how it represents 'reality'. These concepts or qualities of experiences sought – adventure or excitement of the unpredictable, manifest in otherness/difference - are familiar to tourism scholars and are quickly tied to discussions of the difficult concepts of authenticity or 'reality'. However, WWOOFers and hosts seem to be arguing that they are connected in that they reinforce the existence of a presumed nexus between adventure/excitement and 'real', unscripted, spontaneous moments of otherness/difference, that can be brought about through WWOOFing. Thus WWOOFer M found that she was brought into contact with wildlife that had she hoped to, but had never encountered before in the wild. Pearce (2005, p143) points out the 'gift-like' quality of unpredictable and therefore 'real' encounters, which are "at times magical".

WWOOFer JL, keenly aware of the frustrations and **alienation of the 'tourism bubble'** was aware (having also been a host) of how quickly one is "injected" into the lives of others when as a WWOOFer, including the unscripted moments and chaotic lounge rooms, compared to those offered to 'tourists'. Similarly, Host M argues that WWOOFing "gets to real life":

Well that's my version of it, and that's how I see it, and that's how I try to implement it when someone comes here. Because I feel that that is what they're coming for. Is to find out, to have an organic experience as well as a cultural experience. And to do that, I think you have to see how a person lives. Really, not a touristy thing (Host M).

To some extent, experienced WWOOFers have highlighted that it is the 'random' nature of experiences, which are often connected to tangential experiences such as side trips to the local town or beach or neighbour's house, that make it both more personally meaningful (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006), but also 'real' and thus, exciting, or significant, and a *reason* to WWOOF.

Host S1 was aware of the tedium and predictability of the tourist circuit which can be an insulated bubble difficult to escape from, frustrating anyone hoping to meet local people and find out something about them:

I think being a tourist is a little bit hard, because some of these WWOOFers who we've really liked and kept in contact with, they'll say, "Well here I am in Cairns and I'm getting tired of being a tourist and seeing all these tourist sites, seeing all the famous things. I wanna go out and, see some real life and some bush and some stuff that's not so famous (Host SF).

She takes WWOOFers to her local beach and National Park (as do many hosts) and offers them direct insights that they find more meaningful and natural, having achieved them through their efforts as interacting or engaging humans. Indeed, an important term for dealing with the problematic notion of 'authentic' experiences is to consider the degree to which they are *sincere*, as usefully suggested by Taylor (2001). While a small number of WWOOFers became WWOOFers partly in the hope of meeting 'like-minded people' and to **make personal connections** with them, most others appear to be seeking interpersonal connections with people in general, hoping to get beyond barriers presented by the **commercial** transactions or pre-paid encounters with various 'others' available from within the 'tourism bubble'.³

³ In an article retrieved from the travel blogging website Get Jealous, a British tourist kept a lengthy travel log of adventures in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore over a period of months. This blog provides much focus on temples, sites, food, transport, relaxation, bars and various escapades without a single mention of interactions with local people, other than those explaining difficulties or unwanted attention, or 'comical' acts witnessed. Notably this changes entirely when they arrive in Australia and commence WWOOFing: <http://www.getjealous.com/printdiary.php?cust_url=tinajay>.

This is connected to efforts to *create* sincere connection with people, while some WWOOF more to *avoid* the much admonished '**beaten track**' (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Bennett 2008; Urry 2002): those places where the tourists are. WWOOFing provides a key to unlocking this 'true' traveller's holy grail:

Even if you say yeah, were gonna go really explore, were gonna buy a car and travel around, you don't know the secret spots that these locals know, and they show you if they want to show you. You know? There's just lots of knowledge from all these people that you could have, possibly yeah, have access to (WWOOFer M).

Getting off the beaten track is naturally and reasonably regarded as the place in which many of the above anticipated outcomes are expected to be achieved. The nature and perhaps the 'packaging' of WWOOF also have and are likely to continue to fuel the romance of this idyllic concoction for some, as a number of the above quotes and much of the travel writing about WWOOFing demonstrate. For example, Jerums describes how WWOOFing (in Europe) was a move to a more economical and 'simpler way of life' than previous faithful adherence to a guidebook:

As we passed a man strolling along the road with a baguette under his arm, I felt truly immersed in rural France. Old patchy white alabaster houses with terracotta chimneys abounded. Artichoke plants with vibrant purple, fuzzy flowers grew in front gardens alongside the ever present tomato plants (Jerums 1996, p22).

This kind of representation of WWOOFing has the potential to influence anyone seeking to avoid the beaten track (Photo 7), while also offering powerful incentives for the 'romantic tourist' (Urry 2002):

Um, and also just WWOOFing just seemed like a lovely idea, you know, and so that's, that's why... I mean they had a rainforest on their property! And that was the only rainforest that was on a private property or something! I don't remember - in the north Hunter Valley - and it was just absolutely fantastic! And the waterfall that was Aboriginal owned on her land and it's just fantastic! (WWOOFer M)

As noted, tourism circuits can be tiring, given the apparently endless, predictable engagement in travel itinerary and on-the-road story swapping in tourist enclaves (Cohen 2004a; Cohen 2004b; Howard 2007; Riley 1988), the near constant and all pervading commerciality and the matching need to constantly account for and manage precious financial resources that are part of the long term budget traveller's lot. Thus some indicated that they chose to WWOOF partly as an **exit from the travel circuit**, including the associated desire to stop travelling for a while, enjoy some home comforts and home cooked food. Some of Nimmo's (2001a) interviewees in NZ were glad to engage again in some work routines after long periods of unstructured travel.

Photo 7: The researcher (and son) during 'free time', South Island NZ, 2004



There are numerous extrinsic motivations to WWOOF. Since November 2005, the opportunity to extend the much valued **Working Holiday Visa** has become a reason to WWOOF for a three month period. Learning and practicing English is important to many Asian WWOOFers in particular, and it is notable that 5% of WWOOFers indicated that they had joined WWOOF as part of a package deal that promoted WWOOFing in connection with this goal.

Some may be primarily focused on the **economic advantages** in saving significant amounts of money by WWOOFing, but Host B at least claims that "there's less of a need

than there was 20 years ago” and that today, “more WWOOFers are looking for the experience, rather than just a cheap way of getting accommodation”. This reminds us that multiple motivations are at play, but that it is in seeking experiences that we are likely to find more fertile ground for understanding WWOOFer motivations. WWOOFers commonly joined to have experiences and to learn from such experiences. **Experiential learning** opportunities that WWOOF promotes relate to:

- general farm life and associated animal husbandry and plant production techniques.
- rural landscapes and environments.
- ‘natural’ landscapes and environments and nature and wildlife in general⁴.
- local people and local culture and their lifestyles, some of which are notably ‘alternative’.
- organic production systems in general, on a range of scales, informed by a range of paradigms (eg Biodynamics, Permaculture design), as well as exposure to and practice in specific aspects of production and associated techniques (eg compost making, crop rotation, worm farming etc).
- Sustainable living, community living, healthy eating, holistic living, spiritual living, natural healing, natural/sustainable building, and so on (refer to the WWOOF Australia book).

For those consciously aware of the potential for experiential learning, WWOOFing provides a vast opportunity, as well as simply providing opportunity to have experiences for the sake of experience. Though interest in organic farming techniques is not a strong driver, having the opportunity to learn about organic farming still represents a useful life experience:

I thought OK, he must know a lot of stuff because he’s saying in the description that he is like, 20 years experience, and I thought well that’s quite good, because, even if I am not, never having an organic farm I guess, but um, to learn stuff is always good. (WWOOFer J).

Thus, accumulating experience without any particular directedness is a driver for a number of WWOOFers, as surveys showed.⁵ For hosts committed to their goals and to the

⁴ Depending on the balance of modified and unmodified habitat found on particular rural properties.

potential for WWOOF to be a vehicle for people to learn of and about sustainability, an apparent lack of interest in such a focus can be a disappointment:

you know they're just ticking off a passport. They're not real interested in learning... anything. They just want to say 'well I was in Australia for 8 months' and seeing all they can see (Host S).

However, this is a disappointment many hosts have learned to live with, subject to the overall attitude of the WWOOFer to the exchange (Chapter 5). As indicated in profiling interviewees, there are WWOOFers with a firm and serious focus on sustainability issues, such as WWOOFers A and R:

R: we knew a bit about Permaculture ecovillages, communities and we thought, well, let's stay on a few of these.

AM: yeah we were, yeah, picking a few that were specifically at, like, alternative communities to give us an idea of what they were like... Yeah, and I think it's just wanting to learn, like, we wanted to travel, but also wanted to ... we went to so many different community gardens and we really wanted to learn about organic gardening and like, sustainable living and WWOOFing seemed like a really good way to do that...

Japanese WWOOFer T claimed to be "crazy about Permaculture", with WWOOFing a means of learning all she could about the implementation of this set of sustainable human settlement design principles. With prior history as a paying volunteer at sustainable agriculture farms in Japan, WWOOFing was facilitating focused studies of Permaculture. She specifically sought knowledge of small scale production practices as part of her mission to increase the knowledge of an NGO she worked for, and she also planned to establish a new Japanese Permaculture network.

These WWOOFers had accumulated an understanding about the destruction of ecosystems through human actions, which had led them to become interested in Permaculture as a basis for practical, grass roots solutions to such widespread global

⁵ Richards and Wilson suggest that backpackers are "experience hungry" and tend to do more of everything, "probably related to an expectation ... that they need to experience a lot in order to justify their trips" (Richards and Wilson 2004, p28).

crises. These underlying concerns had propelled them to WWOOF in a highly directed way.

A young American student of sustainable communities observed that her 'American **guilt**' (presumed to be shared with other westerners) may be partly behind the desire of some to WWOOF:

[There is] a lot of guilt that I've been fed as an American. Like. You guys use too many resources, and you're doing everything wrong and you're unorganized and you're being a big bully politically to the rest of the world. And then you kinda feel like you've got to do the right thing and back it up with right action... And that you know, could be a fad or it could be people... getting high on that good karma feeling (WWOOFer E).

She specifically identified that she and perhaps others, were seeking to **feel good** by trying to reverse their own guilt as over consumptive Westerners as they had become aware of their possibly causal role in global inequality and therefore their responsibilities to others. Behind the action of WWOOFing for some therefore, is the intention to **reduce guilt** and thereby increase personal good karma⁶, though WWOOFer E emphasised also that the underlying *intention* toward others is more likely to be the key to good karma.

I think, once you change that intention, it's not building karma anymore. If you're doing it to ... feel better about yourself. (WWOOFer E).

Despite the improbability of ever reversing life long negative impacts, awareness of impacts is important as a driver for people to WWOOF, particularly those who "don't want to be part of the problem". As identified in Chapters 2 and 3, there is much in common in WWOOFing with the notion of 'responsible tourism' (Stanford 2008). WWOOFer E suggested though that guilt often remains and it seems that many people are moved to undertake activities which may or may not be effective. Along with certain critics of volunteer tourism (Birrell 2010; Butcher 2005; Deziel 2005), she wondered "how much WWOOFing is about "people looking for a do-goody feeling?"

⁶ Def: [1] *Hinduism, Buddhism*: action, seen as bringing upon oneself inevitable results, good or bad, either in this life or in a reincarnation: in Hinduism one of the means of reaching Brahman. Compare [bhakti](#) (def. 1) , [jnana](#). [2] *Theosophy*: the cosmic principle according to which each person is rewarded or punished in one incarnation according to that person's deeds in the previous incarnation. (<<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/karma>>).

This mention of intention, where the beneficiaries of our actions drives our choices, signifies the distinction (see Figure 23) between self-oriented motivations and more outwardly focused motives for WWOOFing.

Other-Oriented Motives

Only about 4% of WWOOFers indicated that a motive to WWOOF was to be involved with or to **assist people/communities**. This figure is only slightly higher than the 2.7% of 'global nomads' (independent travellers) claiming to be "travelling for more altruistic motives, such as contributing something to the places they visit" (Richards and Wilson 2004). Notwithstanding the above insights about *gaining* a good feeling through the reversal of guilt *by* contributing to others, there is a notion that there can be an element of altruism driving the actions of some WWOOFers (Singh 2002). Altruism is usually taken to be a selfless giving to others (de Young 2000), and although there is no expectation of selflessness in the WWOOF exchange per se, there is some value in focusing on the extent to which WWOOFing can be outwardly motivated or 'other' oriented, as well as self-oriented.

One WWOOFer perceived that some WWOOFers, like some ecotourists or voluntourists, *aim* to feel good by *contributing* to the community that she WWOOFed in, "the good karma aspect is what makes a lot of people want to stay here forever" (WWOOFer E). The ethic of contribution was strong at this community (personal observation) and a number of hosts elsewhere have also described instances in which WWOOFers were unable to stop work. Some are *aware* of the value of contribution to others upon themselves: WWOOFer T and J both said helping people made them feel good and produced happiness. It can therefore be difficult and perhaps pointless to disentangle altruism from intrinsic satisfaction, as noted by de Young (2000).

Many writers have discussed various forms of tourism (e.g. volunteer tourism, mini-missions, altruistic tourism) that might share an overlap of motivation with those that choose to combine travel with a desire to assist hosts in some way by WWOOFing. Again, the very act of combining travel with the aim of contributing suggests that there is a limit to the purity of the selflessness involved, but WWOOFing perhaps shares much with volunteer tourism forms including the possibility of fostering:

a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between the host and guest... that is more rewarding and meaningful than other holidays and focuses on the altruistic and self-developmental experiences that participants can gain and the assistance that can be delivered... (McIntosh and Zahra 2007, p543).

WWOOFers A and R modestly indicated that one of their motives was to **offer knowledge or ideas** to hosts of organic techniques, sustainable living and design, having built up a degree of experience over several years of focused learning. This form of contribution, or sharing of experience, is perhaps a relatively uncommon motive for WWOOFing, taking place alongside of the occasional mention among other WWOOFers of the motivation of offering some knowledge to hosts of their cultures. Additionally, it has been observed among some WWOOFers, the existence of a firm belief in the organic movement and the motivation for WWOOFing among this minority, is partly concerned with a sense of **solidarity** and support for this movement.

This consideration of WWOOFer motivations has been largely concerned with anticipated experiences and their expected outcomes. Knowing the details of actual experiences helps us understand the heart of this phenomenon.

5 WWOOFING EXPERIENCES

There are many characteristic aspects of WWOOFing experiences to consider, including the degree, intensity, focus, qualities and feel of experiences, all of which feed into the assessment that WWOOFers in turn make of their experiences.

5.1 Degree of Experience

Since opinions about experiences are likely to be affected by relative levels of participation, it was considered useful to first determine the degree of experience among participants, measured by several indicators.

The period for which WWOOFers had been members at the time of the survey varied widely, from less than a week through to 16 years. The mean/median length of membership was about 8/3 months, indicating that most join shortly before they begin to

WWOOF. Indeed, almost 70% had joined less than 5 months before the survey. Membership is active for 12 months and in keeping with UK data (Clarke 2004), there are few renewals.⁷ Overall, WWOOFers join with pragmatic recognition of the opportunities that it offers for accessing and having experiences within a limited travel timetable, usually returning home within 12 months.

The number of days of actual previous WWOOFing experience varied from 2 days to approximately 3 years, with a mean/median number of days of 50/25.⁸ At the time of the survey approximately 52% had WWOOFed for 24 days or more, while only about 10% had WWOOFed for 95 days or more. Most WWOOF for relatively short periods, but in the context of total time spent in Australia (mean/median of 8/7 months), about 12% is spent WWOOFing, which is a significant proportion given the enormous number of other possibilities and vast expanse of the country. As mentioned, explanation of this can be found in conceptualising WWOOF as a mechanism to achieve a range of possible travel related 'objectives', particularly those connected with socio-cultural experiences. This may be amplified by the expanse of Australia and its diversity of people and places, with WWOOF offering a connective conduit into an array of such experiences. McIntosh and Bonnemann (2006 p.89) suggested that younger travellers "may be more interested in socio-cultural learning experiences, be more willing to work as a 'volunteer' and may stay longer in places" than the older visitors they found in commercial farm stays in NZ. But as well as duration, it is clear that WWOOFing also offers an experience qualitatively different from those in commercial rural 'homestay' options.

51% of participants had not previously WWOOFed at the time of the survey (i.e. it was their first experience), while of the other 49%:

- 71% had WWOOFed previously in Australia;

⁷ 6% had been members for longer than 12 months and notably 60% of these were Australians. Only 3% had been members for 2 years or more. For the very few longer term memberships, it was not always clear whether responses indicated one continuous or several occasionally renewed membership periods. Survey comments suggested most had lapsed and later renewed, though several individuals have WWOOFed more or less continuously for many years.

⁸ Naturally those surveyed later in the survey month provided would have tended to contribute towards a higher overall mean/median figure and distort the validity of the 'snapshot' value of the collected data. However, there was no way to prevent this variability while also aiming to broaden the 'capture' of respondents by surveying over this time period. There is also no way to determine to what degree the data is skewed or would be otherwise different since no dates were collected. It is proposed that overall, the data will be representative of the sample uniformly, notwithstanding this factor.

- 17% had WWOOFed previously in NZ; and
- very small numbers had WWOOFed previously in Europe, North America, the UK and the Asian region.⁹

Thus most WWOOFers have relatively few and relatively brief WWOOFing experiences, again suggesting that WWOOF membership is largely used pragmatically to suit the needs of long term travellers. While this data points partly to extrinsic motivations driving people to WWOOF, further consideration of qualitative perspectives provides a deeper and more nuanced view of this group.

5.2 Character and ‘Structure’ of WWOOFing Experiences

Conversations with WWOOFers provided valuable insights into the experiences of WWOOFing - expected or otherwise – with detailed iterative analysis of interview transcripts and other qualitative materials being the basis for the development of the concept map in Figure 24 (below) which shows the thread running between initial *motivations*, actual *experiences* and final *outcomes*.

Motivations overlay a field of varying expectations ranging from many to few, and from specific expectations to pure open-mindedness about WWOOFing experiences (denoting a quality highly regarded by WWOOF and hosts alike - a ‘willingness to engage’ (Stehlik 2002)). Naturally, individuals vary greatly in terms of expectations, which has a strong bearing upon the final assessment of experiences.

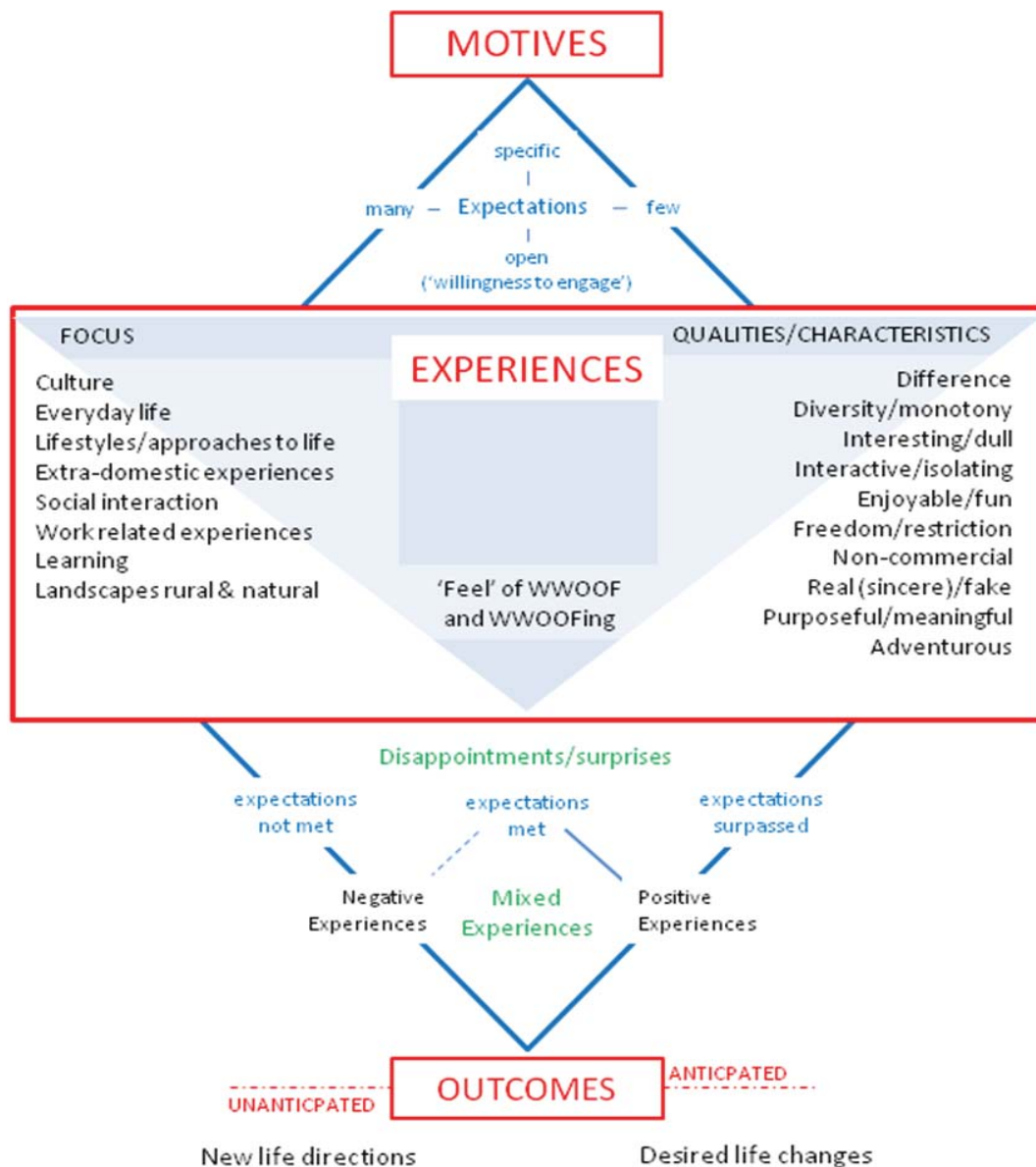
Understanding of relationships between key nodes or concepts embedded in interview data pertaining to WWOOFing experiences was achieved through iterations of analysis, involving rounds of coding, comparison and recoding to accommodate or enhance conceptual fit in light of new data.

The final ‘structuring’ of conceptual relationships in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** represents experiences as the combination of their *focus* and their *qualities*, having or resulting in a more or less definable ‘feel’ that might match preconceived ideas

⁹ This was determined by considering total WWOOFing ‘events’ prior to the experience at the time of the survey. This meant the number of times individuals had separate previous WWOOFing experiences in different countries or regions. See Appendix 6 for details.

about WWOOFing and produce certain feelings for WWOOFers. The ‘feel of WWOOFing’ - a phrase coined by WWOOFer R – relates to the open-ended, spontaneous and flexible nature of WWOOFing experiences. In this model, where prior expectations are met or even surpassed, a ‘positive’ assessment of experiences will be produced, while unmet expectations are likely to result in ‘negative’ assessments, with a ‘mixed’ result also being a possibility. All of this plays a role in producing anticipated or unanticipated *outcomes* of experiences, discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Figure 24: Character and ‘Structure’ of WWOOFing Experiences



Focus of Experiences

Any experience can be seen to have specific or multiple focal points (see Photo 8), and Figure 24 lists eight of these. While these can be clustered into socio-cultural, spatial and activity-based foci, considering each of these individually allows for a nuanced understanding of the diversity and plurality of WWOOFing experiences.

Photo 8: Riverbank weed work (by the author) in NZ



As WWOOF Australia suggests, WWOOFing is very much a **cultural experience**, particularly for international WWOOFers. Because many WWOOFers “come from high rise buildings” and have “never had a garden” (Hosts N & AV), WWOOFing provides the opportunity for a more significant level of contrast (or ‘difference’) in terms of noticing and experiencing culture:

Sydney was just a typical city but here in the country it really does seem a different land... The big cities are the big cities, but here the space is unbelievable. (WWOOFers reported in Anon. 1998).

Importantly, bound up with experiencing non-urban space is a strong sense that there is need to examine non-urban life to understand unique and differentiating points of Australian culture, since what can be experienced in big Australian cities is not unique (Ritzer 2004). Thus German WWOOFer J stated that WWOOFing gives:

... so much more opportunities to see like, how life is in Australia except for um, for the city life... And I think most of the WWOOFers who go WWOOFing are more interested in having like, that's what I did, meeting people and talk to them about the country and how their life is, and what they do.

It is also through observing and participating in the work habits and the connection to the land brought about by farming work that one might come to "experience the 'true' Australian culture" (Anon. 1998). WWOOFing promises experience of "the archetypal Australian farm", including farm animals, which despite deep connections to 'alternative Australia', several hosts consider to be the main focus for most WWOOFers in "getting to see what it's like to live in Australia" (Host S1). Indeed, the organic focus of WWOOF is well hidden in the shadow created by the highlight of experiencing 'culture'. This phrase was articulated in terms of two related, but separate aspects of culture. Firstly, by WWOOFing, one experiences the **everyday lives** of hosts and their associates (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Obenour 2004). WWOOFer M was able to see how difficult the economic realities were for one organic host and "how much money she wasn't making from selling organic food", and with another host:

I got to see his daily life. He did irrigation systems and stuff like that... so we'd drive around and whilst we would drive around, he would show me things. (WWOOFer M).

This WWOOFer later contrasted the experience of accessing this sort of everyday detail with what is possible through tourism:

And it's just excellent just to pass on this knowledge to travellers ... that's how real Australians, real life, it's one way that they live, instead of hopping on the bus up the east coast... (WWOOFer M).

WWOOFer JL, as a domestic traveller was able to find out:

...about my own country, and in a way that even other Australians may not find out about, because of the unique experience that WWOOFing... gives you ... an entry straight into people's lives (WWOOFer JL).

In Chapter 5 it was shown that hosts themselves were generally not interested in changing their lives for WWOOFers, who need to “fit in”, even to events like attending a grandson’s birthday party (Host M). Sometimes direct experiences of everyday life through WWOOFing produces perspectives that allow various small quirks of everyday ‘culture’ to be noticed in contrast to one’s own everyday life:

Drove to Lyndoch first thing to buy rivets to fix the duck shed with as this was our next task. The hardware store was through the supermarket - this place is bizarre. (Source: GetJealous.com).

The second related aspect of culture is focused beyond the everyday realities and details of hosts’ lives, upon the **lifestyles of hosts**, or the chosen directions or approaches to life more broadly that hosts were practising, or aiming to achieve (Jamieson 2007). For example, WWOOFers A and R, being particularly interested in seeking and learning from those with an approach to life that encompassed integrated, holistic living, admired the lifestyle of some hosts which was bound up with their “whole attitude to life”. This was expressed in their:

mudbrick home and just how they’d set up their household. It was very much in a sustainable fashion ... the shower was outside [which] would water the bananas or the ferns that surrounded the polypipe shower, and just, little things like that. (WWOOFer R)

Similarly, WWOOFer Y sought to experience peoples’ life in order to know them and cited two examples that were profound for him in which hosts were “living on the land” with a real “feeling of belonging to the land” which he imagined “Aboriginal people used to have”. By the same token this WWOOFer also experienced the antithesis of this with a different host whom he regarded to be exploiting the land for profit alone. Nevertheless he claimed this was “a good experience” because it offered another perspective as “the opposite of the way of living” to that which he was increasingly gathering commitment, in his own search for a suitable approach to life.

Naturally, there is a large variety of approaches to life among hosts, but by joining them and observing and participating in the details of their everyday domestic realm, much is absorbed by WWOOFers, constituting a key part of their cultural experiences.

An important additional experiential focus that can contextualise host 'culture' is the **extra-domestic experience**, when hosts include WWOOFers on outings, recreational trips, or to local natural or cultural attractions:

On the way home we stop at the Chudleigh Honey Farm for free tasting of lots of different flavours of honey, but specifically the native 'Leatherwood' as the trees which the bees gather pollen from only grow here. It has a really strong taste, might be better on toast. The farm is great fun though, showing all aspects of the honey making process and even displays a see through hive. (Source: GetJealous.com).

Indeed it is not unusual for hosts to signify their proximity to such attractions and when they accompany WWOOFers, sometimes offering an insider or local perspective, WWOOFers are provided with a means of entering and exiting tourist trails in the manner of 'locals'. They may also be able to access a level of understanding about their hosts' lives through interactions with their friends, family and neighbours, which can itself produce experiences of significance for WWOOFers. For instance this researcher witnessed a moment in which a WWOOF host was presented with a large and detailed framed oil painting by a friend, in return for yoga lessons given over a long period of time. Host M always tries to take her WWOOFers to meet her elderly mother which she regards as important to her and insightful to the WWOOFers, and includes any WWOOFers in family Christmas celebrations. In short, there is significant scope in the WWOOFing experience because of, but also, outside of the central exchange of *work for accommodation and food*, for experiential closeness to hosts that results in the achievement of personalised, and therefore personally meaningful cultural experiences.

It is commonly cited in the literature that such closeness and immersion in local ways of life is a key difference between WWOOFing and regular or commercial farm tourism, as noted by McIntosh and Bonneman (2006). But it could be readily argued that this is also a key difference between WWOOFing and tourism in general, perhaps in much the same way as a fairly rigid distinction is maintained by the Australian government (ABS) and by numerous scholars (according to Morrison, Hsieh et al. 1995) between Visiting Friends and Relatives and other more commodified forms of "pleasure" tourism (as discussed further in Chapter 7).

The means by which all this focus upon and understanding of culture is experienced is of course through **social interaction** between WWOOFers and hosts and those in their social networks. It is of course necessary that WWOOFers and hosts are able to 'get along' and facilitate the cross flow of social exchange, however separation between hosts and WWOOFers can occur for various reasons, such as the need to work off their properties or because some hosts simply "keep their distance". For some WWOOFers, this can create feelings of isolation that affect their experience, particularly for those that value the social interaction component. WWOOFer M experienced a place where both hosts, despite being very accommodating, generally worked off site daily:

there was just no one there the whole day. But there was a dog, all of them had dogs, which was just lovely, but there was no one there all day... I was I suppose, a bit lonely because it was just me all day, sort of doing quite boring jobs sometimes, but, and sometimes I'd just improvise and do things. It was like that most of the time. (WWOOFer M)

The absence of social interaction led her to sometimes begin to feel bored, especially when working on her own. A very disappointed WWOOFer in NZ described a host with a very isolating approach:

... the man didnt speak to me! i had to buy my own food and cook for my own and he gave me the money back,.. (he didnt even told me that i had to ask for everything and then another japanese wwofer told me that i have to buy everything and so on. he was in his house and i was not allowed to come into his house!) i mean and that has really nothing to do with wwoofing anymore if i have to cook for my own and i was just so lonely in that place.. (sic, NZ WWOOF Bulletin Board, accessed 2006).

While this may be an extreme example, it highlights the centrality of the social interaction focus for many WWOOFers. WWOOFer M in her isolation tried to avert the sense of loneliness by use of an iPod, but soon found that she felt less *present* in the experience:

You didn't hear the birds chirping... and it just didn't feel right".

But her frequent bouts of loneliness also led to her finding value in solitude, and in interacting with the surroundings, which clearly had romantic appeal. On the "mountain top" property where she spent seven weeks she was able to engage with and absorb the

place and its relative isolation and found it wondrous that these people lived there, observed their dedication to the place and sensed the rewards that accrued in return.

A number of hosts and WWOOFers identified that having other WWOOFers or children of similar age around, were barriers against a level of social isolation that would for many, defeat the purpose of WWOOFing. Chapter 5 described a host that had regular, organised 'WWOOFer nights' at the local pub, which fostered a sense of community among WWOOFers and other local hosts. WWOOFer E was one of 15 WWOOFers encountered in a community in northern New South Wales, thriving upon the intense energy and interest that this level of occupation by fellow WWOOFers provided. Indeed she specifically contrasted it favourably with the perceived dullness of more typical family centred hosts, demonstrating again both that company and interaction is a key focus for many WWOOFers.

Much of the social intercourse experienced by WWOOFers takes place during their role as workers, which some consider so important as to recommend intending WWOOFers first "find out if you will be working alone" because "WWOOFing is always best when shared with friends" (Rother 2009). Being at the core of the exchange, **work** is an important focal point in its own right and a key contributor to the success of the experience. Depending on the host situation, it can be extremely diverse or repetitive, as well as physically and mentally challenging. Work can also be intensely busy or relatively relaxed:

You hear of some hosts wanting, expecting a hell of a lot more work than other ones, um, some who don't care if you do the work at all, they just really want the company and the experiences with these travellers and just want to show you round. You know it's really, really random. (WWOOFer M)

The range of WWOOFing work types is almost limitless and not all of it relates directly to farm work or to organics.¹⁰ For some, work is itself a source of relaxation (Conway 1999), routine (Rother 2009), and contrast and satisfaction relative to "hostel hopping" (Anon. 2006; Jerums 1996), generating new experiences and learning of certain skills to be

¹⁰ Instances in which the work is significantly off-target in terms of WWOOFers expectations are not uncommon which can be cause of some frustration or disappointment. WWOOFer M suggested that "if somebody is really really into organic growing, then they would be very excited by the whole wwoof, [thing]... That they could do that on their travels and probably [be] disappointed with lots of places they went to".

applied in novel ways. **Learning** is of course not confined to work, but as work offers direct, immersed experience of hosts' lives, it feeds into the cultural learning experience and sometimes also yields a new appreciation of those that work in agricultural production or other areas. WWOOFing generally therefore offers a focus as well on learning about the world and about the self in that world (considered later as an *outcome*).

WWOOFing experiences take place in a spatial context, usually the **rural and natural landscapes** of Australia, which can itself be a very significant experiential focus and motive for many. Again, some marvel at the relative isolation of some properties, which can be "pretty far out there". The much anticipated vastness of Australia may nevertheless awe and have significant aesthetic appeal.

Encounters with nature, particularly in the form of key wildlife icons, are also focal points associated with these locational characteristics. This weblog describes a WWOOFer's experience with a neighbouring wildlife carer:

The lizard flipped round to face the other way when in my hand, I yelped - everyone amused, they were lucky I didn't throw it across the room.... We also saw a couple of Fat Tailed Dunnarts - so a real wildlife experience. (Source: GetJealous.com).

We spot our first baby echidna snuffling on the side of the paddock - adorable, but no piccies as we didn't have a camera. (Source: GetJealous.com).

Host N recalled a WWOOFer that:

...used to sit on the toilet out there and the door doesn't work. She wrote us a letter saying she enjoyed sitting on the toilet, with no door, so she could watch the birds.

Experiences of and in nature, are not always perhaps as hoped for, given the various natural dangers in the Australian landscape. However, there are many examples of WWOOFers fondly discussing online their 'real' experiences with nature in spite of, or because of, the various dangers. Again, it is often the fact of properties being located in a broader natural and therefore often 'remote' landscape that is key:

We're WWOOFing in Makarora, a town of 40 people, and their (sic) are blue rivers and snow covered mountains all around. I think this is my favorite place yet (WWOOF NZ Bulletin Board, accessed 2005).

The Warrumbungles in the background, kangaroos in the foreground and the late afternoon sun everywhere deliver a lingering Woofing (sic) postcard until a truck comes along and the 20th century returns (Kowalski 1993).

These quotes illustrate the difficulty of separating the *focus* of an experience from its *qualities*, to which we now turn.

Qualities of Experiences

Journeys from the urban 'core' to experience the rural/natural 'periphery' are a key part of the difference sought and experienced by WWOOFers (see Figure 24). But while host places can be 'out there' and provide 'romantic' spaces of "rurality" for some (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006), the remoteness and thus the degree of difference they produce for urban WWOOFers can overwhelm others, like the Japanese WWOOFer "that cried from the time that she got here to the time that I took her [back] to the train" because, Host N believed, "the wide open spaces frightened her". Entry into the difference of hosts' lives can be immediate and therefore confronting.

WWOOFing experiences are considered as *unique* as the individual hosts, who frequently espouse eccentric worldviews relative to the mainstream culture from which WWOOFers come. WWOOFers are also "shown spots that [only] locals know about" (WWOOFer JL), or witness unique local events. Proximity to unheralded, yet unique moments that are an everyday part of hosts' lives, results in WWOOFers feeling a sense of achievement:

We really keep falling on our feet with these once in a lifetime opportunities, especially as this place is not open to the public (Source: GetJealous.com).

While difference is relative, some WWOOFing experiences can be an occasion in which *otherness* is brought into new perspective:

I would never actually thought about doing this work. Like, my parents have a garden, I would never work in their garden, never would occur to me, 'cos I really don't like it. But here it's so different (WWOOFer J).

Another key property of difference is *novelty*. First time experiences are frequently encountered (driving tractors, drinking fresh cow's milk, seeing/touching certain wildlife, pruning fruit trees) and for many, are highly regarded. This is demonstrated by a common concern among hosts and WWOOFers with the **diversity** of experiences. Beyond having experiences other than those provided by regular travelling, experienced WWOOFers perceived that diversity was characteristic of the WWOOFing realm as a whole:

I mean, all our experiences were just so different... Every family was different and every place that we went to had different positives and different things that weren't so great about it... Yeah I imagine like people would just get so much different experiences out of WWOOFing, like cos it is just such a, what you make it really... and what your hosts are making it ... (WWOOFer AM).

Diversity *within* an individual experience is important to WWOOFers, particularly in relation to the work:

Every morning we would do an hour of weeding, and you know I didn't really learn that much, of how, you know, everything works... The second place was mainly, yeah, lots of mulching, sometimes just a whole day of mulching. I don't know, in that place they um, they would, you know, sometimes get you to pick up sticks for a whole day (laughs), or something, which if there is a big group of you it's fine, but you know... I mean, but really, they should have a variety... it's good to have variety. (WWOOFer M).

WWOOFer T related with fondness the diversity of tasks she undertook in just a small space:

I planted seeds, washed dishes, and so, housework. And just took off weeds. Also I did harvest. And collect seaweed... Mmmm. ...Ah, I made, like a teepee in [the host's] place. And I made a... frame, for net, to keep strawberries (WWOOFer T).

Host JL, who had previously WWOOFed in Australia and internationally was well aware of the need for diversity and company in the case of tedious work:

I don't get WWOOFers to go out there on their own and collect firewood or go weeding or do anything that's just tedious! Cos I wouldn't have been happy doing that either. If we're going to do that, I'll do that with them so they know that it's a mutual thing. And I always try to get an interesting project for them. (Host JL).

WWOOFer J reflected on line between *difference* and *repetition* in describing her sense of completion and satisfaction when seeds she had planted had grown through to plants that she then helped to harvest for market.

... after 3 weeks, it's like a big circle, it's not something new. I'm really happy now, I've seen the whole process, because at the weekend, I will pick a plant that I've seeded, that I planted, so the circle is like closed, and I've seen everything of that, and, that's OK.

This circle was a signal that she was able to move on before the work became "really boring", suggesting a connection between diverse/monotonous and interesting/dull experiences. As suggested later, this also perhaps suggests the shape of the line of demarcation between the commonly assumed work *versus* leisure distinction. What makes an experience **interesting** revolves around the work, host personalities, the nature of the place and so on, but those with a passion to learn about lifestyles or skills from hosts are different in this respect than those with other reasons for WWOOFing:

... we learned so much from them about healthy eating and like, you know, spirituality and just like, approaches to life and, um, yeah, they were just really fascinating people and just, you know, sharing their stories with us ... (WWOOFer AM).

The **interactive** quality of experiences, is highly valued by WWOOFers and social interaction is also one of the means by which experiences are (or are not) interesting to WWOOFers, particularly if tasks are repetitive. Interaction underpins a sense of **fun and enjoyment**:

... when our daughters are home, sometimes they are home when these WWOOFers come, they have a great time. You know, chin wagging and laughing and talking about... I don't know what they talk about! Can't remember, but [laughter]. You know, they just have a good time. (Host S1).

WOOOFer E enjoyed the work “for the most part” on her host community which was highly social (with 15 other WOOOFers at one time), as well as during time out from work:

It’s fun, we like sit around and joke about the way, we’re communicating with language all the time, even if we’re all speaking English, everyone’s got really different slang. (WOOOFer E).

WOOOFer T, a shy young Japanese woman, recalled having “a great time with [her] host” on their last day together, sharing some alcohol, which was “very enjoyable”. WOOOFer M was mostly solitary, but found enjoyment (like WOOOFer J above) in her connection to the gardens she worked in:

... every evening we’d eat something from the garden... that was just absolutely amazing yeah, even if it’s just herbs and every weekend I’d come back to Sydney I’d bring loads of stuff you know (laughs)... 12 eggs and just, loads of basil and um, it’s just absolutely lovely picking it yourself and um eating it... (WOOOFer M).

Fun and enjoyment are considered by some to be defining characteristics of WOOOFing, to varying degrees, depending on proclivities and activities:

Weed-whacking wasn’t that much fun, but raking coffee into long rows on the hoshidana (drying deck) so it could be warmed by the tropical sun was positively meditative. And snorkeling after a long hot day was even better! (English 2007).

Indeed English (2007) suggests it is possible to choose a WOOOFing place “more fun than you can imagine”. Rother (2009) observed that sore muscles each day made it “hard to explain to those back home how this fit into the ‘fun’ category”, but concluded that:

despite the odds, we did have fun. Good hosts, cheerful companions and hearty evening meals went a long way to easing the physical pain of the demanding work (Rother 2009).

A key aspect of the enjoyability of WOOOFing then, is social, but Madden (n.d.), who also had moments of wonder about whether or not she was enjoying WOOOFing, found:

it suddenly dawned on me that I was enjoying myself. I was, after all, here out of choice. (Madden n.d.)

Choice underlies enjoyment and provides an important line of demarcation between **freedom** and restriction. WWOOFer E provided many observations about freedom in reflecting on her time in an intentional sustainable eco-community which catered to many WWOOFers and housed semi-permanent residents working variously toward community goals. In the independent living 'dome' created to house WWOOFers, and in the community generally she found "a lot of freedom", so much so that new WWOOFers need to "just figure it out" on their own. This extended to having freedom to work out and initiate projects of use or value to the community, such as creative productions. There appeared to be freedom to choose whether to take initiative or to take direction on daily work programs and needs from the longer term WWOOFer 'group leaders'. Freedom outside of work time was "infinite", with very few rules or guidelines other than not being "a really ridiculous out of control person".¹¹ Though an exceptional circumstance reflecting unique hosts, this illustrates that freedom and initiative are related to flexibility. For example, WWOOFer M found freedom with one host that offered a space for her to "plant vegetables where you want" with only "a bit of guidance". She also found freedom in fitting WWOOFing into broader travel plans, fitting with a general pattern of openness to opportunities discovered 'on the road', making her reluctant to commit to too much travel planning.

Because hosts can vary greatly regarding routines and rules concerning minimum stays, behaviour, work times and practices, **restriction** too can characterise WWOOFing. As well as the overt presence of host rules and the background list of guidelines provided by WWOOF Australia, more subtle forms of restriction can be noted, such as that which comes with the emotional energy (or emotional labour cf Hochschild 1983) required to constantly "be on your best behaviour" and make an appropriate impression on hosts in order to make the arrangement work.

¹¹ But she (and I) also observed that longer term WWOOFers often chose to continue to work after work periods ended, partly because for such WWOOFers, there was a convergence between WWOOFing work and an ill-defined 'stake' in the property in the long term in which livelihood opportunities were being offered. That is, the owners were open to allowing indefinite stays within the WWOOFing arrangement, and allowing for income earning enterprises to be established upon the land, providing a growing but uncertain sense of 'ownership' for some long term and established WWOOFers. This challenged the identity of some key long term WWOOFers as they merged with becoming 'stakeholders'.

Though most WWOOFers can simply leave if the situation is too restrictive for example, anecdote suggests that for some, without independent transport, with limited language ability and uncertainty about customs, there may be feelings of obligation to complete an agreed arrangement in order not to offend. Power distribution in such circumstances can be exacerbated by the non-monetary nature of the exchange, as there is no basis for assessing its relative exchange value. The experience is dynamic, co-created by both parties in real time with few external reference points. One piece of advice is that:

WWOOFing can be very different from one place to another. It's a matter of balance between you and your host's expectations. There is a book to help you, but there is no rules (excerpt from a WWOOFer letter to a host, provided to the researcher 2006).

Various factors (discussed in Chapter 7) influence the experience and how it feels, but the **non-monetary, non-commercial** and **non-standard** nature of the experience is something commonly raised by WWOOFers and hosts alike. The non-monetary aspect provides "more of a connection with the community and the local people" than tourism (WWOOFer A), magnifying social reciprocity and making it "more enjoyable for both parties":

It's not like if you went and stayed at a bed and breakfast and paid someone and they feel like they have to, I don't know, go out of their way to... make sure that you are feeling really comfortable and, in that space, and, whereas, like with [WWOOFing], if it's on like a different exchange level, it's like... well we're trying to make it a really good experience for them as well (WWOOFer A).

WWOOFer E felt she was getting "the ultimate hands on education that everyone wants to get", otherwise unaffordable and inconceivable in the commercial realm. WWOOFer M argued that attempts to gain comparable knowledge and experience of the 'real Australia' as an independent traveller are fraught, with attempts to do so from within the commercial tourism realm, regardless of how seemingly 'authentic', even more so. Comparing WWOOFing to commercial 'low key' experiences of 'the outback' she'd heard of while on the road, she claimed that:

you'd probably get a much better experience staying with a WWOOF host. Yeah, you would, definitely, but, and you don't pay for it! (WWOOFer M).

Commercial experiences can condense a lot of targeted activities, such as horse riding, which WWOOFers cannot expect or demand. Host S2 also suggested that the accommodation is "much more controlled" in commercial tourism experiences, whereas with WWOOFing "you really don't know what you're gonna get". But, you can get lucky, in a range of different ways, with caring for an injured wombat and watching a koala in the wild *through* WWOOFing being poignant moments for WWOOFer M, and more valuable than staged events and the photographs that document them in predictable, themed environments.

For Host B, the non-monetary nature of the WWOOFing exchange is "one of the most wonderful things about WWOOFing" making it "one of the last bastions of trust". Indeed for him, the introduction of an economic exchange "taints" an experience and removes it from the realm of 'real' exchanges between people. Host D claimed that the absence of money "always transforms any kind of relationship", while host and former WWOOFer JL claimed it is "fundamental" to the experience that WWOOFing "really isn't about money", and that "expectations and responsibility are different because money's not involved". McIntosh and Bonneman (2006) compared staying on commercial farmstays with WWOOFing and concluded that a chief difference, given non-commercial barter system at its heart, was that the "relationship between host and visitor was potentially more intense in nature and perceived as more meaningful and sincere." They quote Taylor (2001), who in turn revisits MacCannell in saying that:

The chance to feel 'one of them'... means being permitted to see behind the others' mere performances and is an important aspect of an authentic experience. In this way, the potential for intense friendships and understandings to develop from the non-commercial experience of staying on a WWOOF farm may be more appropriately termed an experience of 'sincerity' (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, quoting Taylor, p95).

The present research readily supports this interpretation, with hosts and WWOOFers converging in opinion around this issue of the authenticity or more appropriately (as urged by Pearce 2005; Taylor 2001), the **sincerity** of WWOOFing experiences. Experiences perceived as 'really real' and based on good will, are highly prized and the de-commodified

nature of WWOOFing is the key to unlocking and accessing such 'existentially authentic' experiences:

I think WWOOFing gets to real life. Well that's my version of it, and that's how I see it, and that's how I try to implement it when someone comes here. Because I feel that that is what they're coming for. (Host M)

Furthermore, WWOOFing by-passes the paradoxes of touristic quests for 'objective' or 'cultural' authenticity (Cohen 1988b; Cohen 2004b; Cohen 2004c; Minca and Oakes 2006; Oakes 2006; Shepherd 2002; Wang 2000):

...there are definitely people looking for much more real experiences, this is why they're more interested in more unusual tourist destinations, the ones that haven't been spoilt by tourism. Um, and ah unfortunately then get spoilt because they go there. (Host B)

As developed more fully in Chapter 7, the issue is one of how and how much hosts and WWOOFers *engage* with each other and the extent to which sincerity (i.e. by "just being yourself" (WWOOFer Y)) characterises encounters. As also noted by McIntosh and Bonneman and others (Pearce 2005; Taylor 2001), there is an important corollary of this sincerity, which is the possibility of intimacy (Conran 2006) and ultimately, **personal meaningfulness**. It is notable that WWOOFers often chose to compare WWOOFing to tourism around this key distinction. In comparison with the "aimlessness" of tourism, WWOOFer JL liked the ability to stop, meet and "get to know some people. Spend time in a village and get to interact in a different way". WWOOFer J described "just lying on the beach and doing nothing" as "really boring" because "you don't learn much about the country", but also that "it makes you feel good actually, that you do something like, you help people doing their work." Others agree on this point:

I like the way Wwoofing feels purposeful, the way you're helping your hosts to live their chosen lifestyle. (WWOOF NZ bulletin board, 2005)

WWOOFer E was willingly involved in a group clearing woody weeds for many days alongside a creek bank, without really understanding its purpose. Then when rainforest trees were then introduced into those cleared spaces and she connected ends and means, her experience was transformed into a meaningful, purposeful and enriching one:

And then I was like, 'Oh, we're saving the rainforest! This is awesome. Yeah, let's go plant trees where we cleared land... This is all really good karma work, out here ... Yeah, it's a really good feeling. (WWOOFer E).

This was observed by McIntosh and Bonneman (2006, p94) also:

As such, the experience of working outdoors and feeling close to nature gave respondents a feeling of being useful, of personal achievement and of personal meaning that had not been apparent in their everyday lives or travelling.

Finally, many of the above qualities of WWOOFing experiences combine with a general level of unpredictability which connotes and provides a level of reality, in that WWOOFers need to be 'ready for anything' in terms of responding to the work, the landscape and environment, cultural differences and social interaction, which is itself exciting and thus **adventurous**. Indeed, simply not knowing anything much about the host beforehand was shown by some WWOOFers, to be a key part of the adventure.

They have to be a bit adventurous. I mean I'm sure there'd be a lot of people who wouldn't even consider... going into somebody else's house as a complete stranger. Just as there are a lot of people who we've talked to who can't even imagine inviting people into your house, that you don't know. (Host B).

[It's] a little bit like hitch hiking. You put yourself out there in the morning and you really don't know who is gonna give you a lift. It takes huge trust. (Host S2)

Adventure, sincerity, meaningfulness and some of the other qualities mentioned may not be part of every WWOOFer's experience, but the research undertaken has strongly demonstrated that there is, deriving from the *combination* of all of the above experiential *foci* and *qualities*, an overall **'feel' of WWOOFing**.

The 'Feel' of WWOOF(ing)

Though WWOOFing experiences are unique to individuals, there is something about the possibility of producing highly customised experiences that itself is part of the 'feel' of

Wwoofing. Being relatively loose and unregulated, with Wwoofers and hosts making their own arrangements and experiences happen, is also a part of its feel:

Wwoofer R: the feel of the phenomenon of Wwoofing ... is you don't know what you're going to get.

Wwoofer A: Yeah, and the whole thing just being based on that trust.

In order to trust, spontaneity and flexibility and a degree of informality also become key aspects of the feel of Wwoofing, considered to be "crucial" by long term budget travellers using Wwoof in escaping from mainstream travel circuits in NZ (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001, p175). Hosts B and M suggest that Wwoofers need to be "people who are open" and "flexible", because they need to fit in with their lifestyle.¹² From the Wwoofers' perspective:

the feel of Wwoofing is that its unstructured and its, you know, it's not a defined path... its bendy and windy and it can, you know, that kind of feel of that, it's a bit, a bit disjointed, or... Like a Permaculture garden, it can be a bit chaotic but it's, it's a beautiful space, overall. (Wwoofer R).

Wwoofing thus provides a space, platform or arena for informal, spontaneous and direct creation of human-human, and human-nature experiences. A range of survey data indicates that both Wwoofers and hosts regard Wwoofing to be *primarily* about social interaction and cultural exchange, drawing attention to the importance of the space in which such exchange occurs. The ways people construct, negotiate and navigate this interactive space is the subject of Chapter 7.

Wwoof, now a global organisation, has and promotes its unique 'feel' as well, and this is something that many Wwoofers and hosts appear to have understood. Several other identifiable thematic characteristics contribute to the overall 'feel' of Wwoof, including its 'folksy', downbeat character, being concerned with the 'real' Australia, but particularly among those with earthy, organic and often frugal lifestyles. Its online presence is decidedly 'retro' in look and feel when compared with contemporary websites, while the

¹² As was made clear by various hosts in Chapter 5, where this does not happen, there can be conflict.

deliberate decision to continue to function with a hard copy book rather than a digital alternative (Gary Ainsworth, pers comm.), like its emergent labour exchange ‘competitor’ – Help-X.net – is also a part of this retro feel.

Host JL and WWOOFer E stated that its low key web presence is appropriate to its character though, and would not wish to see it changed:

... so many people in the book don't have Internet access. It's nice to keep it at a more basic level too... half of them, they don't have a phone... So you gotta really want to be out there. (WWOOFer E)

This means it is something that people need to be aware of through particular and appropriate networks, rather than being something that can be Googled, like everything else:

You have to be aware of it... through some other way than the Internet. (WWOOFer E).

Much of this is something that might be regarded as being intimately bound up with the abovementioned broader concern with ‘authenticity’ in a reviving ‘new realism’ (Boyle 2003) and there is little doubt that many see it (positively or negatively) as being an enterprise borne of and focused on ‘romantic’ ideals in pursuit of noble goals. Indeed one interviewed WWOOFer distinguished between ‘real’ and ‘other’ WWOOFing, on the basis of the use of organic techniques, the scale of operations, concern with self-sufficiency, remote locations and a general feel of rustic simplicity and folksiness, particularly in that it operates on and promotes trust (Larson 2000). Again, trust is possibly a characteristic of a lost, more innocent yesteryear and some characterise WWOOFing as going “back to a time when extended families would work, play and share with one another” (Klein n.d.). But in this is a defining aspect of the feel of WWOOFing, in that it is bounded by those willing to trust, creating a sort of WWOOF community, or a “fellowship” as Host D put it.¹³ There is an undeniable romance at play in the combination of experiential qualities, described by Host S1 as “a big, positive, soft fuzzy thing”. It is therefore appropriate to now

¹³ Of course, this trust is sometimes violated, evidenced by the occasional ‘WWOOFer Alerts’ provided to hosts when problematic and uncooperative WWOOFers are discovered.

consider how this 'feel good' aspect translates into surveyed WWOOFers assessments of their experiences.

5.3 Assessment of the WWOOFing Experience

Despite spending an average 12% of total travel time in Australia WWOOFing, most indicated that it was either an *important* or a *major* focus of their overall travel experience. 52% found it to be *all positive* and 40% regarded it as *mostly positive*. Expectations were matched by actual experiences either *mostly* (52%) or *always* (32%), and 84% would WWOOF again. Almost all (94%) would, or had already recommended WWOOFing to other travellers and collectively, a very positive 'rating' of WWOOFing experiences is made by WWOOFers. Its popularity is likely to continue to be positively affected by this rating and the strong word of mouth mechanism of information spread associated with it.

Naturally, mixed and negative experiences do occur as well, and many see each WWOOFing experience consisting of "ups and downs the whole time" (participant WWOOFer M). There is also variability within and between experiences and any final assessment consists of a balancing of positive and negative aspects (refer to Figure 24).

I mean sometimes I hated it. Thinking back... then it was absolutely amazing, but at the time, yeah, some days I just hated the work... Everyone is going to have one, possibly, bad experience, but there's lots of good places out there.... I have heard a lot of... stories not so nice. But then, yeah, you just take a risk, don't you? (WWOOFer M)

Every family was different and every place that we went to had different positives and different things that weren't so great about it... WWOOFing's got the good and the bad sides and you've got to be honest about that... You get, like, a range of experiences... (WWOOFer A).

For some, WWOOFing was an overwhelmingly negative experience:

I had 3 bad farms and 3 which were good but the bad experiences were just TOO bad that i really dont know how to choose another farm! maybe there are some more nice farms but i just dont know how to find them... (sic, WWOOFer L, NZ Bulletin Board 2005):

Maycock (2008) urges that we should not be blinded by the romantic appeal of WWOOFing and to be aware of the “balance of challenges and benefits” which is ultimately an individual affair.

Sometimes you can work ten hours day and be happy, sometimes you just have to dish wash and you feel in jail. (Excerpt from WWOOFer letter to host, provided to researcher, 2006)

Even when experiences were personally disappointing they could be regarded by some as “a good experience”, because with the right attitude, “you see the opposite of the way of living” that you have an interest in exploring (WWOOFer Y), which is nevertheless, ‘real’. WWOOF Australia reminds WWOOFers to give themselves time to create and explore their experience before judging its success, as there is necessarily a period of familiarisation for hosts and WWOOFers that can be critical as they move between the unknown to the known. But ultimately, both parties are able to determine for themselves their own criteria for judging and acting upon that as needed.

At this point, two outstanding interconnected questions are: *Why are WWOOFing experiences so highly rated?* and *what sorts of outcomes are there for participants?*

6 OUTCOMES OF WWOOFING

Responses to targeted survey questions and conversational interviews help understand the nature and importance of outcomes of WWOOFing experiences. Outcomes refer to changes following an experience. Outcomes are personal constructs, sometimes physical, sometimes material in nature and can be reflective or cognitive regarding orientation toward the future. Collectively, outcomes provide understanding of the impacts of WWOOFing experiences on participants (though it is noted that some outcomes may not (yet) be known or understood).

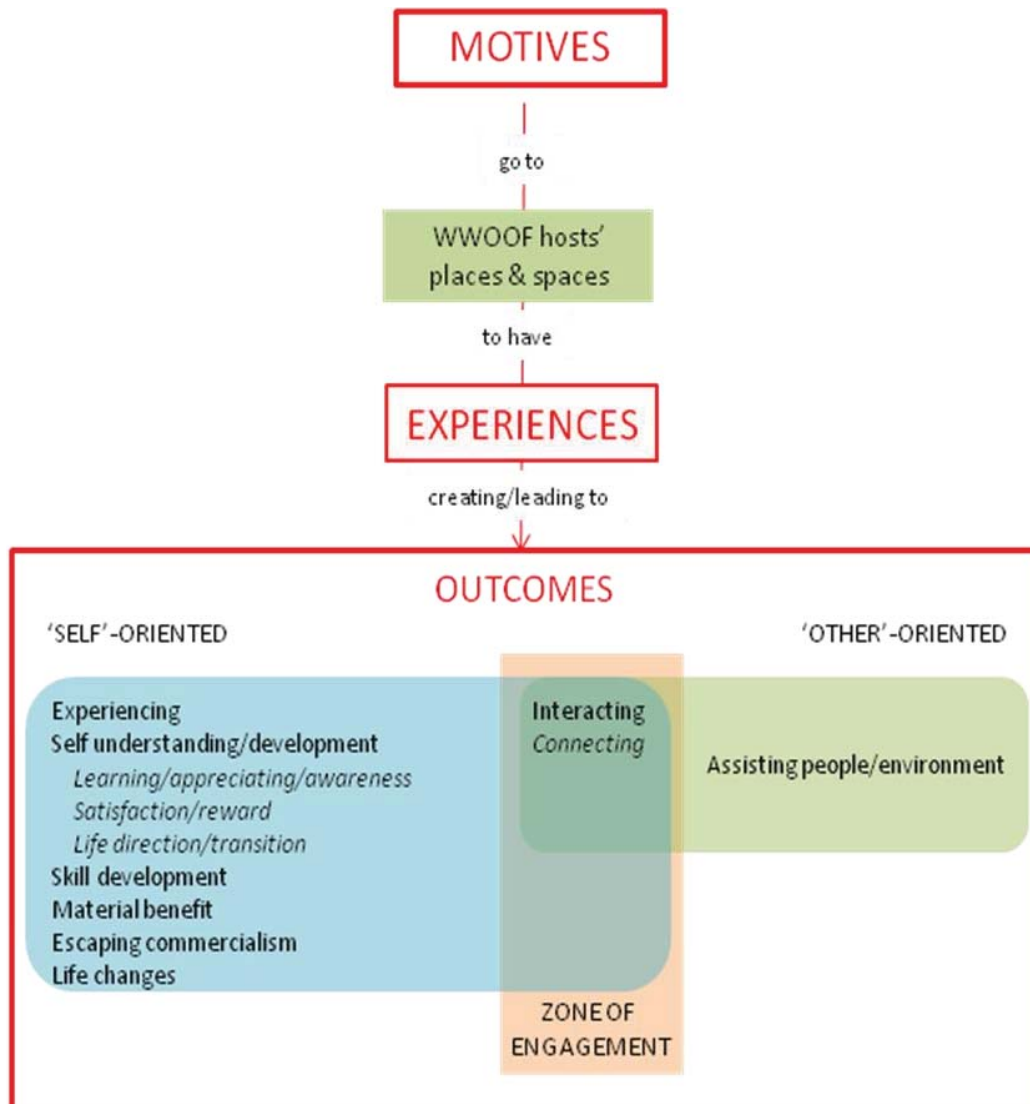
Analysis of both survey results and interview data are interwoven below to build towards an explanation of the final component of the integrated concept map at Figure25.

6.1 Gains of WWOOFing

Consistent with their primary motivations, surveyed WWOOFers indicated that the most significant benefits of WWOOFing (selected from a list), were gaining the opportunity to *meet and interact with people* and *experience and participate in cultural exchange*, followed by *experiencing rural/natural environments*. A second cluster of important outcomes (from most to least) included:

- experiencing farming generally;
- learning about 'alternative' lifestyles;
- contributing to hosts;
- saving money;
- being part of something meaningful;
- contributing to earth repair/environment; and,
- escaping tourists/tourism.

Figure 25: Outcomes of WWOOFing



This data affirms the view that the concept has drifted significantly from its original intent, since the least important outcome was *learning organic production skills*, compared with more general experiential outcomes, such as those related to farming generally. despite being drawn to WWOOFing, there is a general lack of motivation to gain specific knowledge about organics, but this is not to say however, that surveyed WWOOFers were unaffected by their experiences. Further, how accurately prescribed categories in the survey reflected WWOOFers' own understanding and framing of outcomes of importance to them is unknown. Thus a complementary and more empathic understanding of

outcomes from WWOOFing is needed, achieved by looking at responses to an open ended question about outcomes of experiences and at the views of interviewees.

6.2 Significant Aspects of the Experience

Figure 25 offers a conceptual map of possible outcomes of WWOOFing, derived through iterations of interpretive analysis. Surveyed WWOOFers openly listed the most *significant things liked, learned or appreciated by WWOOFing*, with Table 24 condensing individual responses into key categories (with a full listing of categories in Appendix 6.6 Table 31). Working through these below contributes to understanding the outcomes of WWOOFing, which sometimes result in changes to WWOOFers lives.

Table 24: Significant Aspects of WWOOFing Experience (grouped)

Category	% (n = 308)	% of Cases
Experiencing	32.7	71.5
Interacting	31.4	68.7
Self understanding/development	14.9	32.6
Skill development	10.4	22.9
Material benefit	3.9	8.5
Other	3.1	6.9
Assisting people/environment	2.3	5.1
Escaping commercialism	0.8	1.7
TOTAL	99.5	-

Experiencing

WWOOFing affords its participants the opportunity to experience *'alternative' lifestyles, Australian life/culture and new things generally*, while experiences of *animal husbandry, farm life/farm work and other people's lives* generally are also valued. Experiences of *local places/landscapes and sustainable living* have importance, all of which may be consciously tied up at important life junctions, with 'browsing' lifestyle choices, or learning skills (below).

Experiencing can also be seen as simply part of an effort to participate in life, as many WWOOFers are experience seekers as shown, without any particular orientation towards the goals of the WWOOF community. Having experiences is theorized by some to drive many contemporary people and underpins the booming 'experience economy' in much of the developed world (Pine and Gilmore 1999). Experience consumption is itself a leisure

form, particularly well developed in much tourism (Meethan 2001; Wang 2002). Although consumption of tourism experiences may not produce a lasting satisfaction (Urry 2002; Wang 2002), in some cases or through some forms of tourism, it remains possible to learn specific things or achieve personal goals which are lasting - a means of achieving self-understanding including identity formation or confirmation (Wearing 2002), or cultivating distinctive identity ('cultural capital') and possibly self-development (see below).

Interacting and Connecting

Respondents attached the greatest significance to *meeting people* (23%), and *living with family/people* (19%). This category included responses emphasizing the importance of a 'sense of community' and 'being part of something', and WWOOFers particularly appreciate inclusion in hosts' day to day life, since a cultural exchange based on a positive personal relationship with the hosts is essential to meeting their universal and primary travel motivation – meeting and living with members of another culture (Nimmo 2001a). Without interaction and involvement, there can be a sense of being used as cheap labour, detracting from the experience as a whole:

... I think it's quite sad when I am leaving because like if you stay somewhere 3 weeks and live like in a family, that's quite nice. But I think if you are like in a big commercial farm where it's all about working it can be difficult. (WWOOFer J)

This category also includes *experiencing friendships/hospitality, exchanges of culture and ideas* with hosts, *being involved with/interacting with people* generally and *reciprocity*. WWOOFers find it possible to create networks through relationships with hosts, their family and friends, and other WWOOFers. Since this research commenced, online and now mobile social networking has become a mass global phenomenon which has doubtless reduced the significance of this outcome of WWOOFing, but it can still be agreed with Pearsall (n.d., p72) that by being involved in and contributing to a place, WWOOFing "allows a depth of relationship to develop which is much less common for the average traveller". This sentiment was found repeatedly in the Australian context, with many confirming that firm friendships or other close relationships are frequently made. For many WWOOFers, such connections can in turn be a part of an acknowledged increased self understanding and personal growth.

Self understanding/development

Self-understanding and self-development are both types of learning outcomes forged *through* micro-social interactions characteristic of the WWOOFing situation, along with specific skills development mentioned below. Indeed, 'experiencing' (above) can also be readily seen in connection with the idea of *learning* (Kolb 1984), usefully seen as "an appropriate name for the interactive processes that contribute to change" (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000, p8). An interactive learning process, such as that in WWOOFing, is also taken to contribute to "the accumulation of social capital as the *outcome* of the process", depending on "the issue of quality and quantity of interactions", which should be meaningful and numerous (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000, p20), as is the case with WWOOFing.

Almost 15% of all survey responses were concerned with an altered self-awareness and/or self-understanding arising from WWOOFing experiences, which for some, led also to a perceived self-development (refer to Appendix 6.6 Table 31 and Figure 25). The development of an *increased environmental awareness* was regarded alone by over 14% of all participants to be a significant outcome of WWOOFing experiences, manifest in specific comments about the importance of water conservation in Australia, or broader statements of awareness of change in attitude towards nature or the environment. Some claimed *new appreciation of organic produce/practices*, a general sense of *self understanding or self development, life inspiration*, recognition of the possibility for *living a more relaxed or simplified life*, development of a *more positive outlook* and *feeling appreciated* through involvement in the WWOOFing experience.

Interviewees also found a new appreciation of/for organic food production, including the underpinning, more holistic worldview and techniques it entails:

So if you don't have an organic farm you always see like the beds always look very nice, and only where they don't spray, you have like a lot of weeds. So yeah, that's quite interesting... you have to be open minded to see it, but it's like working on an organic farm and see how, like you have to work with the nature, because that's what organic farming is I think mostly about, it's not working against the nature ... you have to watch out for certain stuff because not every weed is maybe bad, some weeds are maybe quite good. (WWOOFer J).

She introduced me, like, everything, every aspect in your life. Like every, cycle... of the environment, and you, somehow you, are part of the land, part of the environment, so... like

everything, is one. Just oneness... and doing... actually anything, like cooking, anything like, it's just part of your life and you feel the part of your life and part of the environment, so that, and you need to do it, and want to do it. (WWOOFer Y).

Exposure to such an 'approach to life' was a profoundly resonant experience for this WWOOFer, leading them to want to continue to seek and absorb such holistic and thus more sustainable modes of living. WWOOFers A and R also sought and gained an appreciation of new approaches to living through WWOOFing with certain hosts, including

sustainable living as a whole, like about health and you know we learned so much from them about healthy eating and like, you know, spirituality and just like, approaches to life (WWOOFer A).

The idea of *sustainable living* perhaps two or three decades earlier, was represented by the term 'alternative lifestyle', but is arguably and increasingly part of the current mainstream. Indeed, as shown in Chapter 5, previous WWOOF Australia managers explicitly claimed that by not restricting WWOOFer membership, there was an increased exposure of WWOOFers to the "organic approaches and alternative thinking" of eclectic WWOOF hosts and it was the deliberate hope to plant in the minds of greater numbers of visitors, the "seeds of change" (Pollard 1993, pp81-2). WWOOF saw for itself a role in shifting sustainability focused thinking from the realm of the alternative into the mainstream, through exposing people to a range of ideas and practices. Thus *experiencing alternative lifestyles* was a frequently stated 'significant outcome' of WWOOFing (4th out of over 30 ahead of *experiencing Australian life/culture* generally) and such experiences have been the basis for setting some WWOOFers on a life changing path (below).

Alternatively, some WWOOFers were awakened to the wider *realities of farm life*, including the impact of weather, natural disasters¹⁴, or power politics¹⁵. Some gained awareness and appreciation of the wider political economy of food production systems (English 2007 also provide examples; Vansittart 2002), with WWOOFer M learning how much her commercially oriented organic host "wasn't making from selling organic food", adopting the

¹⁴ The Cairns banana industry had been obliterated by a cyclone at the time.

¹⁵ In the case of a battle for local water resources between the *Coca Cola* company and a commercial host.

view that the expense of organic produce is part of a wider food production and market system in which “middle men” are making “all the cash”.

Learning and appreciation of Australian rural and natural environments can be acquired through direct experience and be a point of considerable contrast for some nationalities, sometimes connected with new understanding of the nature and impact of culture upon environment and landscape, past and present, with implications for better understanding of the need for changed future land management practices as well.

Another commonly reported outcome related to self-development is *growing through working*, particularly when the work is put into a meaningful context, such as clearing weeds to prepare for natural and assisted rainforest regeneration. Meaningful work is an important part of gaining a sense of purpose and it is well understood by experienced hosts that meaningful, varied work is also critical to the willingness of WWOOFers to work (Stehlik 2002), lending positive value to WWOOFers’ judgement that particular hosts are “worth working hard for” (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p91). Working fosters appreciation of what can go wrong in the production of the food they consume, the supply of which is often taken for granted. Work can broaden confidence in “life skills, communication skills and awareness of lifestyles other their own” (Schmetzer n.d., p7), the basis for self-understanding and personal growth. Indeed, Eldridge claims that “the experience of WWOOFing seems more about personal discovery than almost anything else” (in Maycock 2008, p285), particularly apparent where there are opportunities for a degree of mastery in the learning and application of new skills, itself is a route to gaining *satisfactions and rewards*, going “away with something” by “seeing a job through” (Host JL) and learning about patience/tenacity. WWOOFers may experience feelings of “good karma” (WWOOFer E) and/or being useful and valued (Host JL) through working.

Ideally work is intrinsically satisfying, but it is commonly repetitive and menial, and here the offering of host gratitude goes a long way towards establishing extrinsic satisfactions, complemented with a rewarding meal, conversation, rest, exploration or vista. Such work can produce awareness of the possibility for “meditative” moments amongst repetitive tasks in the outdoors (English 2007), while WWOOFers may find satisfaction or reward in other ways, through incidental wildlife sightings, where the sense of ‘real’, unscripted

events magnifies their pleasure and their meaning beyond what might be possible in other, predictable or staged touristic contexts.

Skill development

The acquisition of certain practical knowledge or skills generally, has been much discussed in popular writings about WWOOFing (Cosgrove 2000; Devlin 1998; Klein n.d.; Pollard n.d.; Rother 2009; Statham 2005), and was considered significant by around 10% of WWOOFers. WWOOFers often quite specifically identified particular skills learned which had value in their own right. These are therefore an independent category of responses, while recognizing that development of competence in particular skills leads to some form of self-development (de Young 2000; Maycock 2008; Nimmo 2001a; Stehlik 2002; Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003).

WWOOFing provides an avenue for hands-on learning of some of the skills underpinning 'alternative lifestyles', including self-sufficiency, alternative technologies, Permaculture design and so on. But skills are also able to be learned from thoroughly contemporary, and now 'mainstream', business oriented organic growers also (Biological Farmers of Australia 2010).

For surveyed WWOOFers the most important of skills acquired were *organic gardening/farming* (11%), followed by *general gardening/farming*, *English language* and (alternative, natural or sustainable) *building techniques*. The learning of *organic* skills is central to the vision of WWOOF and is an open, affordable and "hands on" alternative to more academic approaches (English 2007). Skills relating to organics were often highlighted by interviewees as being a core focus and outcome of WWOOFing:

But the final place was really where I did, where it was real to WWOOFing, to what I would count as really WWOOFing. What I learnt about... we were growing vegetables, I was there for 7 weeks, I could see them actually growing... And it was a commercial organic farm as well, very small scale. But that was really... really [where I] learned, and you could see things growing and you transformed the whole veggie patch and things... (WWOOFer M).

Maycock (2008) argues that WWOOFing can "teach the skills, techniques, and attitudes that make organic farming work", and McIntosh and Bonneman (2006, p92) found that

although only half their research participants in New Zealand had initial interest in learning about organics, “it was found to be a much more prominent part of the experience gained by almost all the visitors interviewed”.

I had never met people who had an organic farm or a self-sufficient place as a lifestyle, as the people have it here. These places have a lot to offer in terms of things I could learn. I now want to grow my own food and learn more about organic farming; that would never have entered my head if I had not gone WWOOFing. (WWOOFer quoted in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006).

Direct experience produces some level of skill acquisition and subject to the frequency, nature and success of interactions between hosts and WWOOFers, further interest can be ignited.

So if I would have one day house with a backyard I can have like a vegetable place where I can grow some stuff. And, because now I have some knowledge, I would do a lot of stuff different than I would have done if I don't have it. (WWOOFer J).

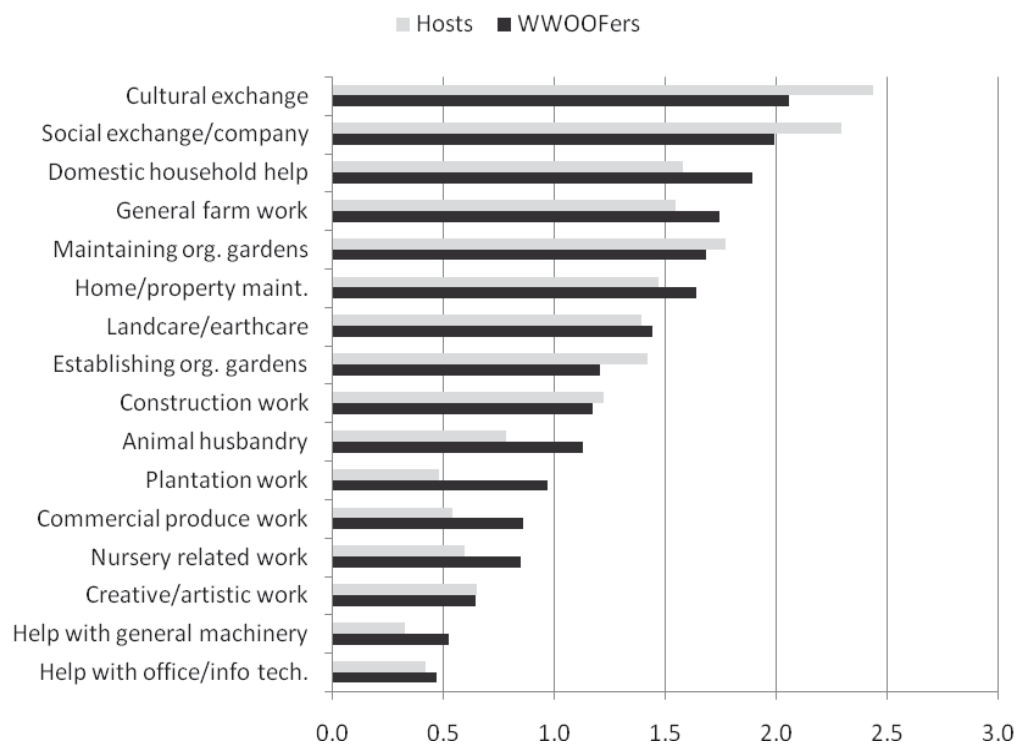
Proponents of WWOOF argue that there are many wanting to learn about alternative lifestyles, self-sufficiency, alternative technologies, Permaculture design and so on, and that WWOOFing provides an avenue for hands-on learning of some of the skills underpinning these (see for example, Pearsall n.d.). Schmetzer (n.d.) claims with some justification therefore that WWOOFing provides “an education in living”, as suggested above.

Other Benefits

Direct material benefits of WWOOFing like *home comforts, good food and cheap or 'free' accommodation* were of significance to about 4% of survey participants. This apparently contradicts those hosts (in Chapter 5) suggesting that WWOOFers were *primarily* motivated by (or benefitting from) such factors in choosing to WWOOF. WWOOFers may have downplayed this aspect in this survey, and interviewees also did not dwell on it, but perhaps hosts have not fully appreciated the relative importance to WWOOFers of the socio-cultural interaction and broader *engagement* involved.

In about 5% of cases, surveyed WWOOFers indicated that they had gained something significant from *assisting other people or the environment* through their efforts. While again, only a numerically low consideration, it is of interest to consider that surveyed WWOOFers perceived that *hosts* gain most in relation to cultural and social exchange, more than specific forms of help from WWOOFers, which actually accords well with hosts' own perceptions, as Figure 26 indicates (see also Chapter 5).

Figure 26: WWOOFer (and Host) Perceptions of Benefits to Hosts



WWOOFers then ranked *domestic help* ahead of *general farm work*, *maintaining organic gardens* and *home/property maintenance*, all suggesting either that hosts are commonly using WWOOFers for purposes other than production related ones, or that WWOOFers perceive that their inputs to produce related work are not particularly valuable to hosts. But overall, there is a significant degree of concurrence in the way both parties ranked benefits from these types of assistance, producing the same 'top five', with hosts perceiving *maintaining organic gardens* as a greater benefit than WWOOFers did, possibly because

they are in a better position than WWOOFers to appreciate the value of this work over the long term.

It must be recognized of course that not all WWOOFers find significance in their experiences and again, it is not difficult to find evidence (in online forums) of disappointment at the occasionally encountered *lack* of organic focus or inclusivity among some hosts. However, it is common in these cases to also find some qualification regarding the scheme in general, a reminder that experiences and outcomes consist of assessments of the *balance* of positives and negatives against personal expectations:

the idea of wwoof is really good but i think there are just really many farms which are not organic, not at all. And that's sad... There are a lot of good places out there too. Please don't let it put you off wwoofing... (sic, WWOOFer on WWOOF NZ bulletin board, accessed 2005)

6.3 Changes to WWOOFers' Lives

For most WWOOFers it has been shown that there is seemingly little intent to learn from hosts about organic production and associated techniques *per se*, but rather to meet and stay with local Australian people more broadly. It might not be surprising therefore to find relatively limited life changing 'outcomes' from WWOOFing experiences. However, for most, WWOOFing meets and exceeds expectations and provides highly significant experiences involving learning, awareness, appreciation and self-development, which is for some, inspirational enough to generate a range of **life changing outcomes** and potentially, put them on a path of transformation (Figure 27 below).

Specifically, survey participants agreed that they will:

- *try to eat more organic food (62%)*¹⁶; and,
- be more likely to *become a WWOOF host in future (34%)*.¹⁷

In response to a specific question about changes to their lives resulting from WWOOFing experiences, 70% of survey participants nominated a broad range of *life changes*. While it can only be assumed that they will indeed make these changes (refer to Appendix 6.6

¹⁶ 20% stated they would not change and 18% were undecided.

¹⁷ Note that most are young, single and urban (30% *not likely*, 37% *undecided*).

Table 32 for details), twenty (20) categories were determined,¹⁸ with seven (7) of these accounting for more than 54% of responses, as follows:

1. 15% were *generally* inspired by what was experienced in staying with hosts, in terms of their life direction, pace and complexity.

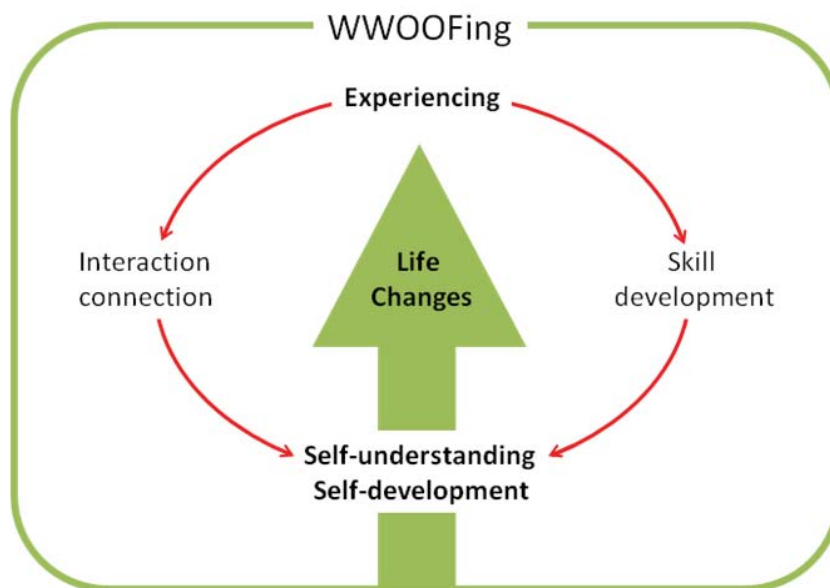
You are truly an inspiration to me. I don't think I ever met anyone with such enthusiasm for life, your energy radiates. I admire the freedom you have and your 'take each day as it comes' take on life. It has certainly been an adventure, we share many of the same attitudes right now. My wish is that I carry them with me throughout my life. (comment in host guestbook, supplied by host).

2. 15% had acquired *new knowledge and skills* relating to gardening/farming, other specific 'technical' skills and more general 'life' or living skills (eg cooking) that would enable change.
3. 14% will attempt to *live in a more environmentally friendly manner* following their experiences.
4. 13% felt *more open minded or tolerant*, or in some cases, *trusting* of other people.
5. 12% will strive to do *more gardening or farming*.
6. 10% were generally more *appreciative of organic farmers* and the production of organic food; and,
7. 11% had adopted a '*more positive outlook* following their WWOOFing experiences, or were *feeling more confident* in or about themselves sometimes arising from undertaking and succeeding with activities, including novel types of work.

In summary, a significant majority of surveyed WWOOFers reported that some detectable changes were likely to arise following their WWOOFing experiences, including for most, increased consumption of organic food. Some degree of change in consciousness and appreciation of more organic or 'earth friendly lifestyles' through WWOOFing was detected in this data, likely to translate into various life changes in conjunction with the partial acquisition of various knowledge and skills related to living.

¹⁸ Additionally, 'Other' accounted for nearly 8% of responses.

Figure 27: Life Changing Outcomes of WWOOFing and the Path of Transformation



Interviewees also were invigorated to produce their own food in some capacity:

I really want to have a garden which is edible garden, because I learned about a lot, from this trip. ... Because now I don't have any garden and I've not done gardening in Japan, and just I have a little bit of knowledge about agriculture, which is not doing things, just from book or other people (WWOOFer T).

I want to have my own house, and I want to have a garden. I want to be a part of the land, which has less impact on the land. (WWOOFer Y).

WWOOFer Y claimed for those “trying to find a way of living” in harmony with a holistic and earth friendly worldview, WWOOFing can help. Others had benefited from human-human interactions that had resulted in an increased trust and or tolerance of others, including those that lived ‘alternative’ lifestyles. Thus WWOOFer A had met “really amazing people” who “embodied” values she and her partner sought to know and learn about. Finding such people through WWOOFing was “really awesome” and “really inspiring”, creating admiration and new aspirations.

Hosts B and S2 suggested that WWOOFing changes lives most of the time, citing a Japanese WWOOFer who wrote to tell them that his WWOOFing experience had “changed his whole life, to the extent that he’d changed his job, and was now actually teaching people about the environment” and was working “in a National Park teaching school children and corporate groups”.

WWOOFer E identified the significance of the “good karma aspect” associated with environmental restoration and organic production work being undertaken on an intentional community where long term WWOOFers had become *de facto* local residents. Devlin (1998, p31) wrote of a 63 year old WWOOFer who claimed to want to never to return to a conventional lifestyle because he was happily learning about organics, broadening skills and interacting with other cultures while seeing “where life takes him”. Other examples of ‘permanent’ or perpetual WWOOFers seeing where life takes them can be readily found, demonstrating that WWOOFing is not accurately regarded as being only a fringe backpacker phenomenon, as it has sometimes been characterized.

WWOOFer J would be now likely to consult a WWOOF book if she knew she was to travel overseas again “because it makes so much more sense”, given her aversion to *only* lying upon a beach, concurring with the 84% that also ‘would WWOOF again’.

Notably, **escaping commercial tourism** by WWOOFing was apparently a significant *outcome* among only three survey participants. Such limited attention to successful *avoidance* of commercial tourism by survey participants should be seen however, in the context of the emphasis otherwise given to the *flipside* outcome of meeting, staying with and interacting with Australian people, which is difficult to achieve through commercial tourism. This was more strongly articulated by interviewees. WWOOFer M particularly indicated that the various ‘real life’ and natural experiences she had with native wildlife made her generally want to “steer in that direction”, towards “being more open minded” and taking a more de-commodified approach to travel in the future (cf Nimmo 2001a; Wearing, McDonald et al. 2005):

The WWOOFing, compared to what I was like before. I would not think 2 seconds of - stupid example - of going to a [wildlife] sanctuary. And I've got friends now from England over here and

they do all the main touristy things, but that's just yeah, made me realise just, where possible, just do things a bit differently. (WWOOFer M).

7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter has outlined key demographic and psychographic attributes of WWOOFers, and described their motives, experiences and outcomes. WWOOFers in Australia are primarily young overseas visitors, especially from Germany, South Korea, the UK and Japan. Significant numbers are also from Australia, Holland and other regions.

They are mostly single, largely female, independent, solo travellers who spend most of their time in Australia for periods averaging just over 6 months. They tend to derive from urban environments with relatively high levels of formal education, with involvement in local community groups mostly associated with personal pursuits. Most have limited and pragmatic membership on the whole, but very long term and 'habitual' WWOOFers are also known.

WWOOFers primarily want to meet local people and experience natural, outback and rural environments in Australia. They are interested to encounter wildlife and to get away from urban centres for a time, with WWOOFing being well suited to achieving these aims, as well as experiencing Australian life/culture and learning about/experiencing alternative lifestyles. Overall, WWOOFers are primarily travellers who WWOOF with a pragmatic recognition of opportunities for accessing and having experiences with 'real' rural Australians, within limited budgets and sometimes timetables. WWOOFing can be reasonably seen in the context of the most common motivation for journeying generally, being "social interaction with local people" (Obenour 2004, p3). For budget travellers, this occurs in three distinct forms:

1. a learning process about history and culture through immersion in the daily lives of the visited culture.
2. sharing emotional connections through time spent directly with individuals, producing development of understanding of human values.
3. exotic locales form an attraction and backdrop to personal activities such as escape from responsibilities, spiritual/sporting pursuits, enjoyment of social

isolation, separate from meaningful or personal social interaction with the host culture (Obenour 2004, p3).

The first two forms offer strong overlaps with the general activity of WWOOFing, while the latter has some potential for overlap for WWOOFers in those moments of personal free time. Again, for those who are long term budget travellers, WWOOFing provides a mechanism that facilitates social interaction, cultural immersion, human connection and other benefits.

Most undertake relatively limited WWOOFing, collectively spending about 12% of their total travel time in Australia as WWOOFers. Given a limited reported depth and breath of experience also, its very high rating (90% described experiences as *all* or *mostly* positive) seems disproportionate. That is, the assessment of WWOOFing experiences appears to outweigh what might otherwise be expected on the basis of the proportion of time and effort put into undertaking such experiences. It should also be noted that the survey methodology itself may have played some role in influencing the assessment by WWOOFers reported in this thesis, since less enthusiastic WWOOFers may have simply chosen not to participate in the research. While undetectable and unquantifiable, this insight and limitation should be borne in mind in the final analysis in conjunction with consideration of confidence intervals relevant to the sample (Appendix 6.2).

Experiences have a very wide ranging focus and multiple qualities, which combine to produce a unique 'feel', involving flexibility, informality, spontaneity, trust, initiative and varying degrees of mutuality in the creation of a shared and 'real' experience. Experiences almost always matched or exceeded expectations and the vast majority would both WWOOF again and recommend it. A generally very positive view and the word of mouth nature of the spread of WWOOFing is certainly likely to have underpinned its popularity to the present, doubtless to be aided further in viral fashion, like many contemporary human phenomena, through new social media.

Though WWOOFers mostly have little insight into the techniques, aims or focus of hosts and learning about organic farming techniques was of little importance, this does not, according to many hosts, limit their enthusiasm to engage with hosts and their surrounds. Above all, WWOOFers value *engagement*, which includes *interacting with and*

experiencing people and places by participating in various forms of exchange that can assist hosts not only through social and cultural experiences, but practically in their gardens, with farm animals, with 'earthcare' and so on. This *can* produce a range of opportunities for self-awareness and ultimately, self-development: through attempting to meet new challenges, and sometimes gaining satisfaction and reward from doing so: through accumulating practical skills and gaining new insights into the lives and lifestyles of others; by interacting with new environments and people and finding the resources and the flexibility to do so; and, from assisting people and sometimes gaining their appreciation and friendship. Increased environmental awareness, as well as an awareness of personal change in attitude towards nature or the environment more generally was reported among many WWOOFers, including an increased appreciation and support of organic produce/practices. Most participants claimed to be keen to eat more organic food having learned of the nexus between organic production and wider sustainability goals. Some reported a general sense of self-understanding or self-development and in some cases life inspiration, with a personal resolution to become more engaged with community, environmental protection activities, or living sustainably. Such findings are consistent with those reported by various other writers focused on WWOOFing (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006; Nimmo 2001a; van Raders 1994) and more widely on altered consciousness gained through alternative tourism (McGehee and Norman 2002) and through 'journeying' more generally (Obenour 2004).

The present study did not however, aim to determine whether participants will indeed make these types of life changes and it is therefore appropriate to remain aware of efforts to understand intention-behaviour discrepancies and the existence of theoretical models for understanding and achieving 'environmentally responsible behaviour' generally (e.g. Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; Shih-Jang 2004; TravelSmart Victoria n.d.; Wong and Sheth 1985)¹⁹. Also, there were a few participants for whom WWOOFing could be said to have been an almost reluctant adjunct to or an extension of a semi-adventurous leisure experience, pursued for pragmatic reasons and resulting in limited insight or change. For these WWOOFers, no life changes at all were expected since, as one put it: WWOOFing

¹⁹ Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) conclude that "the question of what shapes pro-environmental behavior is such a complex one that it cannot be visualized through one single framework or diagram", and nor will incorporation of all relevant factors ever be likely to be achieved.

is “not [their] main inspiration to lifestyle”, but rather an experience to be had in the short term.

By contrast, for a small group WWOOFing has been a thoroughly transformational experience, for example [sic]:

...before I didn't know really a lot of things. Valuable of nature, and important of anything from the natural... I'm feeling now I'm real me. I like now me. I'm thinking now I tuned back to natural... now my eyes very open. So I'm very happy ... I like this simple lifestyle. I want to simple life... I have been great WWOOF experience. I'm feeling very... so much thankful (Japanese survey participant).

For the majority in between, it is a pragmatic means of having interactive experiences in another culture in a manner that is open-ended, flexible, accessible, and to some degree, adventurous, given that it entails an element of the unknown. As WWOOFers immediately find out, it requires them to constantly produce and offer personal resources to sustain the experience that involves social interaction, physical labour, unfamiliar contexts and highly variable ‘standards’ of compensation. The experience and its outcomes are strongly dependent on their efforts to engage appropriately with their hosts and can be highly unpredictable. But all indicators show that it is successful in fulfilling the main aims of WWOOFers, while providing for additional and valued outcomes.

Notably, few WWOOFers emphasized the economic and other material benefits of the WWOOFing exchange. This is perhaps because experienced WWOOFers understand that the necessary *engagement* for successful WWOOFing requires, includes and results in *reciprocity* on a range of fronts, which in itself generates a range of responses and feelings and responses that comprise, generate and sustain the experience.

Chapter 7 therefore focuses on the experiential ‘zone of engagement’ in which factors, processes and conditions such as reciprocity - crucial to ‘successful’ WWOOFing experiences and to producing significant change in people’s lives - are elaborated.

CHAPTER 7: TOURISTS IN WWOOFERLAND

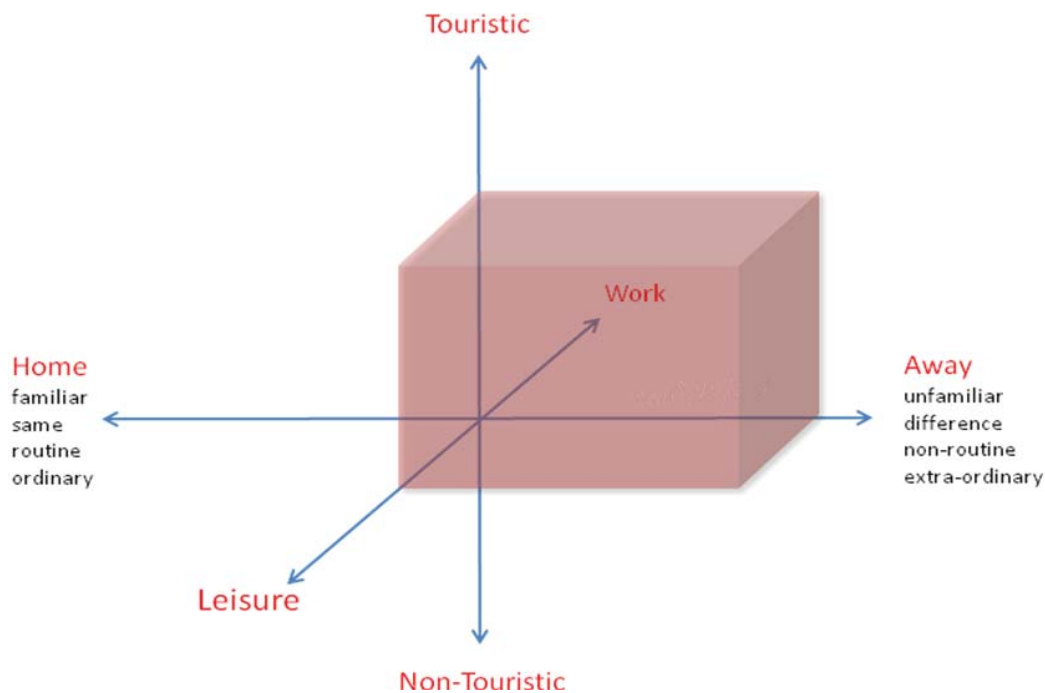
1 INTRODUCTION

Leiper (2004, p52) claimed on the basis that most attempted definitions of tourism are flawed and unhelpful, that it was possibly most useful in attempting to understand 'tourism' to work on the principle that it is something that tourists do. WWOOFing can certainly be seen to be something that *some* tourists do, but for a variety of reasons, it seems a large step to comfortably conclude that WWOOFing *is* tourism or that WWOOFers *are* tourists.

There is therefore reason in this chapter to wrestle further with the complex relationship between WWOOFing and tourism raised in Chapter 3. In terms of obvious differences, we know that WWOOF was not conceived as a tourism organisation and there are WWOOFers past and present still 'true' to its original purposes *viz a vis* the organic movement. Among many WWOOFers there is a prevalent desire to *transcend* tourism - to penetrate beyond the perceived confines and alienation of the 'tourism bubble' and to meet with real local people and therefore directly 'experience' local culture (MacCannell 2001). As 'cultural tourism' has taken hold as part of a broader perceptible 'interest' in culture (Craik 1997), such a view of the self in these encounters as being 'beyond tourism' is something apparently widely shared. For example, like volunteer tourists (Wearing 1998a; Wearing 2001), WWOOFers are not seeking or consuming typical 'tourism experiences' in terms of attractions or relaxation and given the work involved, they are not obviously 'at leisure' either, if that is taken to be "an activity that takes place during one's free time" (Ron, Shani et al. 2008). WWOOFers are also not making use of tourism infrastructure provided by tourism organisations, since apart from some transportation, they are often self-reliant and use infrastructure provided by hosts.

The experience of 'otherness' as highlighted in Chapter 6, is certainly part of the motivation and experience of WWOOFers and the inversion to a degree, of familiar home environments, behaviours and domestic routines to create this experience (see Figure 28) has sometimes been thought to be a hallmark of tourism (Cohen 2004b; Franklin 2003b; Gottlieb 1982).

Figure 28: Tourism as Leisure Away from Work and Home



“Rurality” (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006) may provide a stark contrast to home lives for many WWOOFers, and while important to some, the degree of ‘difference’ encountered is difficult to quantify, since it is mixed heavily with the experience of familiarity as well, in that they are staying in the ordinary homes of working people with mundane and ongoing domestic tasks to complete. But as flagged in Chapter 3, a merging of tourism with the everyday world and everyday activities, by choice or through circumstances of ‘globalisation’, has been noted. The ‘ordinary’ is increasingly accommodated in, or is becoming characteristic of, contemporary tourism (McCabe 2002; Uriely 2005; Urry 2008), as it *de-differentiates* horizontally along with other human endeavours.¹ Scholars thus debate whether globalisation produces ‘homogeneity’ between home and away (Craik 1997; MacCannell 2001) and thus experiential uniformity (Rojek 1995, p4), or rather, whether the fear of cultural homogenisation promotes its own counter tendency some call ‘glocalisation’ (Brown 2000; Coleman and Crang 2002; Franklin 2003a; Meethan 2001).²

¹ The idea of horizontal de-differentiation applied to tourism (Lash and Urry 1994; Munt 1994; Urry 2002) describes “decreasing distinctiveness of tourism as a field of social activity” (Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003).

² Some see this as a type of “veneration of difference as a form of cultural distinction and legitimisation” at multiple local levels (Conran 2006, citing Appadurai, Yea and others). Conran suggests that ‘Global modernity’

But this ongoing and complex debate only makes it more problematic to confer theoretical relationships between WWOOFing and tourism on the basis of 'difference'.

Available data suggests that WWOOFers in Australia *can* largely be considered 'tourists' of some kind, particularly when they are not WWOOFing. Indeed, many factors suggest that the activity of WWOOFing has itself become more like a tourist activity, including the conscious decision to open the doors to more backpackers in the mid-1990s; its description as the archetypal form of "responsible cultural tourism" (Pollard n.d.; Stanford 2008), the regular attendance by the WWOOF manager of annual backpacker 'industry' conferences (Ainsworth, pers comm.); and the fact that WWOOF membership is sold through growing numbers of travel agents in tourist towns around the world and linked through global travel portals online. From its origins to the present, WWOOFing and tourism are now heavily enmeshed. While WWOOFing is an activity undertaken, ironically for some tourists, to avoid *being* (or feeling like) a tourist, it is difficult from the outside, to judge the extent to which WWOOFing is a tourism activity *per se*, or a non-tourism activity undertaken by many tourists.

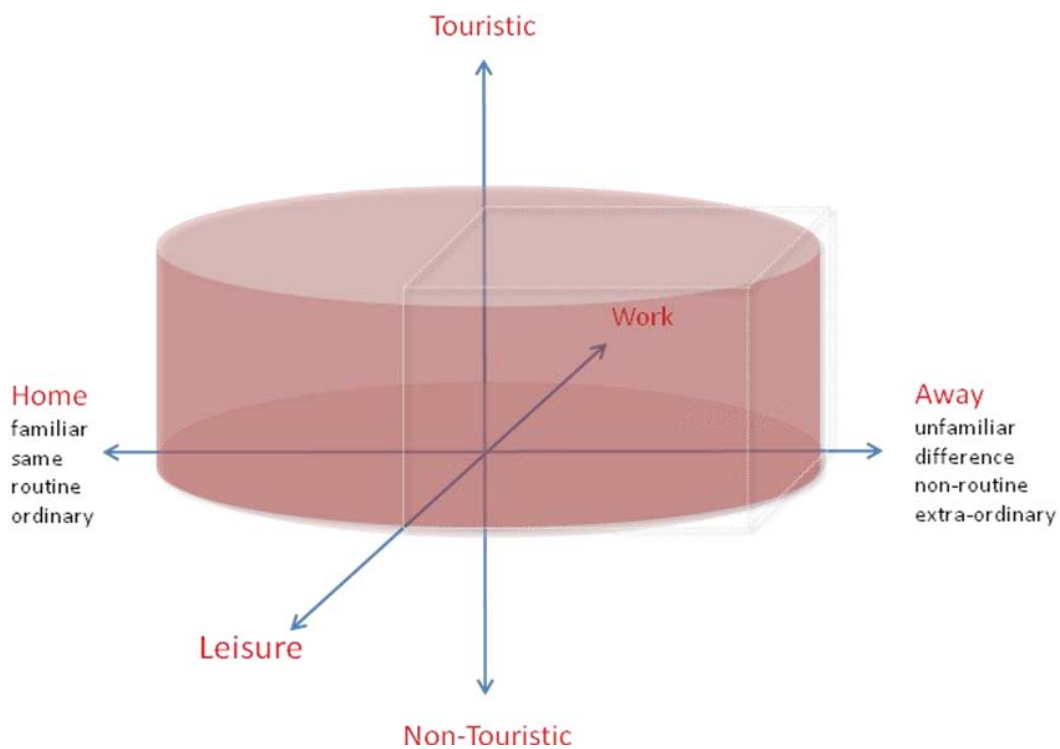
Franklin suggests that 'touristic' consumption is the basis for our "stance to a globalised world", which has now deeply penetrated our daily lives and characterises late modernity in general. It is enmeshed in the constant consumption of novelty (see also Campbell 1987), which is itself a cultural form (Meethan 2001) expressed not only in the form of novel goods, but now experiences (Ahuja 2006; O'Dell and Billing 2005; Pine and Gilmore 1999). In response to the "frantic" consumptive stance to the world, Franklin sees that there are "new forms of tourism" emerging as "rituals of slow time", providing some refuge from a touristic world" (Franklin 2003a, p57). Such rituals include "activities designed to slow down the body and to maximise not the next moment, but the present" (p13), such as bushwalking, surfing, climbing and retreats.³

is the "exaggeration and promotion of difference" which is "especially ostentatious" in the form of in "ethnological tourism – or the commodification of so-called 'primitive peoples' and the semiotic sister, the natural landscape" that are at the heart of tourists' drive to procure "a distinguishing experience" (p275).

³ See Gillespie, Burgess et al (2008) for an explanation of the Slow Travel Manifesto, which is "an engaging exploration of landscapes and cultures" which celebrates the local and recognizes "the journey as an integral part of the travelling experience". Slow travellers "enjoy the transition of landscapes into the heart of new places and experiences".

Since most tourists return home, Franklin concludes that there is an ultimate allegiance to the conditions that underpin and generate the possibility for tourism escapes (and escapes from the touristic). Indeed he says, tourism is more of a celebration of late modernity than an escape from it, even if there is need for periodic refuge from the touristic world it has created. In any case, in theoretical terms, tourism is again difficult to pin down as a discrete human activity bounded by clear demarcations of leisure-work and home-away (McCabe 2009), and in 'new' tourism (Poon 1989), 'post' tourism (Ritzer and Liska 1997), 'slow tourism' (Gillespie, Burgess et al. 2008) and other alternative tourism (Pearce 1992) forms, it is more amorphous and complex than previously portrayed, as illustrated in Figure 29.

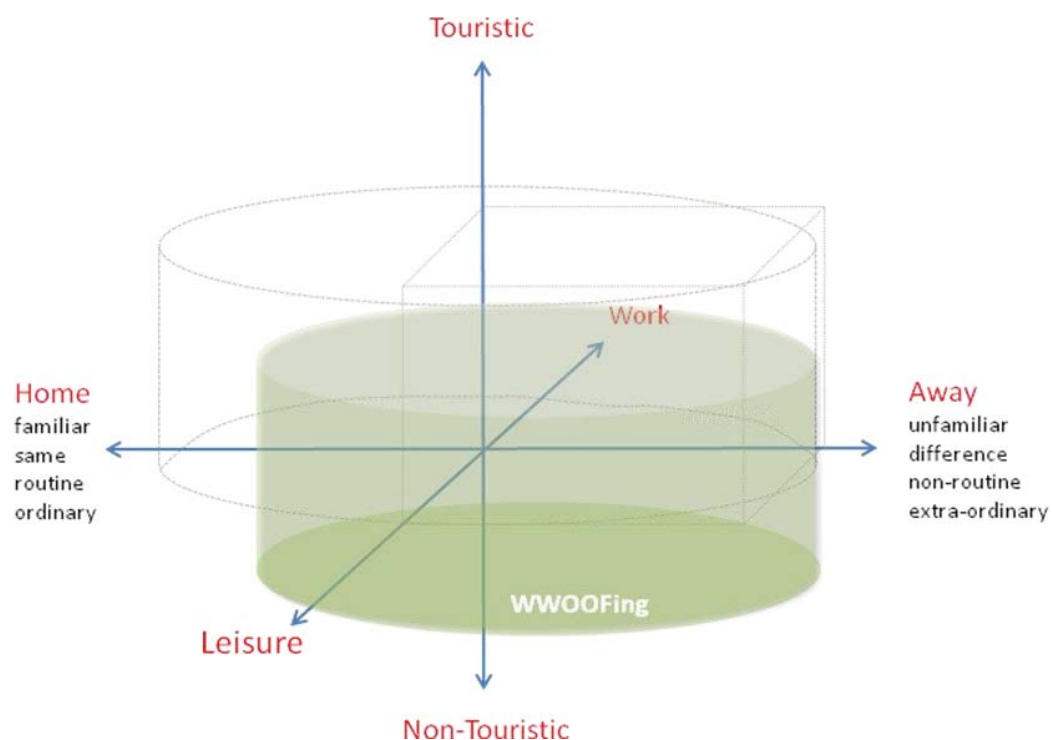
Figure 29: 'New' Tourism, 'Post' Tourism and the Shadow of 'Old' Tourism



Wwoofing is a phenomenon that has grown up among, or into these complexities without having been explicitly addressed in these kinds of terms before. To understand the Wwoofing phenomenon, and as Franklin concludes more broadly, there is need for more empirical work with tourists to hear what *they* think about their various practices.

In this context this chapter has been prepared with two key goals. The first is to open up to consideration from the perspective of participants, the notion that WWOOFing offers the opportunity for some to state their desire for distance from the touristic (McCabe 2002; Welk 2004), if not to actually take refuge from it. The aim is to further explore *what is achieved* by WWOOFing *viz-a-vis* tourism, including the possibility of becoming or being *non-tourists* (McCabe 2009), and how this is achieved. The bounds of this liminal exploration of 'what WWOOFing is about' are theoretically represented in Figure 30 below, again using the key polarities previously presented in Figure 29 and Figure 30 for conceptual continuity. Such an exploration offers useful empirical input into an important theoretical area and provides some building blocks with which to support later theoretical constructions.

Figure 30: WWOOFing, Leisure, Tourism and the Non-Touristic



The second complementary goal of this chapter is to work with the data to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of the important interactions at the heart of WWOOFing and the extent to which this also underpins or contributes to the apparent

'convergences' referred to above, of WWOOFing and tourism and/or tourism and the everyday. Many WWOOF in the wider context of being long-term budget tourists/travellers, whom many suggest are in search of opportunities for closer social interaction with local people and the various benefits this is perceived to bring, including the generation of 'personal meaningfulness' (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006) and concern with refuge from the touristic (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Cohen 1988a; Cohen 2004a; Cohen 2004b; Locker-Murphy 1996; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; MacCannell 1976; McCabe 2002; Obenour 2004; Richards and Wilson 2004; Richards and Wilson 2004a; Riley 1988; van Raders 1994; Welk 2004). Preceding chapters showed the significance attached to the use of WWOOFing in this context and some writers point to the significance and the primacy of personal or emic authenticity in experiences over 'objective' or stable, culturally authentic experiences in such encounters with others (Obenour 2004; Wang 2000), which are increasingly understood to be frustrating (Cohen 2004b) if not futile (Minca and Oakes 2006). So by examining the key interactive aspects at the heart of the experience in this theoretical context and by introducing and exploring the *core category of engagement*, it will be possible to provide an empirically supported and theoretically valuable answer to the guiding questions posed earlier.

2 WHAT WWOOFING AND HOSTING IS 'ALL ABOUT'

Research participants indicated their level of agreement with a series of independent statements that explored what hosting or WWOOFing "is about". The absolute and relative validity of these statements to participants is represented in Figure 31 below. All statements were positively rated (i.e. agreed with) by the group⁴, which in decreasing order of agreement were:

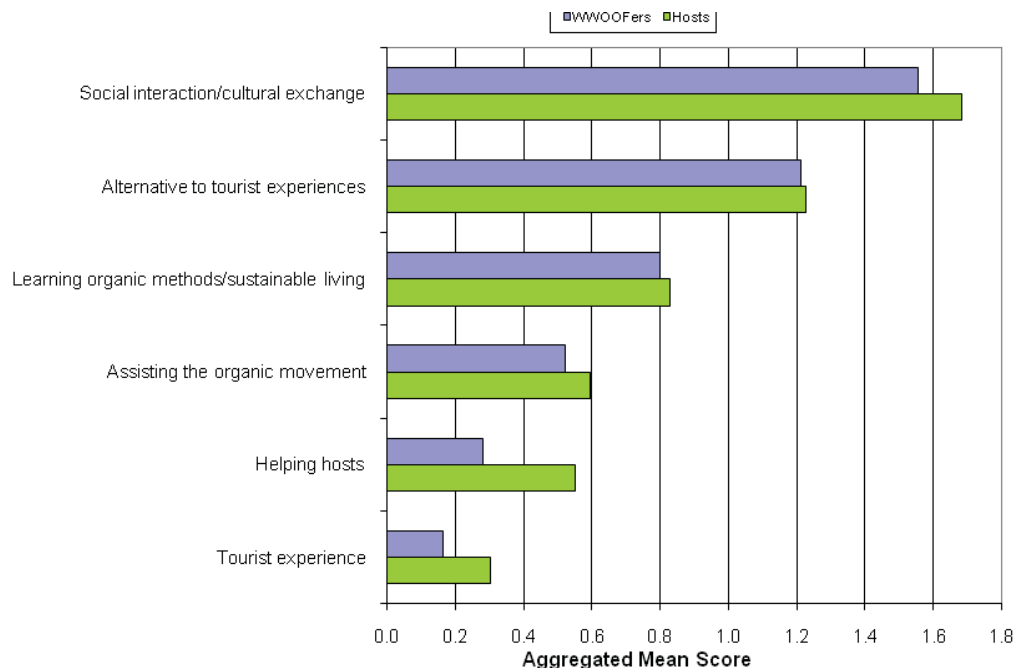
1. Hosting/WWOOFing is primarily about social interaction and cultural exchange.
2. Hosting/WWOOFing provides an alternative to tourist experiences (rather than providing a type of tourist experience, ranked last [6]).
3. Hosting/WWOOFing provides opportunity for WWOOFers to learn about organic methods and sustainable living.
4. Hosting/WWOOFing promotes the organic movement.

⁴ Though there were many individuals that disagreed strongly with some of these statements, this graph represents an overall position and ranking of agreement for the group as a whole.

5. Hosting/WWOOFing is about getting help to do things that would otherwise not get done.
6. Hosting/WWOOFing provides a type of tourist experience (in contrast to the view [2] that hosting provides an alternative to tourist experiences, as above).

Notably, the second and last statements indicate that WWOOFing and tourism are viewed to be in a paradoxical relationship, since the statements contained binary opposite meanings⁵. However the key overall messages are that hosting WWOOFers is *primarily* about social interaction and cultural exchange and that WWOOFing experiences are an *alternative to* tourism experiences, even if WWOOFers are themselves primarily and mostly otherwise, ‘tourists’.

Figure 31: What Hosting and WWOOFing are About



Despite hosts’ main motive of gaining help, the help gained appears to be less important (for both hosts and WWOOFers) by this reckoning, than the promotion of organic techniques and the organic movement as well as the learning opportunities received by

⁵ The binary logic inherent in the structure of this survey question (i.e. an alternative to tourism or a type of alternative tourism?) might have forced participants to provide an ‘either/or’ simplistic response. Yet these were independently posed (sub)questions that could (and in some cases did) produce ‘contradictory’ responses.

WWOOFers that occurs in the exchange, even if this was not present as a chief motive of most WWOOFers. The implication here (as suggested in Chapter 6) is that what is gained by WWOOFers is not limited to what they seek.

WWOOFers elsewhere collectively expressed their view that hosts gained most from them in terms of the cultural and social aspects of the exchange, ahead of specific forms of help, also according with hosts' own perceptions (Chapter 5). Strong concurrence in the way both parties *ranked* benefits from WWOOFer assistance was also found (varying mainly in the case of *maintaining organic gardens*, which hosts perceived as being of greater benefit than WWOOFers did).

Such concurrence of views about the nature of WWOOFing on both 'sides' of the interaction strongly implies a generally shared understanding about it. The emphasis that both parties gave the social interaction/cultural exchange aspect of the experience particularly supports this interpretation. It suggests awareness that both must act in such a manner as to promote each other's benefit for the experience to achieve functionality and much of this mutual action occurs around, or as a result of socio-cultural interaction. This might be expected given that WWOOFing operates within a human-human exchange. Certainly not all young people have yet developed high quality interactive skills and as such, many WWOOF websites have provided guidelines and promoted a list of attributes to encourage the 'ideal WWOOFer' and to achieve an exchange operating at the highest possible level of functionality (see Figure 32).

Taking all data sources into account, the term *engagement* was progressively identified in the research process as a 'core category' - something also anticipated by Stanford's (2008) exploration of the elements of responsible tourism. Following Strass and Corbin (1990), a core category is:

a conceptual category containing all the products of analysis condensed into a few words, explaining to most readers what the research is all about. It offers one convincing plausible explanation for what is happening in the phenomenon.

Figure 32: The 'Ideal WWOOFer

The Ideal WWOOFer...

- modern day pioneer blazing a trail by learning skills that will serve themselves and their community
- is content to work alone for several hours on one job, appreciating the meditation & rhythm it provides, without getting bored
- finds the space & quiet of the countryside comfortable & refreshing
- lets a Host know immediately if their plans change and communicates with them if they wish to leave to farm early, giving them an appropriate amount of time to fill their space
- enjoys their own company & is intent on developing a sense of humour when with others
- checks things out by looking & listening & sometimes taking initiatives
- realizes that learning to see the health and vitality in the land and the plants comes from awareness.
- comes with a 'can do' attitude which enhances their experience in a positive light
- recognizes that WWOOF Hosts are human beings with failures & fatigue and they are also learning
- reads Hosts profile fully and learns as much as they can about their Host before their stay in order to prepare themselves for their trip. Respecting that indeed each host is different and appropriately chooses the right one
- is aware of the resources and energy required to maintain a farm and acts in ways that utilize them the most
- realizes that a short hot shower can be sufficient, rather than a long one, because it costs money to create hot water and it also saves water
- tries to identify with the host's vision & goals as well as sharing their vision, hopes, and interests with other on the farm
- tries to seek an open line of communication with the host even if something is not understandable or is a bit bothersome
- will clean up their lodging and leave their space ready for the next person

With *engagement* ineluctably identified as the key to understanding the motives, experiences and outcomes of hosts and WWOOFers, WWOOFing has been taken in its most encompassing form to be:

a human exchange activity built on principles of the organic movement that involves a process of engagement between two parties (hosts and WWOOFers) to achieve their mutual and individual goals, on a range of levels. One party performs the role of the WWOOFer, who works in exchange for meals and accommodation for a specified amount of time on tasks set by the other party, the host.

There is need to flesh out this definition by exploring and justifying from the data, the claim of the centrality of engagement in WWOOFing.

2.1 WWOOFing, Tourism and Engagement

Most participants expressed the view that WWOOFing is more an *alternative to tourism* than a *type of alternative tourism experience*. In conversations with WWOOFers, such a view was often expressed in terms of engaging with people and places *as they are*, with sometimes messy houses and perhaps eccentric ways of living being a feature of the experience:

... [T]ourism as most people would see it, would have much more controlled accommodation and, experiences, whereas WWOOFing, you really don't know what you're gonna get? ... So, some tourists may not accept the... state of house in which they're going to visit, or, the accommodation that they'll be given... (Host S2).

The pursuit of 'authentic otherness' (Bauman in Franklin 2003b) regularly appears in tourism studies as a theme despite many efforts to diminish its analytical utility in accounting for tourist motives and behaviour (Pearce 2005). However, an essential underlying situational 'reality' seems to set WWOOFing apart from *tourism* in the minds of many participants, for even if its ambiguous nature means it *can* be conceived of as a form of tourism:

... it doesn't really lend itself to being, um, spoilt. Um, I mean, it's pretty unlikely that a WWOOF host is going to change their lifestyle or their experience, their ... home, just to accommodate WWOOFers (Host B).

WWOOFing can therefore be seen as an experience with the quality of being un-touristic and relatedly, un-commoditizable.¹ Despite the fact that many WWOOFers are ostensibly or perhaps, 'normally', tourists utilizing the WWOOF network as a travel mechanism, data collected supports the conjecture earlier that WWOOFers might be properly viewed as *people* experiencing alternatives to tourism, rather than *tourists* having an alternative tourism experience, as does most literature on WWOOFing (Chapters 2 and 3). It is a tenet of symbolic interactionism that "If people define situations as real they are real in their effects" (Dann 2002, p5). Because many regard *tourism* as being about the consumption of experiences (Franklin 2003a; Meethan 2001; Wang 2002), many also have difficulty in seeing WWOOFing in this manner, where experiences are not so much consumed as created; they are not exchanged for money - which indirectly and impersonally represents 'effort' - but for direct, immediate and personalized effort. Indeed, there is strong reason to argue that WWOOFing offers people an avenue for escape from tourism, or a doorway into a different, yet nevertheless ordinary sort of world normally inaccessible to 'tourists' who cast as consumers, are constantly at the cutting edge of the relentless and expansive processes of commoditisation of people and places (Greenwood 1989; Pleumarom 2003; Wearing and Wearing 2002), as objects of touristic consumption (Cohen 1988b; Greenwood 1989; MacCannell 2001; Wearing and Wearing 2002).

To enter this world, "they have to be a bit adventurous", says Host B, perhaps in the manner of *Alice in Wonderland* in changing herself to go through the small door. There are increasing numbers that challenge understandings of tourism predicated on the prevalence of the 'tourist gaze' (Nimmo 2001a), or which define tourism in relation to fixed human identities or essential categories. We have seen that most WWOOF participants regard tourism to be an activity separate from and different to what WWOOFing is about, which is interacting with and assisting local people in their usual home, family and working lives where the tourist gaze has very limited utility. WWOOFing interactions seem to allow

¹ Although it should be noted that Amandolare (2009) has expressed some concern that enthusiastic WWOOFers and others engaged in "sustainable farm tourism" should "take care not to overwhelm the organic way of life they wish to immerse themselves in" as its popularity continues to increase.

for, or even require role transcendence, or transformation, or substitution, which as suggested, is a much sought after achievement among many tourists who (perhaps naively) yearn to experience authentic ‘otherness’ (Bauman in Franklin 2003b). However, ‘true’, *objective cultural authenticity*, sought by alienated moderns (MacCannell 1976), or experienced in the touristic search for a degree of spiritual resonance among the lifeworlds of others (Cohen 1979), is something that by the logic of a tourist ontology built on a binary of self-other, is frustratingly elusive, as the tourist *self* necessarily always impacts in some way upon the host *other* (Minca and Oakes 2006). Some suggest that in the broader ‘post-modern’ culture in which real and fake are deemed unhelpful essential categories that are always merged in practice anyway (cf Baudrillard), there has been a growing use of tourism for ‘mere’ pleasure and surface enjoyment (Cohen 2004b; Franklin 2003a; Ritzer and Liska 1997; Urry 2008), involving satisfaction with or acceptance of unfixed or *subjective constructions of authenticity* (or ‘emergent authenticities’ (Cohen 1988b)) that match personal imagined expectations about people and places (Craik 1997), and which manage to accommodate the presence of the tourist *within* the encounter (refer to Table 25).

Table 25: Modes of Authenticity

Objective	Subjective/Emergent	Existential
Fixed, stable	Relative, personal constructs	Personally meaningful
Accuracy/truth important	Acceptable degree of ‘fit’ between ‘real’ and imagined	Sincerity of encounter important

Such an emic shift has been said to have gone further still, with a growing expectation that achievement of highly personalized moments of *existential authenticity* (refer to Table 25) is a more realistic goal for tourist-host encounters (Wang 2000). These can only be built upon mutual interactions or encounters (Crouch 2007) with people and places, without problematic ethnographic reference to, or judgments of ‘objective’ host authenticity being made by unqualified and perhaps neocolonialist (Bennett 2008; D’Sa 1999; Nash 1989; Wearing and Wearing 2002) tourists (Cohen 2004b).

Experienced WWOOFers know (or should do) that WWOOFing, for better or worse, is a means of arriving at or being put among the lives of a range of people, *as they find them*, and as host B suggested (sic) “it has the potential of staying a real experience and not

being spoiled by the tourism that WWOOFing could be seen as". As WWOOFer (and host) JL also pointed out, one of the unique things about WWOOF is that "you get injected straight into, straight down into a level that's a lot deeper than any tourist I think could ever hope to get". WWOOFing is often claimed to be deeper, more 'real' or more *authentic* than tourism experiences. This reference to 'depth' of experience is a reference to the overlooked 'substance' underlying the shallow 'surface' of tourism (cf Boorstin 1987). Noting the shift from objective to more existential forms of authenticity mentioned above, if authenticity in host-guest circumstances is formulated in terms of attributes such as "sincerity, effort, involvement and the quality of the encounter" (Daniel, quoted in Pearce 2005, p.142), there is a basis for overcoming ontological problems associated with temporally static conceptions about the authenticity of experiences of host people and places. This is an acknowledgement that hosts are always necessarily affected by the presence of visitors, but sincere engagement with them (rather than a possibly judgmental 'gaze') removes the necessity (from the tourist viewpoint) that they remain locked in time or place with fixed essences to be consumed by tourists. It also frees up local cultures to evolve or 'progress' as they would *in the absence of any boundaries imposed* by pressures to commodify 'static', objectively authentic culture (MacCannell 1976; MacCannell 2001) for touristic consumption purposes (Meethan 2001; Wang 2002). Re-workings of authenticity have thus usefully shifted focus to the "effortful sincerity of the encounter, a sense of mutual immersion in making the experience the most it can be for all participants" (Pearce 2005, p143). This move was initiated largely by Taylor who argued that sincerity is a "philosophical cousin of authenticity" which "offers the basis for a shift in moral perspective":

away from that which would locate touristic value in the successful re-production of 'objective truths' – authenticities - and towards a view of tourism as embodying communicative events involving values important both to the social actors involved, and in themselves.... In 'sincere' cultural experiences, where tourists and 'actors' are encouraged to 'meet half way', authenticity may be more positively redefined in terms of local values. Rather than seeing value as the emanation of an 'authentic object', the moment of interaction may become the site in which value is generated (Taylor 2001pp8-9).

Mutual immersion, or meeting halfway, recalls Wearing's (1998a) recognition (Chapter 3) of the need for a transformation of perspective of tourism encounters that 'de-centres the self' and allows for a view of the 'self' to become 'self *as part of the other*' and the 'other as

part of the self'. Mutual immersion is here taken to be synonymous with *engagement*, which in WWOOFing, pivots upon an exchange that is independent of value-for-money types of evaluative criteria typical of 'consumptive' tourism exchanges. Host JL, who had also WWOOFed prior to hosting, observed that:

WWOOFing is unique! ... it's not about money! It's not a monetary exchange! The best WWOOFing experiences are where it goes well beyond that (Host JL).

It must be noted that not all research participants simply agreed that WWOOFing is something other than a form of tourism or a tourist activity. WWOOFer E suggested that WWOOFers are generally backpackers stepping into a different role, but that much depends on WWOOFer *intention*. Domestic WWOOFer R suggested that WWOOFing is a form of tourism given its chief role in his view, of providing *experiences* to people away from home, albeit experiences different to passive/relaxing or general recreational holiday types. The key differentiating point is that you have to put energy into the WWOOFing experience, including among other things, emotional labour to ensure the host is comfortable. Indeed it can be tiring and might be considered a "poor man's" type of tourism given the sometimes 'sub-standard' accommodation and food.²

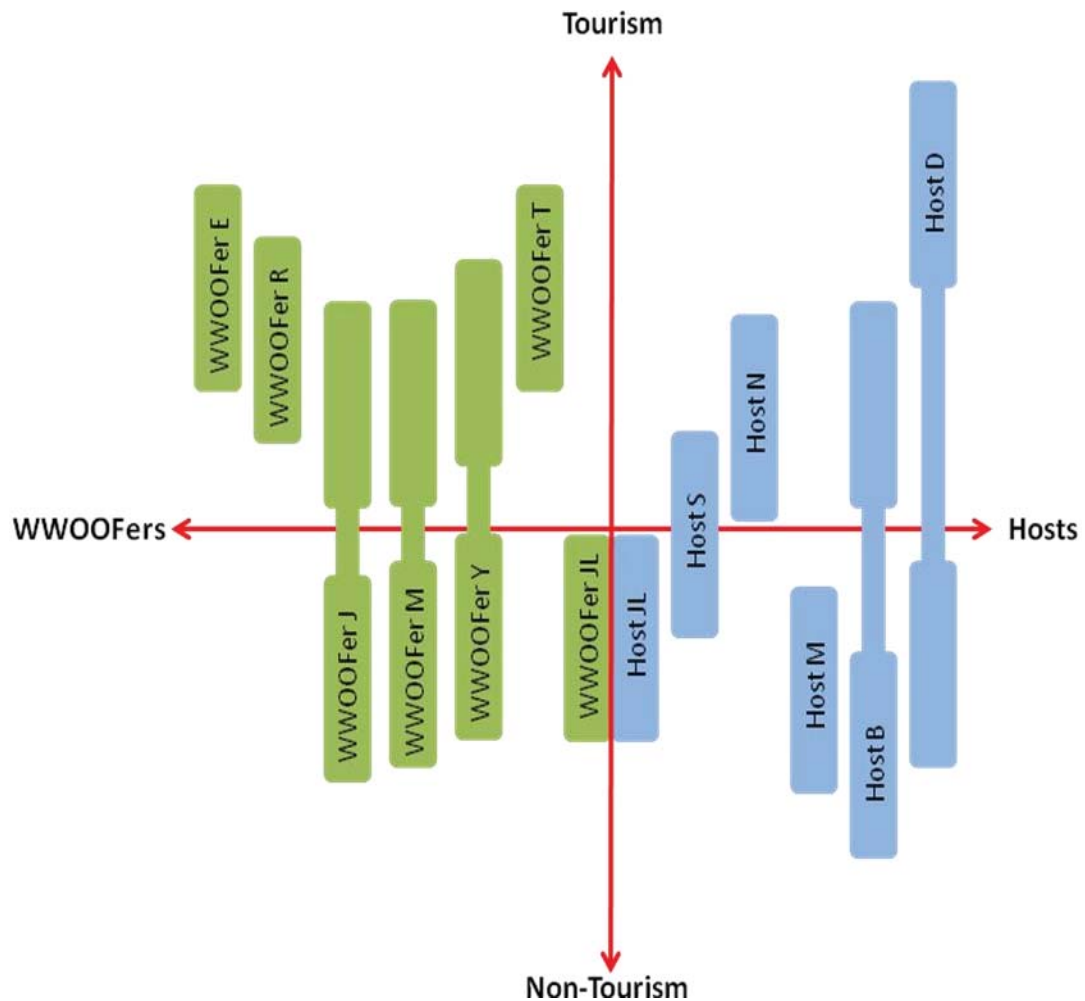
From the host perspective as well, Host D claimed that WWOOFing is heavily dominated by tourists and is one end of the "cultural experience market". He also suggested that some of the domestic WWOOFers interested in organics could be regarded as non-tourists. Thus WWOOFing is not *clearly* able to be articulated as *either* tourism *or* not, and segregated across a simple line of differentiation. Indeed, several other participants expressed similarly ambivalent views, as represented in Figure 33 and Table 26 below.

This attempt to chart the range of views about where WWOOFing falls on an imagined tourism vs non-tourism threshold – some of which are ambiguous or ambivalent - demonstrates the difficulty of making definitive statements in a complex and dynamic field. As Crouch (2007, pp53-4) notes, "[m]oments of being a tourist are not contained, but

² If WWOOFing is correctly seen as an alternative form of tourism, a range of issues might need to be revisited according to WWOOFer R, including the issue of *standards* of accommodation and ensuring that WWOOF book descriptions actually and consistently match reality (as also noted by Nimmo 2001b). On the other hand, if part of the excitement (as acknowledged by this and other WWOOFers) is that you do not know in advance what the conditions will be like, and you are concerned to ensure that the option exists to experience people and places as they really are, this might present an unresolvable paradox.

rather they flow over, amongst, in and out of other parts of individuals' lives" and the phenomenon of being a tourist is "relational". This liminal complexity is exacerbated by the critical need to also tease out the relevance of work and leisure to the discussion.

Figure 33: Views of Research Participants on WWOOFing as Tourism³



³ Figure 33 attempts to portray the range of views of WWOOFing around a simple imaginary dichotomy of 'tourism' and/or 'non-tourism'. In some cases, views were expressed clearly that WWOOFing is one or the other, but in other cases, views were more ambiguous or ambivalent, with the possibility of accommodating or straddling both sides of the semantic line, with different emphases. Refer also to Table 26 for detailed expression of these views.

Table 26: Paraphrased Views of Participants on Tourism and WWOOFing

Participant	Expressed View of Relationship between Tourism and WWOOFing
WWOOFer R	<i>Tourism is about having experiences and relaxing. WWOOFing is an alternative tourism experience for alternative people with more community connection and no money involved. It is a cultural and educative experience, but one must put in significant energy to make it work (unlike regular tourism). It is a poor man's alternative tourism.</i>
WWOOFer E	<i>WWOOFing is related to ecotourism, sharing a 'do-good' feeling, but it is more extreme. WWOOFing is a form of tourism, depending on intention: "[W]e're all still backpackers and like, just stepping into a different group, classification".</i>
WWOOFer T	<i>WWOOFing is part of tourism. Recommended for those travelling around Australia who are not interested in commercial experiences.</i>
WWOOFer J	<i>WWOOFing is different to tourism, partly because of the work involved. But it can be used by tourists to have more and 'real' experiences.</i>
WWOOFer M	<i>WWOOFing is different to tourism. It is not about getting away from it all as is most tourism, but the work can be rewarding. You need an open mind. It is a good tool to use and experience when travelling/backpacking.</i>
WWOOFer Y	<i>WWOOFing is different to tourism, but there are overlaps. Perhaps it is a 'good' form of tourism since it is low, even positive in impact. But there are other, even more effective ways to get beyond tourism than WWOOFing.</i>
WWOOFer JL/Host JL	<i>WWOOFing is not tourism when used purposefully to learn specific things. WWOOFing is deeper than tourism experiences and is unique in operating outside of economic exchanges. WWOOFers get immediately injected into people's real lives and places and see/experience more than tourists can.</i>
Host M	<i>WWOOFing gets at real life and WWOOFers have real experiences as part of the family. Hosts do not change for them and they fit in as part of a cultural exchange.</i>
Host S	<i>WWOOFers are backpackers, but neither of these are 'typical' tourists. WWOOFers (and backpackers) stay longer than tourists and see/experience more than tourists.</i>
Host D	<i>WWOOFing originally was not tourism, but now has morphed into a form or activity of tourism, especially for international visitors. WWOOF now reliant on tourists and WWOOFing is an established part of the backpacker and cultural experience market and is a low cost tool for tourists. Some domestic WWOOFers are not tourists though.</i>
Host B	<i>WWOOFing is part of a tourist experience given the larger goals of most WWOOFers. But it is different from tourism experiences, which are superficial, controlled, almost contrived experiences. WWOOFing is very much more real and unpredictable.</i>
Host N	<i>WWOOFing is part of tourism, not an escape from it. WWOOFers want to see/experience as much as possible like most backpackers and WWOOFing is one such experience.</i>

2.2 WWOOFing Work, Leisure Time and Tourism

In theorising tourism after the Grand Tour, there has been much use of a fairly clear distinction between everyday work and leisure (Franklin 2003a; Jack and Phipps 2005; Leiper 2004; MacCannell 1976; Urry 2002). Tourism has been seen as a form of leisure, though some (especially high adventure) forms are acknowledged as being far from relaxing and requiring significant effort (MacCannell 2001). Escape and separation from everyday mundanities was considered important and tourists frequently seek to relax and/or explore difference (Leiper 2004; MacCannell 2001). According to MacCannell, tourists seek to engage (at some distance) with everyday lives, including the 'work' lives of others from pre-moderns (MacCannell 1976) through to that of contemporary 'others' (MacCannell 2001). Through (re)presentation in museums and re-enacted cultural performances for example, details of others' lives become objects of touristic interest, bringing about a puzzling and often fraught relationship between the 'everyday' and otherness, and between 'tourists' and 'hosts' given their various expectations (Coleman and Crang 2002). For MacCannell, encounters were frequently staged and thus readily regarded as inauthentic, fuelling desires to get behind the scenes or backstage in order to witness the real thing.

Despite many critiques of MacCannell's account of what was occurring, there can be no doubt that this desire is still to be found in varying forms within tourism literature and travel guide books that promise the opportunity to have real in-situ encounters with 'other' cultures (Bennett 2007; Bennett 2008; Huxley 2004).⁴ A central aspect of WWOOFing is the exchange of human physical labour for food and accommodation, a key component of WWOOFer–host engagement. How involvement in the everyday work lives of others is perceived by WWOOFers is also important to our understanding of the WWOOFing experience and perhaps, given the above discussion, also its relationship to tourism. WWOOFers themselves offered a range of views about WWOOFing work in relation to their own leisure time. Acknowledging that leisure is an "amorphous concept" (Wearing and Wearing 1988, p112) that may differ across cultures, 53% consider that WWOOFing work is *part of* their leisure time. About one quarter (24%) regard WWOOFing work as

⁴ In fact, McCabe (2002) claims that tourism is no longer conceivable as a departure from routines/practices of the everyday life, and indeed, that MacCannell did not go far enough in exploring tourists' concern with the everyday lives of others.

separate from their leisure time, while 23% were 'undecided' (details in Appendix 6.5 Table 30).

The high level of uncertainty here perhaps reflects the complexity of the concept of leisure as well as the wide variability in work types, work and other conditions and host personalities, as well as WWOOFer intentions. For example, recall that WWOOFer E was WWOOFing as part of her need to complete field work as a college student of sustainability studies. Furthermore, during the course of this research, WWOOF staff investigating Workcover arrangements in each state following a claim made by a South Korean WWOOFer suffering from an insect bite reaction and hospitalisation, for whom the normal WWOOF insurance was inadequate,⁵ suggesting circumstances exist in which the Australian government considers WWOOFers to be 'workers'. In New Zealand, WWOOFers are required to have an official working Visa to WWOOF, so in short, the exact nature of WWOOFing work is a vexed question for a variety of reasons.

The majority group that regards WWOOFing work *as part of their leisure* view the choice to WWOOF and thus undertake work directed by their hosts, as part of a broader voluntarily chosen experience that encompassed it. Neulinger (1982) emphasized that the essence of leisure is choosing it freely and experiencing (in/extrinsic) rewards from the involvement. Freedom of choice is essential "for if leisure is to have true significance the choice and chosen activity must be because of intrinsic motivation". Poria, Butler, and Airey (2003) also argue that the tourist's perception of time as free or otherwise is subjective and dependent upon personality and circumstances. Motivation for leisure choices varies with anticipated benefits, such as "self-expression, self-enhancement, enjoyment of the development of social relationships, and/or the joy of integrating mind and body in the activity itself" (Wearing and Wearing 1988, p116). Thus, following Neulinger (1982) and others (Henderson 1984; Kelly 1983; Kelly 1996; Wearing and Wearing 1988), experience can be considered the key to leisure, accommodating a significant range of personal definitions or expressions. Usefully, this theoretical approach to leisure mirrors the approach described above to the issue of authenticity as an existentially focused, personal construct. It allows for accommodation of the perspective of Ron, Shani et al (2008, p56)

⁵ In order to calculate possible Workcover recompense, WWOOF Australia were forced to calculate the amount of economic remuneration that a WWOOFer would make on the basis of what a night of food and accommodation would otherwise cost a 'backpacker' and to be able to advise hosts how to remain legal in terms of immigration and work regulations.

that “a person who voluntarily maintains an organic vegetable garden at his/her work place is in fact practicing eco-leisure”⁶.

This supports the idea that the broader concept of leisure is a freely chosen experience while allowing for the inclusion of voluntary work within experiences demarcated as ‘leisure’ experiences (Henderson 1984; Wearing 2001). Stebbins and Graham (2004) refer to this as ‘serious leisure’, while Uriely (2005, p204) introduces the idea of ‘working-holiday tourists’, who perceive their work engagement as recreational and/or a part of their tourist activities. As Henderson (1984, p56) noted, how one feels about it “is more important than what one specifically does”. Leisure is likely to be more complex and personal than a predefined set of activities, bound to a (free)time frame. It is personal, since leisure to one person can seem like work to another.

When we aren't WWOOFing life is pretty leisurely. [To tell the complete truth, working is pretty leisurely as well] (WWOOFers posting on WWOOF NZ Bulletin Board, accessed 2006)

The 24% with the view that WWOOFing work is *not* part of their leisure time perhaps regard the work in this sense as more of a ‘necessity’ than a choice when travelling in Australia: the group WWOOFer R described as ‘poor man’s tourists’. 24% of WWOOFers indicated (Chapter 6) the importance to them of saving money and travelling cheaply by WWOOFing, while many hosts regarded this as a *primary* driver for contemporary WWOOFers (Chapter 5). For most, an accumulation of money, particularly a budget to undertake travel experiences, represents an amount of work previously (or later to be) performed. Since many young independent budget travellers are on relatively low incomes, this is perhaps even more significant. In practical terms saving for a major trip is important, but increasingly, working to earn money *during* the trip has become a major part or facilitator of a long term budget travel experience, certainly in Australia (Cooper, O'Mahoney et al. 2004). But, performing WWOOFing work is another way for some to compensate for a limited budget, within rather than before (or after) a travel experience. Many WWOOFers in this view, conform with Uriely's (2005, p204) “noninstitutionalized working-tourists’, who engage in work while traveling in order to finance a prolonged trip”.

⁶ The term ‘eco-leisure’ was coined to address a perceived gap in leisure theory and defined as “An outdoor activity, related to the theme of nature, practiced by individuals and groups in their free perceived time, involving an environmental- ideological motivation, which is integrated into a routinized way of life and aimed at contributing to both physical and human surroundings” (Ron, Shani et al. 2008, p52).

Wwoofing in this instance thus becomes a freely chosen activity, but in the context of the constraints imposed by the reality of travel cost. Following Ryan and Deci (2000), in this circumstance, *motivation* for Wwoofing could be said to be more 'extrinsic'. That is, the doing of an activity not as much for its inherent satisfactions such as fun, challenge or experiencing something, but rather for some separable consequence, reward, or necessity.

When views about the nature of Wwoofing work were viewed against whether participants indicated that *saving money and/or cheap travel* were important reasons for Wwoofing, it was found by a small margin that the traditional work *versus* leisure distinction was more strongly maintained for the more 'money oriented' Wwoofers. This distinction was also found by Uriely and Reichel (2000) in the attitudes of 'working tourists' in Israel, who significantly concluded that working tourists with a more 'mercenary' approach who perceived work as a means to continue travel were less likely to demonstrate positive attitudes towards their hosts than those who grasped their work situation as part of their overall experience.⁷ This reinforces the utility and limitations of distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and rewards (cf. Ryan and Deci 2000) and is a reminder of the overlaps between, or the continuity of the thread woven by individuals between their *motivations*, *experiences* and *outcomes*. In Chapter 6 it was argued that though such extrinsic 'materialist' motives were present, they were minor in the context of the suite of Wwoofer motives. Further, it was found that the *experiences* and *outcomes* were far from being only extrinsically rewarding or satisfying.

2.3 Wwoofing and the Liminal/Ludic Wonderland

Above it was argued that most participants converge around the view that Wwoofing is primarily about social interaction and cultural exchange and that it is an alternative to tourist experiences, rather than a type of tourist experience. But there is a limit to which the latter view was expressed unambiguously, and a range of ambiguous and ambivalent statements on this issue have somewhat muddied the waters. But this only highlights the amorphousness and complexity inherent in this phenomenon and its dynamic evolution. This is exacerbated by the fact that leisure and work cannot be easily held as separate

⁷ The authors suggest that the touristic orientation of the latter group induced them to develop more 'social exchange' with their hosts, while the former limited their encounters with hosts to a more 'economic' type of exchange.

spheres, both because work can be an object of tourist curiosity, and because tourists sometimes engage in work (and/or 'serious leisure'). The ambiguities here might be taken to provide support for the view that tourism and routine, everyday activities such as work can be and are increasingly infused with each other, suggesting that traditional work/leisure, ordinary/extraordinary and home/away theoretical lines of demarcation are of limited value in wrestling with a characterisation of WWOOFing in terms of tourism.

But on this point, it is worth noting that exactly where particular boundaries lie and a sense of clear definition on these matters appears to be of little importance to the participants in the phenomenon in question. Neither does ambiguity seem to detract from the experience per se, since the 'feel' of WWOOF experiences is very much about embracing and entering the unknown. The uncertain and unexpected, shifting/changing identities, ambiguity of meaning and a degree of amorphousness generally need not be of concern to those engaging at the frontiers of social interaction. Appropriation of old boundaries, re-territorialisation, even boundlessness, are part and parcel of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000) or contemporary postmodern processes and 'lifeworlds' (Ward 1997).

From here it is suggested that WWOOFing is in part related to a larger phenomenon in which people are increasingly comfortable to enter ludic worlds (including cyber/virtual worlds), zones, or *spaces* in which they are relatively free to operate within limited or broadly defined norms to (co-)create experiences with the others they encounter, by force of their own interactive efforts, rather than *because of* cash mediated expected exchange value. Crouch sees 'space' as a "complex conduit" through which individuals may participate in "processes of producing the world" and "making sense of it" through acting themselves. Space is "an inescapable means through which encounters in the world occur" and is a "key component of how meaning and value are produced" (Crouch 2007, pp45-7).

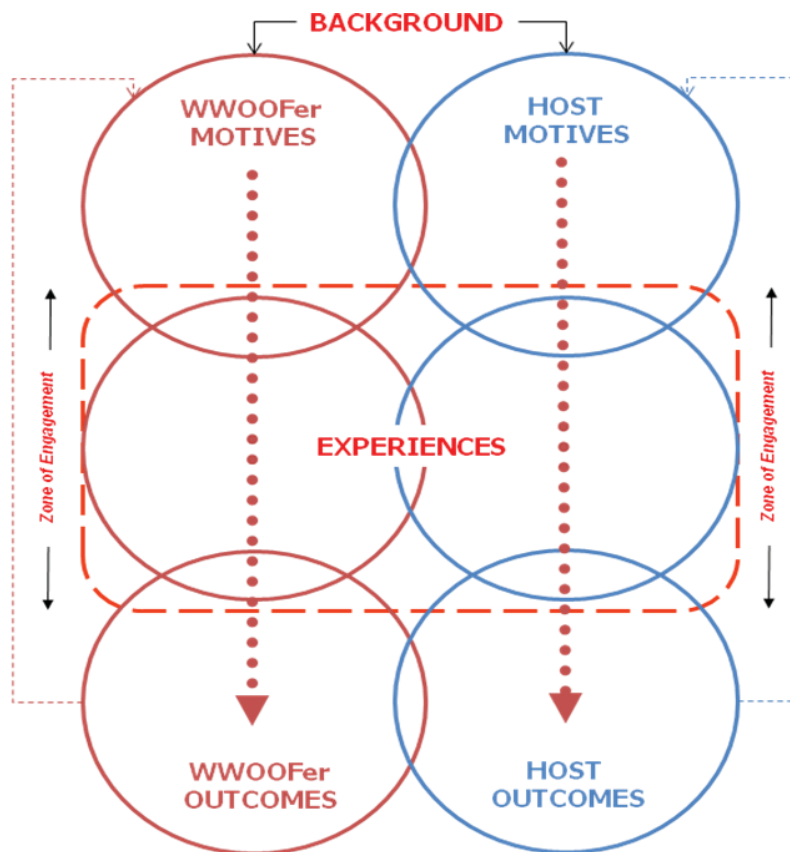
WWOOFing operates in a unique space and generates an interactive zone in which meaning constitutive engagement processes occur. The shared understanding of the relative importance of the social interaction/cultural exchange aspect of WWOOFing and the need for both parties to benefit for the experience to work demonstrates why engagement is at the heart of this research: it is part *motive*, part *experience* and part

outcome for different actors and the zone of engagement is a focal point through which to synthesize empirical and theoretical observations.

3 THE ZONE OF ENGAGEMENT

Figure 34 shows a conceptual positioning of the *zone of engagement* in relation to motives, experiences and outcomes for both hosts and WWOOFers. The zone in which engagement takes place encompasses not only the interactive experiences themselves, but partly those periods *before* and *after* them, because there are three main senses in which the term engagement is used.

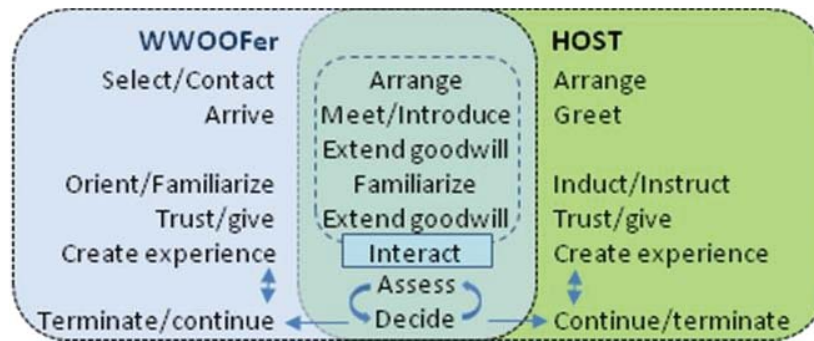
Figure 34: Location of the Zone of Engagement



Firstly, in the WWOOF model it is expected that hosts and WWOOFers engage with each other: “giving, sharing and learning on the part of both host and guest are the essential

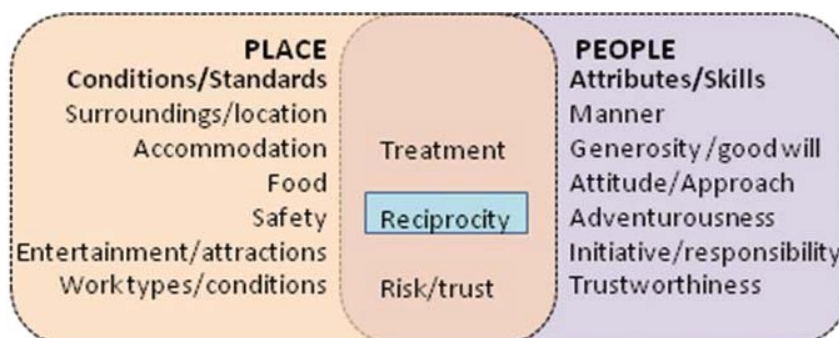
ingredients” (Fenton Huie n.d.). Engagement is effectively formalized as part of the *structure* of the exchange and can be considered a **process** in the act of WWOOFing, as illustrated in outline in Figure 35 (and in more detail below in Figure 37).

Figure 35: Process of/for Engagement



Secondly, in conversations and interviews, participants discussed nature of and the feelings involved in entering the “new and unknown situation” at the centre of WWOOFing experiences. The idea that this requires a mutual “willingness to engage” (Stehlik 2002, p224) implies that the existence of a certain predisposition on the part of both parties needs also to be considered. Predisposition relates to expectations and motivations and suggests that engagement might be considered one of the necessary **conditions** (or pre-conditions) to be satisfied in order to access a gateway to a range of possible experiences, as Figure 36 illustrates.

Figure 36: Conditions/Attributes of/for Engagement



But alongside of a willingness or predisposition to engage, a range of other important conditions or attributes also need to be present or satisfied, both in terms of the attributes

of the people and places to be engaged with. These 'conditional' elements (discussed below) can be considered in the context of the above mentioned *process* of engagement and *combine* to produce the *qualities of the exchange* overall (see Figure 37).

Assessment by hosts and WWOOFers of these qualities against their expectations contributes importantly to views of experiences and ultimately to the **outcomes** of their experiences (Chapters 5 and 6). This suggests the third sense in which engagement can be framed: as itself an end result, outcome or product of an encounter, particularly but not only for those specifically motivated to WWOOF in order to engage with people and places.

These three aspects of engagement – process, (pre-)condition and product - are now explored and explained by means of a descriptive journey into 'WWOOFerland'.

3.1 Through the Looking Glass: entering the zone

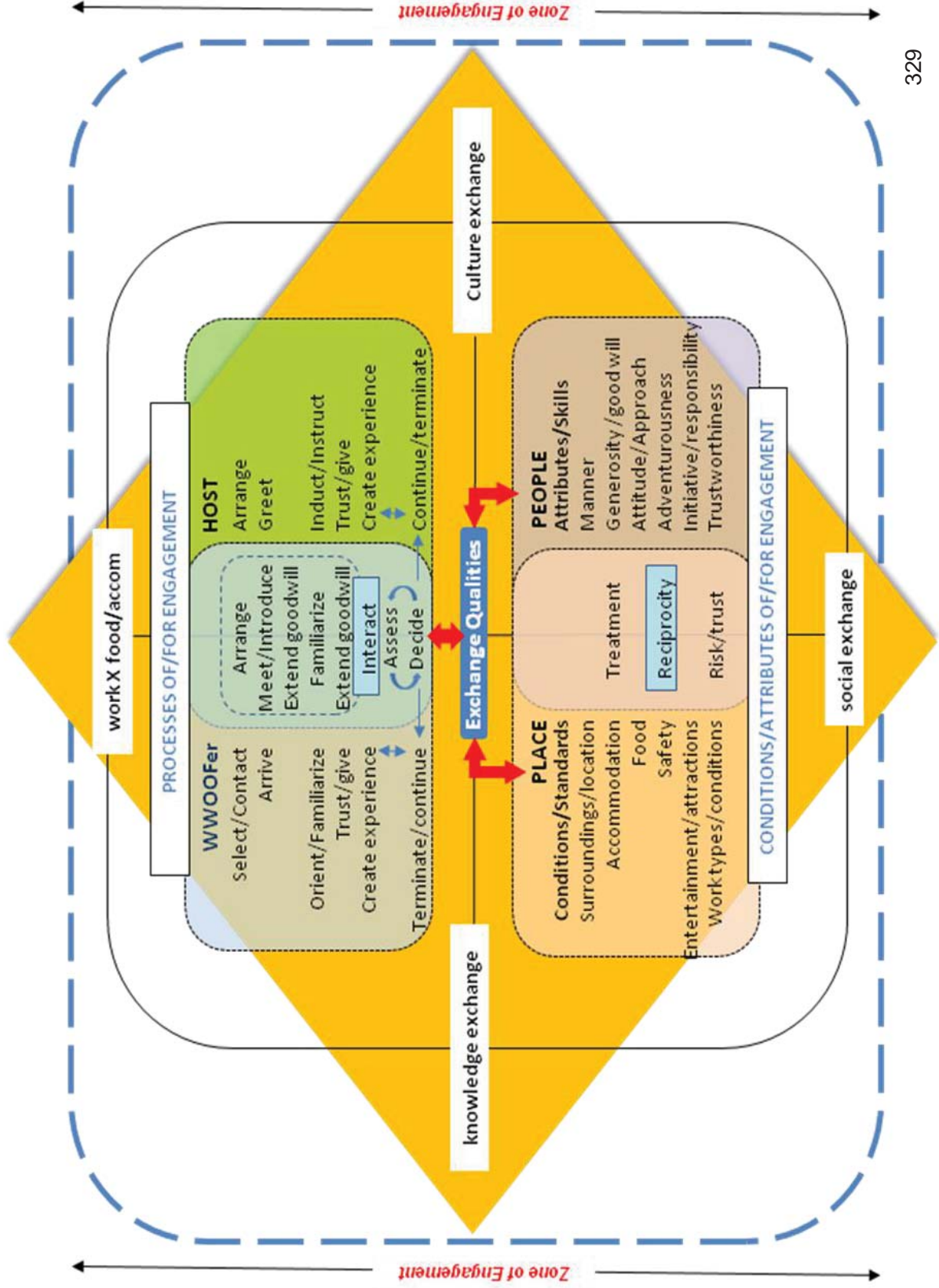
There is always a critical moment between being and becoming, that shapes an experience, such as when Alice left the 'real world' and entered the looking glass into the other world beyond.⁸ WWOOFers enter the zone of engagement when they first **select** and then **contact** hosts and set about arranging a stay (see Figure 35 and Figure 37).

There are many modes of contact possible and many hosts have preferences in terms of this initial part of the process. Some cannot commit far ahead, while others prefer to 'book' WWOOFers well in advance. Some hosts despise the 'mass email' which is impersonal and often leads to no follow through from WWOOFers. Contact by phone may be preferred so they can at least first 'meet' and discuss arrangements and possibilities directly⁹.

⁸ Crouch (2007, p52) reminds us (citing Grosz), that "the borders between 'being' as a state reached and becoming are indistinct and constantly in flow".

⁹ Host S1 claimed she has learned to be very "upfront" during phone contact and selects only those over 18 years of age and makes it clear that 2 weeks is a maximum stay (with exceptions determined after 2 weeks).

Figure 37: Processes and Qualities of the Exchange



WOOOFers make use of shortlists and emails because it can be very frustrating sometimes finding an available host and emailing means:

you don't steal the time of the hosts ... 'cos you always have to call them, it always costs money and costs a lot of time and sometimes you really need to find a place quite quickly (WOOOFer J).

Hosts are sometimes known to change or forget arrangements at the last minute, particularly if emails only are relied upon for contact. According to WOOOF Australia and Rother (2009), this is reason to make a phone call and not commit until there is a clear idea on both sides as to exactly what is intended.

However, making initial phone contact can be a difficult interpersonal process, as WOOOFers R recalled:

[R]inging up was always a bit awkward... Well, you're kind of saying, 'Hi, can we come and stay at your place?'... It's like ahh, you know, it's a bit strange, I mean, well both of us aren't really overly comfortable with just, you know, doing that, so that was a bit awkward. That was the hardest part of WOOOFing for us really, was just... trying to ring up and say 'Hey, can we stay at your place?' (WOOOFer R).

There can be need in trying to **arrange** a stay to "make a pitch" to the host, which is a form of "selling yourself" which sometimes needs rehearsal. In this sometimes delicate negotiation situation, it is not always easy to ask a lot of questions, but some WOOOFers do try to prepare a list of 'standard' questions to ask hosts at this early stage as part of a selection strategy.

Having made some form of arrangement, and assuming that it comes to fruition, the process of engagement has commenced.

The **arrival** of a WOOOFer is a key moment, as both parties have certain expectations of the other and WOOOFers have also engaged to this point in a physical journey that forms part of their understanding of the life and place of the host. Thus upon arrival, Vansittart (2002) found herself "enthusiastically greeted" by the host's dog, but noted an initial degree of reservation among herself and the human hosts since "[W]e are, after all, perfect strangers who will be living together for the next week".

The actions of both parties at this moment can be important to the unfolding of the WWOOFing exchange. When strangers **meet and introduce** themselves, there is a clear need to make each other comfortable in an initial demonstration or **extension of good will** and cooperation. This is often claimed to be the purpose of the handshake and other rituals of introduction that demonstrate no mal-intent. WWOOFer JL found himself in this situation being on what he described as his “best behaviour”:

Cos I guess it's a breaking down of that barrier. You know? It's a bit of an unusual thing to be doing, with strangers really (WWOOFer JL).

Following initial introductions, processes of **orientation** to the place and **familiarisation** with the people and place often begin, sometimes taking place very quickly, before more 'formal' aspects of the exchange commence:

The awkwardness ends within minutes, though, and I'm off to town to run errands with [her host], do some grocery shopping, then head home to prepare dinner.

Along with general introductory 'niceties', WWOOFers might be shown to their accommodation, given a tour of the property, meet the inhabitants and possibly introduced to the sorts of work that might be occurring at the time (**induction/instruction**). At this stage, the general manner of hosts and WWOOFers is being considered by each and fed into conscious and unconscious assessments of the prospects of this exchange situation, at all times being compared to previous expectations. WWOOFers are physically orienting themselves to new surroundings and perhaps also making assessments of the *conditions* or *standards* of the place, relative to the qualities they had imagined or expected.

Some level of familiarisation and orientation continues throughout the experience, as a form and result of interaction with people and place, through various forms of **interaction** and **exchange** as they occur. In achieving the central exchange of work for food and accommodation, it is clear that social exchange is almost always present. That is, in work and any other interactive moments in this situation, it is the **social exchange** between people that facilitates the exchange of **knowledge and ideas**, techniques of **work** or **cultural information**, through the use of language and other communication (Figure 37, p329). So while the work being done is important, it is also through social exchange and communicative interaction that the notion of exchange is actualised.

As mentioned, particularly in the early stages of engagement, a degree of presentation of 'best behaviour' or even 'front' can be important. That is not to say however that pretence is a requirement:

I would not say it's pretence. Like, I would never do anything that made me unhappy. But its more you know, putting the amount of energy into building a brand new relationship that's also starting at something that assumes a lot more trust than you would with the average person. (WWOOFer JL)

Stehlik (2002, p221) considers the **extension of goodwill** to be the crux of the WWOOF system which "runs entirely on goodwill and non-monetary exchange without anyone creaming off a profit or being exploited".

Extending goodwill through a personable manner and behaviour and appropriate treatment helps to build trust early in such circumstances. **Trust** can be partly about looking and seeming trustworthy, certainly initially, so that both parties are disarmed and able to get on with engaging with each other. The research suggests that trust is essential if the exchange is to be built into its full potential. It requires mutual trust "about what the situation is going to involve, and... giving on both sides" (WWOOFer A). The need to extend oneself to create a suitable degree of trust requires that one be on 'best behaviour' in someone else's space, but this can also become draining:

You know, you're putting up that nice front, you know, you're trying to get on well with the new boss or the colleagues, but, at the end of the day, you go home and you relax, sit back on the couch, have a beer or something, but ... you don't even get to do that with WWOOFing... sometimes I felt like I'd just like to relax and that opportunity just wasn't there sometimes. (WWOOFer R)

This is a reminder of the 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983) that can be required to be a WWOOFer, certainly in the early stages of engagement with hosts. The moment at which one might fully relax and 'become oneself' in this situation is personal and relates also to the efforts made by hosts to allow WWOOFers to be 'at ease'. Emotional labour is also something required by hosts to a degree (Chapter 5), depending on the circumstances.

The process of familiarisation and general interaction involves each party offering themselves in various ways to differing degrees, to **create the experience**. Crouch (2007. pp46-7) suggests that individuals in tourism and leisure experiences are “involved in a negotiative process” which is active and which produces meaning and that individuals are engaged in taking the contexts they put themselves in and “acting, thinking and feeling in relation to them”. WWOOFing requires:

a face, a personality, a brain and closeness with other humans and discussion with them, eating with them and working on their schedule in order to make an experience (participant in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p95).

WWOOFing is “what you make it ... and what your hosts are making it” (WWOOFer A). But both parties must make efforts to make it work, by engaging with each other and with the tasks and circumstances at hand. As such, WWOOFers are not easily able to be ‘flys on the wall’ undertaking (covert) ‘tourist gazes’.¹ They are instead more like interactive agents, engaging with the hosts and their places and/or communities, which are generally changed by the engagement. There is among participants some recognition of its co-constructed nature, the existence of the dynamic space in which this occurs, and the bodily nature of the engagement:

... people get involved, they get their body in, and that makes the difference.

You get something to do on the farm, your muscles work again, your brain works again, it's like growing again.

If you work outside, you feel on your body every drop of temperature, every drop of rain, every bit of sun and wind; you are just in the middle of it and I just like it; that's why I'm here. (comments from participants in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p92 and p94)

As discussed in Chapter 3, Wearing and Wearing (1996) usefully introduce the 'chora' as descriptive metaphor for this space, and contrast the 'choraster' with the 'flaneur' to describe and contextualise this engaged, interactive situation with more passive, gazing situations.

During this *process*, both parties might ‘test’ or **assess** the place and people and particularly, the responsiveness of the other to their efforts to engage, and gauge the

¹ Indeed Host D indicated that one key “rule” of WWOOF is that “you do not talk in your own languages to each other, if there are two of you”.

likelihood that the exchange will ‘work’ for them in light of all the relevant *conditions* and *attributes* (Figure 37, p329). As noted by WWOOF Australia and experienced participants, there is value in exploring and testing the circumstances before making long term commitments.

Do not commit for a long time. Start with a few days and extend your stay if both you and the host are happy. Better that way than arriving somewhere and feeling you have to stay, even though you are not enjoying yourself. (Rother 2009)

Stories from the field focus on the wide range of different WWOOF experiences available, encouraging new volunteers both to explore until they find the right fit for them and to stay put when the right opportunity presents itself. (Maycock 2008, p285)

WWOOFers A and R were quick to appreciate the limits of what they might be able to learn in their quest for sustainable building knowledge (or social interaction) from one host that was unprepared for accommodating WWOOFers. As well as their description being grossly exaggerated, the hosts were content to have these WWOOFers design and build gardens for them while they got on with their home building project:

Like we think, wow, a vegetable patch, that requires so much design, and like, thought, and then like, how are you going to manage it? And like, what do you want? And I don’t think he really, like, had any idea about that... concept. So he was just kinda like, ‘yeah, here’s some tools... if you wanna go and build a vege patch, here you go, I’m gonna like, build some mud bricks for my house’ [laughter] (WWOOFer A).

Ultimately, after judging and **deciding** that an experience has not yet, or will not be likely to work, it is possible to decide to **terminate** it:

Having no fixed contract and no financial commitment allows you a trial period of a few days. Stay on for longer if the atmosphere suits ... but if not, there is always the first bus out, rural timetables permitting. (Rother 2009)

Rother relates the ‘hardships’ of one experience but chose “not to sneak away”:

Instead, we stayed to see our projects through to the end. When we left a few weeks later, our enthusiasm for WWOOFing was still intact, helped by pride in a job well done and appreciation from our hosts (Rother 2009).

Some learned that they need to give themselves a minimum amount of time to familiarise, adapt to circumstances and to give it a chance before judging it:

Basically, my thought [was] ... that I would set myself a week as the minimum time ... Cos, one or two days, either it's not working - 'goodbye'. Or, gonna stay a week. At least! ... It's on the third or fourth day that things get difficult. Cos you start getting tired of doing that, and there's not so much need and that's the point where I feel myself go 'I wanna leave! I wanna leave!' ... You know, you're sort of up here and, best behaviour, down here with the exhaustion and tiredness with having to do this again. Fifth, sixth, seventh [days], you know, it starts to become a bit more of an even keel and you know what's expected [and] they know (WWOOFer JL).

Adaptation to unfamiliar circumstances leads to a position from which to be able to make an informed assessment. WWOOFer M (WWOOFing to extend her Visa), did not look forward to her first experience, but realised after a week that it was "going to be an excellent experience". WWOOFer J felt like a "very cheap worker" for the first two days of her experience on a commercial organic farm, but progressively this feeling gave way to a feeling of belonging to the family as she and the hosts made an effort to get to know and learn about each other. Mutuality of effort is required to ease the process of familiarisation:

... a good WWOOFing experience is one when both parties make the effort. It doesn't work when it's just the WWOOFer trying to be helpful, or, vice versa (WWOOFer R).

This is not to say that either hosts or WWOOFers do not or should not make relatively rapid judgements about the situation they enter into, particularly so in the case of feelings of uncertainty about trust, safety and risk (discussed below). But a sense of reciprocity of effort is important and there is need for it to be immediately tangible as part of some initially offered goodwill and then progressively built upon throughout later stages of the process. A search for tangible reciprocity describes what hosts and WWOOFers do in assessing themselves in the context of the qualities of the other, and it (ideally) points to what it is that they need to keep adding to the situation to ensure mutual satisfaction.

3.2 In the Looking Glass: being in the zone

At some point through these early processes of engagement, the parties fully transition into *the zone of engagement*. Here, the qualities of the exchange are more thoroughly

assessed (Figure 37, p329), which has great significance as part of a feedback loop affecting the experiences and outcomes achieved. The exchange depends on the qualities of both **people** and **place** which contextualise, condition and provide parameters for experiences. Key qualities of people and place, and the way these interact to ultimately generate and shape the critically important **reciprocity**, are discussed below in response to a series of questions that might be asked by each in their journey through the zone of engagement.

Where Am I?

Given the spread of hosts across the continent (and the globe) and the relatively loose guidelines for membership, the various worlds in which WWOOFers can find themselves are diverse. There is variability in terms of the scales and types of properties, activities and enterprises undertaken, the degree of dependence upon the land for income generation, philosophies espoused and pursued, the work required, surrounding landscapes, food, accommodation and of course the inhabitants themselves. Despite near infinite permutations of experience possible, this section fixes attention upon the idea of *place* and the key conditions or attributes of places that might affect the engagement of WWOOFers with hosts and their place.

The **location** of properties themselves and their **surroundings** are to WWOOFers sometimes very much a part of their romantic appeal, as described in earlier chapters. Aesthetic appeal, seclusion, and sometimes proximity to local attractions revealed to WWOOFers with or without the assistance of hosts, can strongly condition the experience.

The **accommodation** provided, while not necessarily a selection criteria, can range widely from near *palatial* (“it was like a mansion” (WWOOFer M)) or *idyllic* (“a fully stocked cabin in paradise” (English 2007)), to *appalling*:

[Y]ou wouldn’t even put your dog in it [laughter]... It was so bad... I can’t believe we even stayed there! Looking back I’m just like what were we doing? ... It’s just like, you know? Like, rats, like poo, all over the mattress and we were just like, ‘Oh my God!’ [laughter]... And it must have been about one degree or something at night [laughter]... (WWOOFer A).

Hosts B and S2 point out that minor improvements to accommodation for WWOOFers might be reasonably expected, but demands for any “major change to the environment they’re in” could compromise “the potential of staying a real experience” and “being

spoiled” by demands more akin to tourism (Host B). The issue here is about expectations, and Host JL specifically points out in his WWOOF book description that he is “at the beginning” of “starting sustainable living”, so that expectations of WWOOFers are not too high in respect of accommodation and the place, and that WWOOFers with appropriate interests are attracted.

But it is certainly true that expectations are sometimes wrongly built up *because of the* generally unverified descriptions in the WWOOF book:

Our second stay, which sounded good on paper -- "local artist with organic gardens" -- was not so nice. This mother of six lived in filth, consulted crystals, and claimed to be clairvoyant. There was a flea problem in the house. There was a rat problem in the garden. There was a rotting chicken in the oven. This was all at the time that our clutch cable was being repaired and we were, pretty much, trapped (WWOOFers in WWOOF NZ Bulletin Board, 2006).

Accommodation can vary in terms of whether it is with or separate from hosts, which can be positive and negative depending on the participants. WWOOFer M recalled one solar powered cabin with “one tiny little light” which was “creepy as anything”:

I wouldn't want to be put down there on my own. Some people would absolutely love it (WWOOFer M).

WWOOFers are reported widely by hosts to have many fears, including fears of open spaces, the night, the quiet, insects and other animals and of course, a fear of strangers. WWOOFer A described personal **safety** as:

an issue for people travelling by themselves around, like you are just... and there are some, you know, strange people, who... may... wish to have people come WWOOF with them.²

As with accommodation, **food** can sometimes be provided in relatively independent fashion, sometimes to such an extreme that it clearly and fatally transgresses the basic exchange agreement:

² Interestingly, one host participant in outback Australia wanted to make the point specifically that the thriller/horror movie *Wolf Creek*, in which touring backpackers are drugged, tortured and murdered, had in their view, impacted on the number of WWOOFers that had visited their property in recent years.

i had to buy my own food and cook for my own and he gave me the money back,.. (he didnt even told me that i had to ask for everything and then another japanese wwoofer told me that i have to buy everything and so on (sic, WWOOFer on the WWOOF NZ online forum, 2006).

Separating accommodation and food provision can provide some space for hosts, but at some point begins to impact on the experience, given the key motives of WWOOFers:

i mean and that has really nothing to do with wwoofing anymore if i have to cook for my own and i was just so lonely in that place (WWOOFer on the WWOOF NZ online forum, 2006).

Being lonely was something that WWOOFer M also experienced and as discussed in Chapter 6, there is a question about the degree to which hosts can or should provide **entertainment** for WWOOFers. Some offer TVs, DVD players, stereos and so on, but entertainment reaches its highest point when WWOOFers are included in those forms of entertainment that hosts normally engage in, which itself sometimes creates access to a local attraction and local knowledge (Chapter 6).

Finally, work conditions are conditioning factors in the WWOOFing exchange, including the types of work, relative diversity of tasks, the degree of physicality involved, levels of safety and of course, the hours. These are all important in feeding into assessments of the places where WWOOFers and hosts engage.

Who Are You?

As WWOOFers and hosts come face to face, the way in which they are treated obviously makes an important impression upon their experience. **Treatment** represents the intersecting qualities of *place* and *people*. In terms of the interactions between people, this is about the manner in which people treat each other, expressed partly by the tangible presence of personal traits such as **generosity** and **good will**, alluded to already. For example, Host JL makes a specific effort to determine with new WWOOFers what they would like to eat before they arrive at the relative isolation of his property, in order to initially ensure their comfort and thus he says, their “happiness”:

The generous extension of good will from the start results, he claims, in “WWOOFers putting in extraordinary amounts of energy”. Indeed, as McIntosh and Bonneman found, work willingness was likely to be dependent on the perceived value of the

experiences they gain and their respect for their hosts”, quoting one WWOOFer as follows:

So as long as I felt like the people who own the property were worth working hard for, then I would do just about anything. I would not wear a watch or anything, I would just work and enjoy it (WWOOFer quoted in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, p91).

WWOOFer M also stated that she “always wanted to work hard and for them” partly because she wanted a “good reference” in her quest to extend her Visa, but she qualified this statement by also pointing out the “good relationship” she developed with them in the process, partly borne of her experience of their giving nature. **Reciprocity** results from generosity and good will (discussed later) and generosity is a trait of hosts often mentioned by WWOOFers in online forums, ranging from the being spoiled by the food offered through to more significant offers that open up whole new tangential experiences:

We got on very well and after three days work, he offered me his car to take a 400km drive up to Mt. Cook and back. It was and remains one of the most amazing days of my life, just me, in awe of the lakes, the mountains, and the generosity of a stranger (WWOOFer writing on the WWOOF NZ online forum, 2006).

Inclusivity of some hosts on occasions such as family Christmas, or a more general giving of oneself for the benefit of others, is a part of the generosity reported by some WWOOFers. Host M is keenly aware of the importance of “how you treat them” and claims that because she is “interested in them being here”, she treats them accordingly which affects their relationship from the outset. Not all hosts of course are intrinsically interested in hosting WWOOFers and disinterest can be thoroughly detrimental to the exchange:

...i had a farm in gisborne, too where the man didnt speak to me! ... he was in his house and i was not allowed to come into his house!) i mean and that has really nothing to do with wwoofing... (sic, WWOOFer on the WWOOF NZ online forum, 2006).

In Chapter 5 hosts showed they expected no particular skills of WWOOFers, but their **attitude** or **approach** to the experience was crucial. This assumes a general *positivity* or *openness* to the place and the people, related to *willingness to work, learn or try*, and a *willingness and ability to communicate* well:

Are they motivated? Do they share a belief in what's going on, up here? (Host JL).

Other skills or attributes identified by surveyed hosts included *adaptability* in terms of physical conditions and priorities, work tasks and social situations. Host M described a situation where a WWOOFer did not try to “fit in” and identified that this led to an unsatisfactory and short lived exchange for both parties. This again reinforces the centrality of engagement, but in conjunction with attributes relating to *integrity of character*, such as honesty, reliability, sincerity and diligence. Host B emphasised that in terms of the functionality of the exchange:

I would rather have a person that is easy to get on with and who has no skills, than someone who has every skill you could possibly imagine, but is difficult to get on with (Host B).

WWOOFer attitude and manner contributes most strongly to the exchange, but is itself helped significantly by a sense of **adventurousness** to assist them with operating in the context of the unknown. Otherwise, as was bemoaned by one disappointed former host generalising about the current cohort/generation of WWOOFers (see Chapter 5), there appears to be little point and limited viability in WWOOF exchanges. Although some hosts have detected negative changes to the attributes and attitudes of contemporary WWOOFers, at least one was able to look instead at longer range and more global generational change in terms of independence of mind. In his late 70s, Host N, considered the current generation to be free thinking, compared to his peers in their youth:

They've got their heads screwed on right ... They can't be confused like the older generation were. See somebody would wave a flag and blow a trumpet and they'd all start marchin'. Today they're not that way inclined. (Host N)

It is doubtful that such a generational shift has been uniform and the nuances of contemporary attitudes, mores and behaviours (as detected by some other hosts) have not been considered in this breadth of opinion. But importantly, this focus on independence raises another important and widely prized WWOOFer attribute in the form of personal **responsibility** and **initiative**. Thus, young American WWOOFer E dwelled on the interplay of trust given by her college teachers in allowing her to freely choose to WWOOF as part of a research and learning based internship, without any formal contact between the host and the college, forcing her to “take a lot [laughter] of responsibility for myself”. While she had a specific outcome oriented purpose

connected with her studies, she observed that taking responsibility for oneself is “what WWOOFing is about”, which is “much different from being ... any other, tourist” (WWOOFer E). In a large intentional community (where there were up to 15 other WWOOFers during her stay), she noted that responsibility is in balance with freedom:

[Y]ou have a lot of freedom here. They never, give anybody a tour really, you just figure it out on your own (WWOOFer E).

By freedom she meant that WWOOFers there need only to have and take initiative and be “responsible for working”, with the freedom extending into non-work or personal free time being moderated only by a general expectation that they would not be “a really ridiculous out of control person”. While the hosting circumstances for WWOOFer E were somewhat exceptional, the degree to which WWOOFers need to be independent on this community highlights a point made elsewhere that a degree of initiative extends also to the need to “be prepared to entertain yourself” to *some* degree, since hosts can be very busy and it should not be assumed that they “will have time to show you around the area” (Rother 2009). The way in which WWOOFers experience the balance of freedom and responsibility can be an important dimension of the WWOOFing experience. But the necessity for independence can test some WWOOFers, since it ranges from cloistered suffocation through to solitude, verging on near abandoned daily isolation (Chapter 6).

As suggested, different hosts have different thresholds and expectations in terms of the degree to which they feel comfortable to engage with and *want* to merge WWOOFers into their lives. Sometimes this is manifest in the ‘rules of engagement’ initially set by a host, such as a maximum allowable stay, even if these are frequently altered in practice upon having met and engaged with ‘exceptional’ WWOOFers. At one extreme, Host S1 keeps to a two week period with her WWOOFers and observed that:

... because it’s such a short time for contact, you know, you don’t wanna be the, ah, psychologist or psychiatrist. You just want it to go smoothly then and there. Treat ‘em all nicely. I mean some of them might have problems, but I wouldn’t know it [laughs]. And they don’t come and talk about their home life (Host S1).

On the other end of the spectrum, Hosts N and A – who themselves have foster parented four children - have deliberately established themselves as a hosting option for ‘at risk’ young people, with their property now gifted to a mainstream youth charity.

Hosts B and S2 described an experience with a WWOOFer “from a really rough, childhood” with “some real sadness in his life” who was after a period of time together in their family life, eventually able to share his painful stories and eventually “feel comfortable with it”, which produced a “rewarding” and “uplifting” experience for both parties. This required sufficient time, but importantly again, a degree of mutual **trust** was also needed, which as Falk and Kilpatrick (2000, p3) suggest, is often described as a “critical component of any social cohesion”. Firstly, trust is needed for hosts to allow, encourage or even expect initiative, responsibility and independence, which is not always present among young WWOOFers. These can be something they progressively learn by being given opportunities in this situation (Chapter 6), but there is crucially an element of *interim trust* in operation.

Secondly, the WWOOFer must trust that the host will not allow them to become endangered in exploring their freedoms in an unfamiliar environment, particularly in terms of the work, but also in terms of the broader natural and social environments.

Thirdly, *both* parties must trust that the other aims to do the ‘right’ thing with the right intention, mirroring Molm’s (2010, p123) definition of trust as “the belief that the exchange partner can be relied upon to help, rather than to exploit, the actor”. For example, WWOOFer M, who was WWOOFing as a single female, suggested that to take the initial step into the WWOOFing realm is to “take a risk” since there are stories that are “not so nice”:

[There] was just one guy and I was driving there and I didn’t really know where it was ... but then I rang him up and his daughter answered the phone and I was thinking ‘It’s a woman, there’s a woman living there as well, Yes!’ ... I think a woman going alone would have that question ... you do just ... have a huge amount of trust, in them, before you get there. And they kind of do in you ... (WWOOFer M).

WWOOFers A and R, travelling together as a pair, also highlighted the centrality of trust in the exchange and to the process and nature of engagement:

[T]he host has to have a lot of trust, um, in the WWOOFer, but you know, quite often they are away from their property and the WWOOFers are there, by themselves, and, um, you can easily take advantage of them too, so there is the same element of trust between both parties. (WWOOFer R).

Host B drew an interesting comparison between WWOOFing and hitchhiking, which stands as one of the other few remaining non-monetary and heavily trust based exchanges:

You put yourself out there in the morning and you really don't know who is gonna give you a lift. It takes huge trust... but the more I risk, the more I get. And there's parts of me that have been fearful of things that might happen, hitchhiking, or having WWOOFers. But the more I've dismissed those fears and been more open, the more rewarding the experience has been (Host B).

The idea that the larger the risk, the larger the gain possible seems significant and is very much at the heart of the 'adventure' sought by at least some WWOOFers (Chapter 6).

Earlier, Host JL suggested there is need to put more energy into relationship building than might otherwise be necessary in other encounters, because WWOOFing is something "that assumes a lot more trust than you would with the average person". The mutual extension of good will offers a basis for the development of the trust that is essential to the full development of the exchange. How this feature of mutual trust amongst strangers occurs can be compared to the problematic structure of a classical, free standing stone archway. In its construction, before two 'piers' can span towards each other to complete an interlocking arch without falling down, there is need to provide a scaffold:

A classical stone arch is IC [irreducibly complex] ... because the structure will collapse as soon as one removes either the keystone or one of the other stones. The support of scaffolding is necessary in building a stone arch, but once the arch is completed, the scaffolding can be safely removed (Boudry, Blancke et al. 2010, p476).

When scaffolds are removed the archway functions with maximum strength, but there are no remaining clues to its method of construction. Yet the keystone remains critical. In less grand but analogous fashion, hosts and WWOOFers build relationships of varying strengths, by means of such a scaffolding, through the extension of goodwill. This may perhaps be able to be dispensed with once each is satisfied that there is a sufficient basis (i.e. trust) for the development of a natural process of progressive human bonding. At this point, each party is in a position to 'be themselves' a little more. Nevertheless, a keystone remains in the WWOOFing exchange in the form of a tacit

and overt understanding of the need for **reciprocity** (discussed below) to build and further cement relationships under construction.

Some WWOOFers and hosts implied that the WWOOF 'brand name' and its organic/earthcare ethic lends some confidence to them in trusting in this situation, even if many WWOOFers seemingly have little idea about organics:

But I just have this feeling that WWOOFers, if they've joined the WWOOFing association they're wanting to learn about in organic farming or gardening or whatever, and it's something that I've always loved. In 25 years I've always loved that, and um, I figure if they're here doing that I can trust them (Host M).

Furthermore, if any WWOOFers were attempting to "pull the wool over your eyes" in the guise of 'genuine' WWOOFers (which does happen), Host M is generally assured that there are limits to the degree to which any exploitation might be able to occur:

... I mean, you can't really have a free holiday if you go out WWOOFing, because you have to do a certain amount of work... so I figure that most people who come, really want to have the WWOOFing experience and I do usually get to look at their [WWOOF] book before [laughs] (Host M).

Host S1 also "tends to believe them" when she accepts young WWOOFers, despite the fact that there is great scope for "their story" to be something other than what they tell her. On the whole, participants described the existing system, based on trust and goodwill, as working well and it was observed that hosts rarely ask to see WWOOFer's membership number or book in practice, which is part of showing good will and initial trust.

Nevertheless, the ideal of pure trust is sometimes assailed by news of negative stories on the WWOOFing circuit, in WWOOF newsletters/bulletin boards and in the case of the occasional 'bad' WWOOFer alert issued by WWOOF Australia. It is therefore not surprising that some participants discussed the concept of a more updated, Web 2.0 'review' type system such as operates in E-Bay, where all participants are 'rated' for all other parties to be able to see. This is seen to act to promote 'good' and deter 'bad' behaviour (with exclusion being the penalty for some threshold of behavioural transgression). Indeed such a system has been operationalised by the online WWOOF competitor, Help-X and possibly has some merit for many participants. But WWOOFers

R and A felt that to introduce such a useful system into WWOOF could also change the “feel” of WWOOFing since “part of the experience is you don’t know what you’re going to get” and “the whole thing [is] based on that trust” and a sense of community, which might be compromised through making it more predictable and less adventurous.³

What am I Doing Here?

After a WWOOFer becomes accustomed to where they are and who they have stumbled into, they might begin to wonder what they are doing there, particularly as they begin to be tasked with alien jobs that might appear to offer only dimly understood future rewards. Corroborating personal experience, it has been common to hear about WWOOFers in the predicament of asking what they were doing working for someone else, contributing energy and time and doubting the returns. What makes WWOOFing



successful (or not), appears to be something regularly revised and checked against iterations of experience and found at some point in time to be ultimately in the *balance* of ups and downs. Earlier for example, Rother (2009) highlighted the importance to her of engaged social interaction, satisfaction from completing tasks and the gratitude of hosts in her process evaluating the “physical pain of the demanding work”.

As flagged, even if there is doubt about rewards initially, **reciprocity** of effort is required, and despite broad exchange guidelines, there is no easy measure of the two ‘halves’ of the equation since they are not readily reduced to similitude and there is a great deal of flexibility in practice. Devlin (1998) noted that some hosts allow WWOOFers to determine for themselves ‘what is a reasonable exchange’, which has been a successful hosting strategy for some and is sometimes itself part of a learning

³ It is interesting to note that trust is also very much at the heart of the organic/sustainable agriculture community more generally. One can frame organic certification for example, as having been introduced in part to help bridge a growing chasm of distrust in industrialised global and “stretched food networks”, where “trust and intimacy between producers and consumers has broken down” (Maxey 2006, p241). Indeed, WWOOFing was always intended to recreate connections between city dwellers and the farm and (organic/natural) food (Chapter 2), which was also important to some participant WWOOFers (Chapters 6). WWOOFing therefore serves to actuate trust in this broader sense as well. Further, in the situation in which WWOOFing is undertaken to extend a working Visa, there are various government rules about what sorts of work are allowable and there is need for the WWOOFer to work for the equivalent of three months full time. Interestingly, monitoring of the WWOOFing exchange relies only upon hosts signing a form to verify its occurrence in accordance with guidelines, which suggests that trust penetrates beyond the bounds of the WWOOF system and into its interface with national immigration policy.

or maturing process for some WWOOFers - a sentiment expressed by WWOOFer E in dwelling on her freedom within her host community.

WWOOFer T was clear that the exchange was reciprocal, even though that which was exchanged could be very different in character. For her efforts in helping hosts, she was able to experience a “stay in Australian house, and to learn Australian culture, and to learn speaking English more” as well as learning what she could from hosts in her very targeted way, about Permaculture. As well as the work and the food and accommodation, the exchange might be a swapping of specific skills or insights and even a general sharing of lives.

The relative *value* of what is exchanged is determined by each party in relation to their expectations and motivations, and as reported in McIntosh and Bonneman’s (2006) study and confirmed by this research, WWOOFers are likely to be more inclined to work willingly when they have reason to deem hosts worth working for, which depends on other human traits that condition the exchange and tone of the reciprocity.

The un-commodified or *de*-commodified nature of the exchange, Host B regards as “one of the most wonderful things about WWOOFing” making it “one of the last bastions of trust”, even stating that the introduction of an economic exchange “taints” an experience and removes it from the realm of ‘real’ exchanges between people:

I think, as soon as there’s a suggestion that there should be some kind of monetary exchange, like that hosts should pay their WWOOFers, because of the work they do, then the WWOOF hosts would be thinking ‘well I’ve got to get some value out of this.’ Or if there was a suggestion that it was the other way around, that the WWOOFers should pay the hosts for the services that are being provided, then the WWOOFers are gonna be thinking ‘I’ve gotta make sure I get my value out of it’. So that it’s devoid of that need to feel that you’re getting your money’s worth. I think. (Host B).

The non-monetary nature of the exchange is important to perceptions about the reciprocity of the exchange (Nimmo 2001a) and may itself catalyse efforts to create the experience, since literally and in a sense, ‘structurally’, the experience necessarily becomes ‘what you make’ it through your own efforts and what you value, as part of your assessment criteria:

I guess when you pay for something, generally, you feel like you're receiving, you know, 100% of the experience? When there's no monetary [aspect] involved ... a certain part of the WWOOFing experience is receiving, but giving just as much back in what you're receiving. So that really alters the experience and also your behaviour because you're not only receiving an experience, but also, having to give out (WWOOFer A).

The 'structural' imperative to create an experience through reciprocity was characterised by Fenton Huie (n.d.) as "giving, sharing and learning on the part of both host and guest". This "essential ingredient of WWOOFing" and its connection to the un-commodified nature of the exchange needs further explanation to secure a basis for understanding the crux and implications of the WWOOFing phenomenon in the context of tourism.

What is Going On?

Hughes and Stitt (2008) consider WWOOFing in the same vein as Vipassana centres, which operate open door, silent retreats that teach a form of Buddhist meditation, without remuneration. Both are "experiments" which, although not "perfect" nor "incorruptible", operate almost entirely without the need for money and offer examples of the "amazing things happen when we give freely to enrich the lives of others, instead of strive for profit" (p42). There is a need to consider the ways in which such characteristics might shape the experience and perhaps therefore contribute to the uniqueness and growing interest in the use of WWOOFing among travellers. In other words, we need to address the question of what is going on at the heart of the non-monetary exchange in the centre of the zone of engagement, acknowledging the insight of Host JL that WWOOFers may not themselves be aware of or articulate the various factors and processes at play when they are thrust so immediately into the lives of their hosts:

I'm not sure how conscious people might be of that. They might just come away thinking this is great. But not be conscious of why. (Host JL).

To do so, we begin by picking up on a useful observation of WWOOFer E about reciprocity within WWOOFing in comparison with *Couch Surfing*. In WWOOFing it is common for hosts to specify a *minimum* allowable stay, which contrasts with the general specification in *Couch Surfing* of a maximum period of stay (usually about three nights according to WWOOFer E). She noted that couch surfers are not there to give hosts time or energy, but to "get a couch for the night". She reasoned, and a

number of WWOOF hosts confirmed, that short term stays like these are “for someone more transient”. Indeed, Host S1 distinguished between those “disappointing” WWOOFers that are “just whizzing through”, which are “just like tourists”, and those that “have an opportunity to stay longer and learn a bit more” about “farming in Australia” and “our birds and animals”. In doing so, the longer term WWOOFers also tend to be, or to become the ones that “are really conscientious about just, working the whole day” even though they are only expected “to stop after 4 hours, or 5 hours” (sic, Host S1).

Thus, the *duration* of the exchange experience, partly brought about by the more immediate and ‘necessary’ nature of the required reciprocity, can in turn promote greater or further levels of human-human and human-nature engagement. In some contrast, the *couch surfing* arrangement does not promote direct reciprocity of exchange between the parties sharing the experience, since the surfer and the provider are only indirectly and ‘unilaterally’ linked. Their respective acts of giving (of time and space in their respective abodes) in hosting a couch surfer, are not *directly* or bilaterally returned *to each other*, but taken up across a broad membership and over a period of unspecified time, making the reciprocity aspect a somewhat more ‘risky’ enterprise than that of WWOOFing.⁴

The observation that reciprocity can take different forms raises the consideration that the form or *structure* of reciprocity might itself be an important consideration in understanding what is occurring in the WWOOFing exchange.

The Structure of Reciprocity

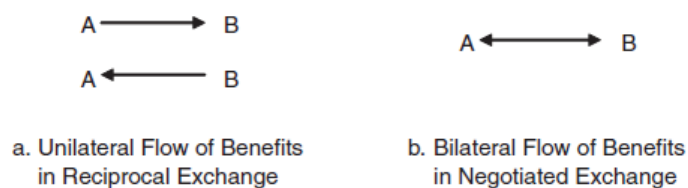
Indeed, this point is considered nothing less than crucial by Molm, a social psychologist with a long term theoretical and experimental focus on reciprocity, who distinguishes between two main types of exchange: *reciprocal* and *negotiated* exchange. Much research has convinced Molm that different *structures* of exchange fundamentally alter the nature of the experience, regardless of any other contributing variables at play. As explained below, the *structure* of exchange has “profound consequences for social relationships, not only for exchange and power but for the emergence of trust and solidarity” (Molm 2010, pp119-120).

⁴ This is not to say that it does not or cannot provide for positive experiences and much valuable reciprocity, but that it is less direct.

Reciprocal exchange occurs when “actors perform individual acts that benefit another, like giving help or advice, without negotiation and without knowing whether or when the other will reciprocate”. Such an exchange involves *unilateral* giving by each party to the other, meaning what is given and received may be vastly different (see Figure 38a):

In reciprocal exchange, benefits flow unilaterally: Each actor’s outcomes depend solely on another’s individual actions (A gives to B, and B gives to A). This means that actors can initiate exchanges that are not reciprocated, and vice versa.

Figure 38: Direct Reciprocity (from Molm 2010)



This is in distinct contrast to *negotiated exchange*, in which some set of agreed outcomes are negotiated in advance and adhered to by each party (Figure 38b). The giving in this circumstance is *bilateral*, which makes the exchange more formal, less flexible and produces few surprises:

... each actor’s outcomes depend on the joint actions of self and other, and the flow of benefits is always bilateral: Actors jointly negotiate an agreement that provides benefits for both actors (A and B), whether equal or unequal.

The negotiated agreement:

creates a dyadic unit; it specifies the benefits that each actor will receive from the exchange, and the mutual exchange of those benefits forms a discrete, self-contained transaction (Molm 2010, p122).

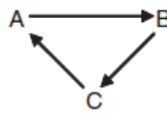
Compared with negotiated exchange, reciprocal exchange activity is unrestricted and the benefits flow unilaterally from one to another. All involved in a network of actors can “initiate exchange with another actor at any given time”, reminding one of the expression/bumper sticker stating the need to “practice random acts of kindness”. This is an open and more unassuming system of exchange, since some initiations “may be reciprocated immediately, others later, and some never”. A key insight here is that unilateral giving and reciprocating occurs over time, requiring and producing “ongoing

relations rather than discrete transactions”, so the natural “unit of exchange” becomes “the relation of recurring interactions between actors”:

This relation takes the form of a series of sequentially contingent, individual acts, in which discrete transactions are difficult to identify because the same act that completes one exchange often initiates another” (Molm 2010, p122).

Molm also identifies a third form of reciprocity which is *indirect* in that the giving is unilateral, but the benefits or returns come via a third (or other) party.⁵

Figure 39: Indirect Reciprocity (from Molm 2010)



c. Unilateral Flow of Benefits in Chain-generalized Exchange

The two forms of *unilateral reciprocity* above (Figure 38a and Figure 39c) are important, but seemingly uncommon compared with the negotiated exchanges ubiquitous in everyday life. Unilateral reciprocity is reminiscent of the expression that “one kindness begets another”, which might be seen as largely belonging to a ‘subjugated discourse’ (in Foucauldian terms), given the hegemonic ideological power (Gibson-Graham 2008) of *homo economicus*, whereby individual human interactions are (and ‘should be’) based upon calculations of pure costs and benefits, or rational self-interest. Gaining and maintaining an efficient, and competitive market-based democracy based on multiple individually economically rational decisions is a highly regarded ideology, critically linked to contemporary modernity and globalisation, which has successfully penetrated most of life’s spheres (Bourdieu 1998; Gibson-Graham 2008; Hughes and Stitt 2008; Pleumarom 2003; Saul 1995; Saul 2001). For many neoconservatives, this appears to be ‘naturally’ so.⁶

⁵ The idea might be provoked here that such a third party (C) might also be non-human in form, for example the environment, property or community of a host, in the manner of Latour (2005) in his ‘material-semiotic’ actor–network theory (ANT). Thus in the WWOOFer (A) gives energy and effort to the host (B) who (ongoingly) works upon and creates their ideal property/place (C), which in turn gives, creates and contextualizes an experience of place for WWOOFer (A).

⁶ “Modernity, as represented by the United States and other developed democracies, will remain the dominant force in world politics, and the institutions embodying the West’s underlying principles of freedom and equality will continue to spread around the world” (Fukuyama 2002, p54).

However, a range of thinkers (including Gibson-Graham 2008; Jackson 2003; McVey 1998; Rifkin 2000; Saul 1995; Trainer 1989) have in different ways encouraged a critical view of the 'inevitability' of the spread of this form of conservative globalised, market-oriented capitalism and of its hegemonic effects in culture, politics and economics. In terms of our consideration of forms of exchange among people, large, complex modern societies may indeed have inevitably contributed to the need to reduce risks among strangers and increase the prevalence of negotiated and binding agreements (usually based on money and contracts) rather than direct unilateral reciprocity found perhaps in small and close knit communities involving other types of familial exchange. But Molm (along with Gibson-Graham 2008 and others working in their nascent 'alternative economies' discourse) argues that:

We now recognize that these assumptions were incorrect, or at least overstated. Reciprocal and generalized forms of exchange are neither rare nor unimportant in modern life (Molm 2010, p125).

Experiencing Reciprocity

Molm persuasively argues that different structures of exchange *crucially* alter the nature of an experience, regardless of the actors, frequency of exchanges, resources exchanged, history of association among actors, relative equality in undertaking or produced by the exchange and other key variable behavioural dimensions. The experienced effects of exchange she says:

are solely the product of how exchange is experienced under different structures of reciprocity, and what those different experiences mean for the emergence of integrative bonds.

She (also citing others) calls for a recognition of the "dual effects that mutual dependence can have on relationships": specifically, *differentiation* (involving processes of power and conflict) and *integration* (involving processes of attraction and cohesion). It is likely that there are some elements of both in any exchange, but Molm's research (and that of others) has pinpointed four key findings in relation to the effects of structure upon the experience of exchange of relevance to our consideration of what might be occurring in the WWOOFing exchange.

Firstly, actors involved in reciprocal exchange trust the other more, express more affective regard for them, and have greater commitment to them than is the case with

actors in negotiated exchanges. They tend to conceive their relations as more harmonious and akin to those of “partners rather than adversaries”.

Secondly, signs of trustworthiness in an exchange partner demonstrated by forms of behavioral commitment, have stronger effects on trust and affect in the case of reciprocal rather than negotiated exchanges. Negotiated agreements can still produce behavioral commitments, but ones “less likely to translate into affective bonds”. It is tempting to add here that there might be more room for demonstrable sincerity in reciprocal exchanges than in negotiated exchanges also, since opportunities to go beyond a negotiated agreement will be present and might be relevant in the minds of actors at this point.

Thirdly, even though pre-arranged, jointly negotiated exchanges may seem to provide for greater procedural fairness, when exchanges are reciprocal in structure, actors perceive their treatment by the other as more fair, even where exchanges are objectively unequal. Importantly, actors have been found to be “more willing to participate in unequal exchanges that disadvantage them” if the exchange is reciprocal rather than negotiated. This may explain partly also why some hosts feel the need to insist that WWOOFers take a break, recuperate and not work too much, in order not to feel overly ingratiated.

Fourthly, a generalized exchange (one in which there are three (or more) parties unilaterally giving indirectly to each other (see Figure 39, p350), produces stronger integrative bonds in terms of the dimensions of trust, affective regard, and solidarity, than either form of direct (reciprocal/unilateral) or negotiated/bilateral exchange.

These statements are supported by Molm’s experimental observations and in the case of the present research, might also help to explain the following WWOOFer comment in the WWOOF Australia Newsletter (#72):

What is clear to me is that where hosts are exploiting WWOOFers for their labour only, and don’t have an interest in the person as a whole, then the contract is already at risk. Conversely if WWOOFers ask only how many hours are required, and want to stick to their own agenda without blending into the household, then a great deal of learning and getting to know each other is lost.

This demonstrates that WWOOFing is an activity undertaken within a relatively delicate balance of exchange(s) which determines overall whether, and how (well) it works. The structure of the WWOOFing arrangement - a mix of negotiated and reciprocal exchange depending on the parties in question - would, according to Molm, work most powerfully or successfully in terms of the mix of motives of hosts and WWOOFers, when the experienced ratio is more strongly reciprocal than negotiated. That is, as the quote above suggests, beyond the basic contractual form of (negotiated) exchange (4 hours work for food and accommodation), individual further acts of unilateral giving by each party (reciprocal exchange) will promote and/or require, greater *engagement* with each other, and it is this which is underpins the balance of assessable *outcomes* of specific WWOOFing experiences, such as those described in Chapters 5 and 6. In making this assertion, it assumed that it is accurate to see engagement as both a *process* and as the indicative *outcome* of the generation of an amalgam of the key reciprocity effects explored by Molm: greater trust, affective regard and commitment to the other. The term suggested here for this amalgamation is *connection*, in the senses described in Chapter 6.

Making Connections

Why should the structure of an exchange mechanism be so powerful in creating these effects and lead to connection? For Molm (2010, p124) this revolves around the building of “integrative bonds” via various risk and conflict based mechanisms:

Uncertainty, risk and trust - Where benefits are flowing unilaterally in *reciprocal* (Figure 38a, p349) and *generalized* exchange (Figure 39, p350), each party has no assurance of reciprocation and therefore risks giving, but not receiving in return. However, recalling the notion of a scaffolding of good will, risk “increases integrative bonds by promoting trust” since it tends to promote efforts to demonstrate trustworthiness and to judge that of others⁷.

Expressive value and affective regard - Where acts of reciprocity are voluntary and uncertain as above, in contrast to something assumed as part of a negotiated bilateral agreement, this in turn conveys “expressive value, over and above the instrumental benefits of exchange” which communicates a regard for the other and some measure of intent to continue to build the relationship.⁸ In the case of WWOOFing, this might be

⁷ Molm (2010) here cites Kelley and Thibaut (1978); Kollock (1994); Molm et al. (2000); Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994).

⁸ Molm (2010) here cites Kollock and O'Brien (1992); Kranton (1996); Offer (1997).

in the form of a host offering to take a WWOOFer to a local attraction, or a WWOOFer creating an art work to leave with the host.

Competition and conflict, cooperation and solidarity - In mixed motive exchanges such as those in WWOOFing, there are both competitive and cooperative aspects which can be made more or less salient to the actors depending on the structure of the exchange. Bilateral exchanges can make the actors more aware of the relative distribution of benefits since one act is supposed to be fairly repaid by the other. This itself can increase the salience of any perceived disparities and increase conflict. Unilateral flows however, tend to mute their salience, “by making it harder for actors to compare what each receives from the exchange, and by diffusing responsibility for both the costs and the inequalities of exchange” (Molm 2010, p124). Again, where hosts and WWOOFers act to benefit each other *beyond* a core negotiated bilateral exchange, this tends to amplify cooperation and solidarity. This explains why one former host complained that WWOOFers seem to increasingly “want scheduled work hours and set rest hours each day and most seem surprised if asked to help outside their plan”.

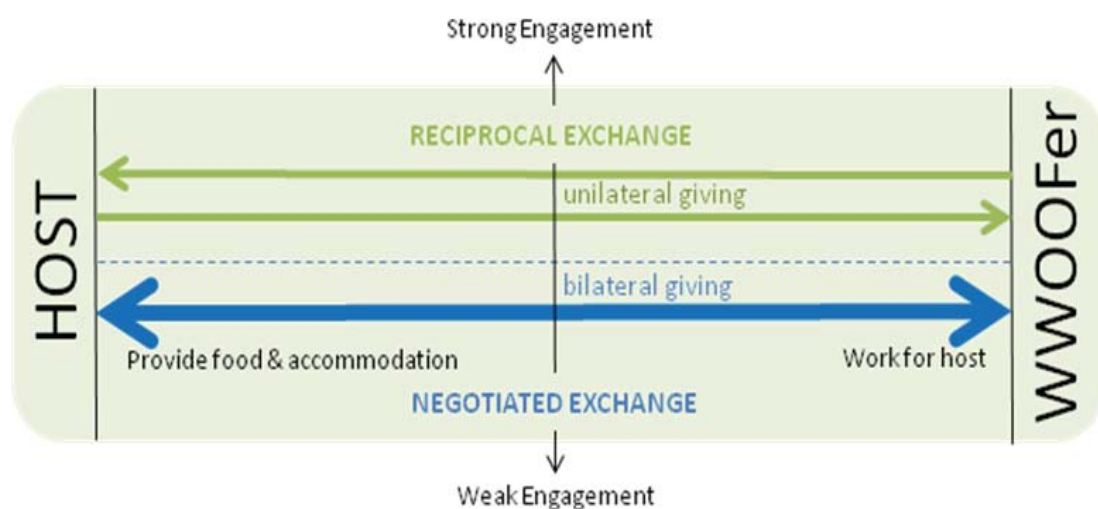
Without laboring too much more on the detail of Molm’s work, the important finding seems to be that reciprocal forms of exchange are able to produce:

strong bonds of trust and solidarity between actors even in the absence of a close personal relationship, whereas repeated exchanges between the same actors—even ones showing strong evidence of behavioral commitment — are less likely to generate bonds of trust and affective attachment when those exchanges are negotiated, especially when the actors in the relationship are unequal in power (Molm 2010).

Bearing in mind a vast body of literature that points to the generally uneven power relations in tourism encounters (for example Becton 2006; Behera 2006; Bennett 2007; Briedenhann and Wickens 2004; Hall 2003; Pleumarom 2003; Ryan 2002; Telfer 2003; Timothy, Singh et al. 2003; Timothy and Tosun 2003; Wearing and Wearing 1988; Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003), and following presentation of findings to this point, the contrast highlighted immediately by this work of Molm’s, is that between WWOOFing and conventional purely negotiated exchanges of a tourism experience, product, or service for money. While WWOOFing is a negotiated agreement in the minimum sense of making an arrangement within the WWOOF umbrella agreement of half a day’s work for food and accommodation, it is clearly also aligned with reciprocal forms of exchange as previous chapters have demonstrated. It is very flexible and fluid

in practice, with any initial negotiated agreement between hosts and WWOOFers known to be subject to review following periods of mutual, engaged experience. It is best conceived therefore, as a hybrid form of exchange and the structural form or mix that it ultimately takes, is the product of the parties involved and the results of their (ongoing) engagement with each other, including the terms of their engagement. This more nuanced view of the WWOOF exchange provides a more heuristic model to explain the processes and results of WWOOFing encounters, as illustrated in Figure 40.

Figure 40: Structure of the WWOOF Exchange



Acknowledging that hosts ‘make the rules’ overall, the structural mix (negotiated/reciprocal) nevertheless determines the degree to which engaged connections between hosts and WWOOFers are made, or can be made. This may also contribute to our understanding of the reluctance of some WWOOFers to work on commercial farms where they felt the risk was greater to them of being treated as cheap labour, rather than as a family member.⁹ It also helps explain Uriely and Reichel’s (2000) earlier findings about working tourists that had significantly more positive attitudes towards their hosts by developing social exchange with them when they understood their work situation to be a part of their total (tourism) experience, compared with when they approached their hosts in a more purely ‘mercenary’, economic (i.e. ‘negotiated’) exchange manner.

⁹ Nimmo (2001a) also found that half her participant WWOOFers avoided commercial farms as perceived hosts made a profit out of not paying for their labour.

All this suggests that structure of exchange has been generally underappreciated, not surprisingly perhaps, in the context of an intensifying broader concern with 'rational actor' models of exchange since the 1970s. But Molm's recent experimental work too, suggests that "any experience with reciprocal exchange, whether it comes early in a relationship or later, fundamentally changes the affective character of the relationship" (Molm 2010, p126), and as suggested in Figure 40, produces stronger engagement.

Money Stuff

In light of this work, we might begin to understand the relevance to many participants of the diminishment of 'money stuff' in the act of WWOOFing and the way that this has been perceived (see Chapters 5 and 6) to *transform* the relationships and outcomes possible through WWOOFing. This in turn has relevance in consideration of some of the so-called 'other postmodern tourism' forms such as volunteer tourism (Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003) and 'decommodified tourism' (Wearing, McDonald et al. 2005) that have been explored in terms of the closeness or intimacy (Conran 2006; McIntosh and Zahra 2007) of relationships able to develop (or not (Minca and Oakes 2006; Oakes 2006)) between tourist 'selves' and host 'others', or the conditions under which an effective collapsing of the self–other distinction can take place (Wearing 2001; Wearing 2002; Wearing 2003; Wearing, Deville et al. 2008; Wearing and Wearing 2001; Wearing and Wearing 1998b).

Forms of exchange in which actors reciprocate unilateral acts of giving, either directly or indirectly, promote bonds of trust, affective regard, and solidarity by increasing risk and uncertainty and by muting the salience of conflict. Actors who engage in these forms of exchange experience a fundamentally different relationship than actors who negotiate bilateral agreements with binding terms (Molm 2010, p129).

Where the actors are 'tourists' and tourism service industry workers, opportunities to reciprocate unilateral acts of giving are certainly possible in and among the increasing array of tourism types discussed in earlier chapters. But the likelihood of transcending the basic bilateral *negotiated exchange* arrangement which includes the promise of certain standards, the generation of experience related expectations to be met and the need for customer satisfaction on a range of fronts, seems to necessarily require some degree of servitude. Commercially profitable, negotiated exchange encounters between tourists and hosts have been observed therefore to be fraught, from the point of view of authenticity, as already discussed. But whether because of, or in spite of authenticity, it is becoming clear that there are many seeking opportunities in the

context of travel, to have experiences significantly different in character than commercially oriented, negotiated encounters. In part, this is about a desire to occupy different types of spaces at the least commodified end of the tourism spectrum (Edensor 2001), where perhaps different modes of operation or spatial practices (Meethan 2001), including *ways of exchanging*, are possible.

The core idea that presents itself here then, is that travel modes structured in such a way and occurring in such spaces, that one is able to, or required to give and receive unilaterally, facilitate the transcending of sometimes frequently alienating barriers imposed by cash exchanges found in enclavic tourist spaces, to produce more personal or sincere encounters that meet the motivations of certain tourists.

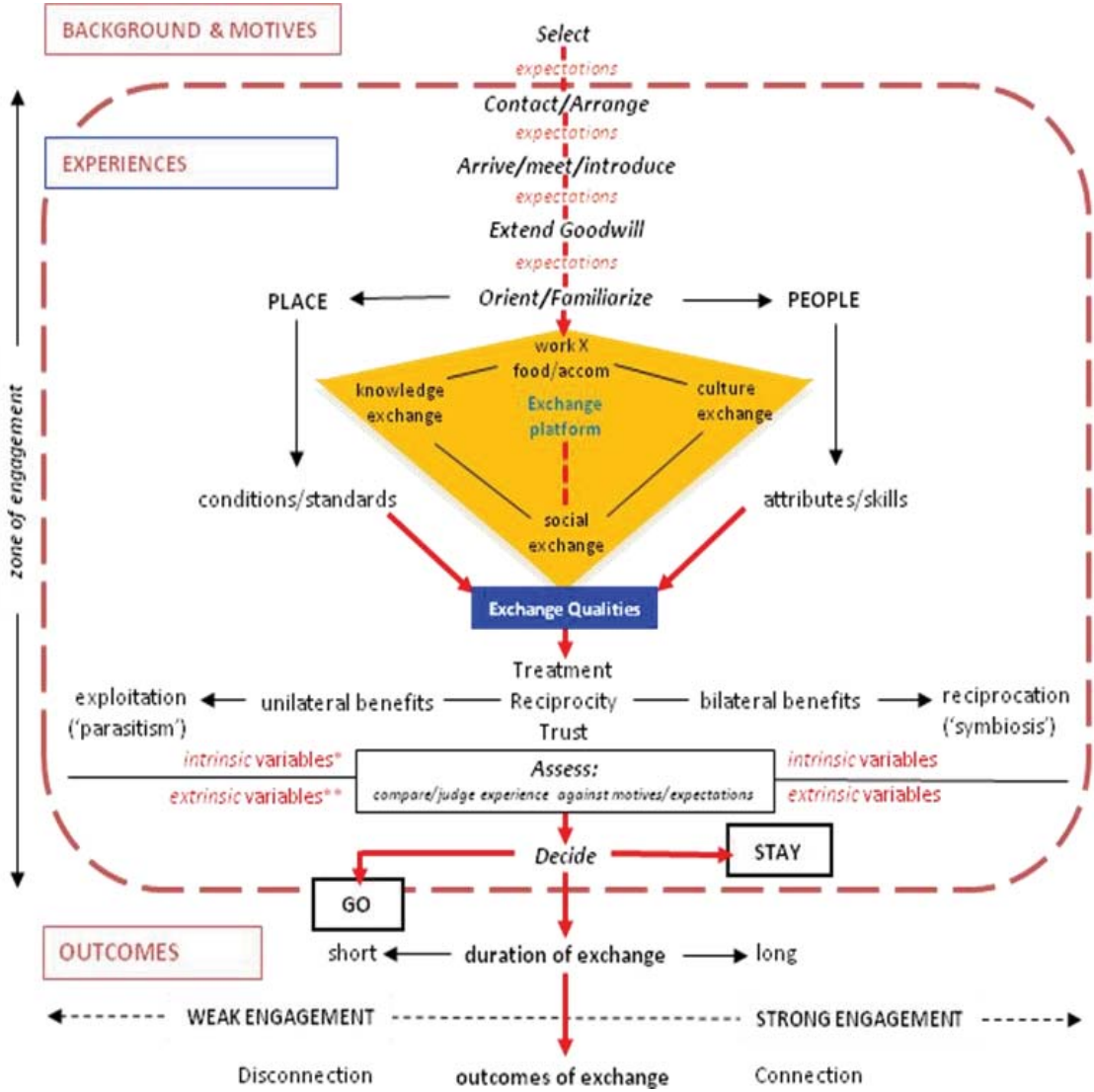
Building Trust and Staying Power

The bilateral negotiated exchange aspect of WWOOFing may or may not produce sufficient mutual gains for each party, but a degree of unilateral reciprocation contributes to the building of trust and good faith, reducing the risk of losses to each party through uneven or uncertain gains.¹⁰ If the exchange pattern does not maximize an individual's gain, the act of reciprocity itself has expressive value over and above the instrumental value of benefits obtained through exchange and so giving unilaterally to maintain or increase the reciprocity of the other party (one kindness begets another) may sometimes be a stronger motivation than simply benefit maximisation from the exchange. This seems to result in and require bonds of trust as described above. It seems to produce the much sought 'closeness' to local people and escape from the alienation of the tourism bubble by virtue of the structure of the exchange, which manifests as a 'co-created experience', also brought about by whatever personal skills and attributes that both parties might bring to bear upon their relationship. In terms of a 'collaboration' spectrum (Timothy, Singh et al. 2003; Timothy and Tosun 2003), there appears to be through this mechanism, an opening up of the possibilities for moving participant 'tourist' (and 'host') parties away from platforms of *alienation* (and coercion), towards collaborative *integration*. The term used in an earlier chapter (following MacCannell) was 'symbiosis' which becomes a possibility where there is mutual engagement both in the core negotiated bilateral exchange element of WWOOFing and the more 'optional' unilateral exchange aspects.

¹⁰ Which are to be expected when the guidelines are loose and the parties need to be adaptable and flexible in what they give and receive which may or may not be even.

In Molm’s terms, increasing engagement across the range of exchange possibilities should produce greater trust, solidarity and affective integrative bonds which are also likely to affect the “**endurance** of exchange relationships” (Molm 2010, p129). This mention of endurance is a reminder that there is a point at which the outcomes or products of experiences (Chapters 5 and 6) begin to emerge from within the engagement zone and begin to feed into the assessment made by each party of their experience, contributing to decisions about continuation or termination.

Figure 41: Processes, Conditions and Outcomes



* Intrinsic variables include all interrelated aspects of the exchange in diagram
 ** Extrinsic variables are overall travel plans, Visa/financial limits, other goals

3.3 Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Hosts have preferences, usually based on experience, of minimum or maximum WWOOFer stays, at least in making initial arrangements:

We usually work around a week. And we can put up with a difficult WWOOFer for a week. And if after a week we find that we've really enjoyed the person, then we say you can stay as long as you like (Host B).

... we'll try it out for 3-4 days and if it's OK, you know, they may stay for 2 months. But if not, we don't need any more work, thank you (Host D).

Hosts therefore have overall power to determine the **duration** of the arrangement that best suits them (see Figure 41 above).

It is sometimes the intention of WWOOFers to stay somewhere for a long period, but again, doing things on a trial basis first is often recommended (Rother 2009). In practice, both parties set some initial parameters (a negotiated exchange), commence their engagement featuring varying degrees of reciprocal exchange, and move through cycles of assessment of experiences, until such time as a decision is made by one or other party to conclude the arrangement. As such, duration of stay is a broadly useful indicator of the degree to which the arrangement is working for both parties.

How Will I Ever Fit?

Durability relates also to *fit* (Maycock 2008) and *workability*. Fit refers firstly to the fitting into the lives of hosts, as described by Host M:

[W]hen you take someone into your home, that person should try and, I mean they're here to have an experience, with an Australian, and to find out what they're life and what their culture is all about, and perhaps you should, at least make an effort to fit in with the family... I would want to, fit, just to join in, with whatever... they were doing (Host M).

Failing to meet this expectation was reason for her to close off the experience for one WWOOFer, whom she thought should "find somewhere else". Fit relates closely to engagement, as Host S1 also pointed out:

There are certainly people that we would not have back. If they don't talk to us they're not much fun. If they do the work a little bit slowly and if what they are really here for is

everything free, and then don't talk to us... I don't kick 'em out, I just think they're a bore! [laughs]... They can go on and be a bore somewhere else (Host S1).

As reported in Chapter 5, Hosts S2 and B also found that the fit of a WWOOFer with their children was critical and have even had the children request that the parents terminate an exchange in which the fit was not good. For these hosts, fit and workability and therefore duration, result from shared worldviews, but also, particularly for those from very different cultural backgrounds, the ability to absorb and share information, openness and flexibility.

With previous experience as a WWOOFer, Host JL understood the urge to escape from some hosts before the process of engagement had yet settled. From this he had learned to take pro-active steps to facilitate a feeling of fit for a WWOOFer (such as buying food that will make them happy), resulting in valuable repayments of effort by them. In short, he felt that the way he operated enshrined the idea in practice of 'you get back what you give'.

Fit or workability may be something that sometimes requires significant effort, depending on the combination of people and place or the qualities of the exchange. Several participants noted that giving oneself to or for the other party can be energy draining for both, common in the situation in which there is not a high level of 'fit':

... there's certainly a lot of energy which has to be put into the experience and it's quite tiring.
... By the end of the WWOOFing experience, to some degree you're kind of relieved that it's over (WWOOFer R).

In the end, the decision to stay or go, or to continue to host or to terminate, will in practice be considered in the context of both *intrinsic variables* (i.e. the qualities of the exchange itself) and *extrinsic variables* (the motives and expectations of each party). The decision of a WWOOFer to leave before an initially agreed time for example, might be due to the fact that the experience did not match expectations in some relatively important way, like being unable to learn what they might have hoped, uncommunicative hosts, or work tasks perceived to be beyond the call of duty or the spirit of WWOOF¹¹.

¹¹ Expectations of WWOOFers themselves might be unrealistic also, as noted by one former host: "I think the way it is marketed to potential wwoofers overseas needs to be looked at though, I think they come here already with the wrong idea" (from letter to researcher from disaffected former host).

While many unexpectedly long stays are common, one of the aspects of the claim that “WWOOFers are changing” and becoming more like backpacking tourists is that they now “seem to be in a hurry and hardly ever stay longer than 5/6 days at the most” (van Raders, former host, pers. comm).

Other participant hosts expressed the view that many WWOOFers are similar to backpackers in trying to cram in a maximum diversity of experiences, which moderates the duration of experiences. Ultimately, the duration of the experience also conditions the *outcomes* possible (see Chapters 5 and 6), since the longer the stay, the greater the scope for deeper experiential engagement. Implicit in this, is the degree to which WWOOFers and hosts make an effort to share, as discussed earlier in terms of attributes and skills such as generosity, goodwill, positivity, inclusivity, conviviality and openness.

For many WWOOFers, the ultimate concern is to make and feel a close connection to local hosts, to penetrate beyond the alienating barriers of the tourism bubble (see Chapter 6). The degree to which they can position themselves with sincerity (Maycock 2008; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006) and trustworthiness in a manner that encourages hosts to make them welcome as part of the family or community (Vansittart 2002), is critical, as is the propensity of hosts to do so. Ideally, in each exchange, both parties progress towards achieving their aims *by* addressing themselves to the aims of the other. If reciprocal interdependence is not realised early in this lock and key situation, it can be expected that the outcomes will be limited and the exchange relatively brief. However, recognition of the interdependence of each party and an appropriate degree of engagement *can* establish a positive cycle of reciprocal exchange from which outcomes appear to be profound (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Authenticity: Immersing and Engaging

In some respects, the process described above resembles a dance with essential, expected minimum form, to which significant expressive flourishes can be added depending on and representing the talents of the individuals participating. In Molm’s terminology, much can be done to increase integrative bonds.¹² It is to be expected

¹² To extend this metaphorical exploration even further, one could suggest that because youthful travellers of this time are increasingly bound up to some degree with forms of social media that seem to encourage or legitimise flirtatious connection, through internet and speed dating and through various forms online chat, it is possible that the notion of ‘trying out’ or browsing relationships or possibilities to see to what extent they seem to ‘work’ (cf Cohen’s 1979 experimental tourist) is not a foreign idea in the process of engaging with WWOOF hosts. An enormous amount of flexibility and negligible punitive impact from the

though that adhering *only* to the basic exchange of work for accommodation and food would limit the depth of the encounter and the significance of the experience, since doing so reduces the opportunity to develop an experiential closeness to hosts that *could* result in the achievement of personalised, and therefore personally meaningful cultural experiences.

It seems the creation of such closeness is a key difference between WWOOFing and regular or commercial farm tourism, where engaging in helping is of “low appeal” compared with the attractions of “scenic beauty, proximity to tourist routes and attractions as well as passive farm activities such as observing stock and farm activities” (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006, citing Pearce 1990 and Warren and Taylor 1999, p91). As such, the potential for “conflict over their role in farm duties” (e.g. boring repetitive, unsatisfying work) does not occur in the case of visitors to commercial farm stays, compared with WWOOFing (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006).

This invites us to again consider the character of interactions in a decommodified space compared with commercial experiences, being unmediated by market-value based expectations associated with cash based exchanges. But the important distinction was also made in passing much earlier, between the term *engagement* and *immersion*, a term sometimes also used in describing forms of tourism that aim to reduce the gap between the tourist self and the host other. It is argued here that immersion is a more passive or less interactive activity that produces a different metaphysical relationship between self and other, than engagement. An attempt is now made to illustrate this and its implications, by contrasting the experience of a commercial farmstay, with WWOOFing.

In a commercial farmstay, there is generally a tourist-centred, service oriented experience for the benefit of the visitor seeking encounters with ‘real’ farm life, in exchange for money. This purchase allows for a degree of immersion in daily life, no doubt giving some access to the working and perhaps some of the inner life of another. Indeed Ollenburg (2006) argues that the “most important feature for all farm tourism operations was the farm family itself”, supported by the following quotes from interviewees (i.e. farm hosts):

breaking of any ‘commitments’ (in the manner of ‘FLEXIVOL’ described in Volunteering England 2005) means that some WWOOFers can shop around, play the field etc, such that relationships may or may not develop, and there can legitimately be limits to expectations of each beyond the basic ‘steps’ of the exchange.

- “Farm tourism is interaction. We are the farmstay”.
- “People come to meet the real people”.
- “I want to provide an experience as personal as possible, so that the guests have a link with the family” (Ollenburg 2006, p182).

She goes on to say that the “provision of an authentic and genuine working farm experience was emphasised as the key success factor by many operators.” Yet the notion expressed here (without a hint of irony), is that it is possible to have a “genuine working farm experience” without actually working (see Photo 9).

Photo 9: 'Participating' in Rural Tourism: Immersion



Source: Ollenburg (2006 Plate 9.3 Wrotham Park, p182). Despite the fact that the subjects here look like spectators rather than participants, this image was intended to demonstrate the “very small proportion” in rural farm tourism that do “allow direct participation in farm activities”.

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (in terms of cultural capital) and Luft and Ingham (the Johari Window), Parsons (1997) illustrates how both parties are in a position in such tourism encounters to ‘reveal’ themselves to the other both within and outside a negotiated tourist-host ‘contract’, transmitting or exchanging and transforming cultural capital through experiences with and of the other. In this model, paying tourists are provided with a degree of proximity to the relevant ‘action’ that promises opportunities to immerse themselves and absorb experiential ‘essences’ (McRae 2003). The aim of

the negotiated exchange in this case, is to produce an ontological/epistemological regime closely approximating the ‘fly on the wall’, where cultural capital is exchanged ‘as advertised’ and as expected (Figure 42: Q1).

Being able to ‘act naturally’ (i.e., act authentically) for this encounter to successfully take place requires some degree of ‘emotional labour’ (cf Hochschild 1983) on the part of the host in particular, which is compensated for by incoming cash exchange, as negotiated.

Figure 42: The Johari Window & the Transformation of Cultural Capital

	Known to Host	Unknown to Host
Known to visitor	<p>Q1: Open Area/Arena What hosts and tourists see/reveal. Involves conscious consensual exchange of cultural capital, as advertised in brochures.</p>	<p>Q2: Blind Spot Aspects that tourists see but hosts are not aware of. Involves an unconscious exchange of cultural capital, as observed by guest [‘backstage’].</p>
Unknown to visitor	<p>Q4: Hidden Area/Facade Private space known only to hosts and kept from tourists. Includes local knowledge, sacred secrets that may be withheld to seek to preserve/maintain cultural capital.</p>	<p>Q3: Unknown Area The unconscious or subconscious part of the host, unseen by them, nor visitors. Transformation of cultural capital occurs as a result of repeated interactions [i.e. ‘demonstration effect’].</p>

Adapted from Parsons (1997)

But the Johari Window concept shows that other ontological/epistemological regimes exist where flows and transformations of cultural capital for tourist and host can arise, with different degrees of control. For example, there are areas specifically hidden from tourists (Q4) which ‘bracket off’ the full, culturally embedded story of a host’s life and which provide reprieve from interactions for the host. Blind spots (Q2) also exist, which represent the limits of hosts’ control over what is revealed (and what tourists assess to be true), while cultural capital may also be exchanged and transformed in possibly unpredictable and uncontrollable ways, as a result of repeated tourism encounters (Q3).

Immersion recalls the ontological/epistemological regime of the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry 2002), in which there is no intention to *alter* the essential medium of immersion, but for those immersed, to absorb *some* of it, primarily through gathering in its essences in a

weak form of participation which ideally, ensures the durability or 'sustainability' of the tourism product (Hughes 1995; Wahab and Pigram 1997; Wall 1997).

The tourist gaze however, has limited utility in accounting for those tourists wanting to engage their senses *and* their bodies (Franklin 2003a) in intimate (Conran 2006), or sincere (Taylor 2001) *exchanges*, where static essences (of both host and guest) might even be deliberately transformed in the process of exchange. Hence:

With commercial farm stay guests it's totally different. You have to be their servant as they are paying you money to stay here. I'd have to put my day aside to amuse them. I'd have to get formal. The WWOOFers, they've got to muck in (participant WWOOF host in McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006. p96).

WWOOFing is different from commercial farm tourism in terms of the degree to which it is outside of commodified relations, not delimited by the same norms prescribed by associated marketing intended to attract and persuade for financial profit. But just as the Australian government applies a distinction between *Visiting Friends and Relatives* and other more commodified forms of 'pleasure' tourism to international passenger arrivals generally, we are reminded that what is important about this, is a degree of intimacy with hosts (such as friends and relatives). WWOOFing is therefore different from most forms of tourism – not just commercial farm tourism - in that it transcends commodity relations and (perhaps *therefore*) can promote interpersonal closeness and even build relationships, while not attempting to represent or fix essential cultural identities (Hollinshead 1998). In terms of the parlance used earlier regarding 'authenticity' (referring back to Table 25, p316), WWOOFing operates between the realms of *subjective* and/or *existential* modes of authenticity, where what is authentic is either a relative or personal construct that may produce an acceptable degree of fit between the 'real' and the imagined, or is something personally meaningful, produced by the sincerity of the encounter rather than any given external reference point. This is effectively what is meant by the "primacy of personal authenticity instead of cultural authenticity" noted by Obenour (2004) in his study of the 'meaning of the journey' among many backpackers. Personal authenticity also encompasses various aspects of the earlier described '*feel*' of *WWOOFing*, such as trust, spontaneity, flexibility and a degree of informality: attributes considered to be "crucial" by long term budget travellers using WWOOF in escaping from mainstream or institutionalised travel circuits in New Zealand (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001, p175).

This discussion can be summarised by visualising a model continuum representing degrees of interaction, establishing clearly where it is that WWOOFing sits in respect of varying tourism forms. In this view, alienation/isolation stands at one extreme, with mutual engagement at the other. Immersion – in which the immersion ‘medium’ remains essentially unaltered by the encounter - is represented by a position towards the centre, but grading into the notion of *mutual* immersion (Pearce 2005, p143) in moving in the direction of *engagement* as interactivity (or human exchange) becomes increasingly two-way.

Individuals who travel into the domain of ‘others’ (many of which might be called ‘tourists’), are likely to be more or less comfortable at different points along such a continuum and different forms or mechanisms of travel bring people into different positions along it. This continuum is therefore also tied to types of tourism and with these variables, preferences regarding ontological and epistemological standpoints in relation to ‘the other’, along with preferred relations with authenticity, ranging from ‘assessing’ it to ‘producing’ it.

So whilst it can be agreed with Franklin (2003a) that a consumptive, embodied ‘touristic stance’ to the world may have expanded, the massive growth in the use of WWOOFing by travellers and its co-location with other burgeoning forms of flexible, informal, spontaneous and adventurous travel at the *engagement* end of this continuum, implies that the broader touristic trend may also have contributed to a precipitation of other, non- or anti-touristic outcomes amongst those that travel. WWOOFing appears to represent in Franklin’s terms, an example of a refuge from the touristic, but it is the engagement between hosts and WWOOFers in the micro-social realm that helps to understand the place of WWOOFing in the macro-sociology of tourism.

There is therefore need to return focus to the micro-social processes at play in the zone of engagement, to the range of factors considered by WWOOFers in weighing up and deciding whether to stay or go, and by hosts considering extending or finalising the exchange.

Harmony, Conflict, Power, Disengagement

Of primary importance, the core negotiated bilateral exchange must be ‘working’ for each, largely demonstrated to hosts by WWOOFers’ willingness to work, and to WWOOFers by the provision of ‘adequate’ levels of food and accommodation.

Additional actions beyond a strict bilateralism are demonstrated by engaging with each other particularly in and through unilateral acts of giving, which if reciprocated over time, positively affect the nature of the developing relationship (Molm 2010). The presence of this 'additional' reciprocal exchange appears to be what deepens or strengthens the engagement, or increases the sense of harmony or symbiosis experienced, which is the primary means by which individuals have significant *experiences* and *outcomes* (Chapters 5 and 6).¹³

This is not to say that reciprocation and symbiosis of this type always exists, nor that significant conflict is unknown between hosts and WWOOFers. There is not space to attempt to deconstruct the nature of conflict or determine specifically its triggers or causes, which might be ideological, cultural, generational, inter-personal or related to unreasonable expectations, and so on. The point here is to acknowledge that one or other party can sometimes feel that on balance, despite their best efforts, they have arrived at a situation which needs to change, either by making further effort to initiate change (as per above), or to terminate it and cut losses. Host and WWOOFer are relatively equal partners in terms of the ratio of relative power in this situation, although it must be acknowledged that hosts may have a slight 'home ground advantage'.¹⁴

In a delicate situation of balance in which its non-monetary character also means a reduced *right* to expect the usual 'standards' and 'conditions' that money can buy, WWOOFers must count on a mixture of luck, self-reliance, the good will of others and to be satisfied with things *as they find them*, to a large degree. This means that they must create their own experience unassisted by the conventions that underpin our usual reliance on getting what you pay for. Particularly where commercial imperatives exist on host properties, this might mean getting past the feeling of 'being used' as a cheap worker and penetrating into hearts and minds of hosts by the force of giving above and beyond that level of the basic exchange. In this situation, some WWOOFers have managed to learn a great deal without feeling exploited, because of their efforts to connect or engage, and because hosts have responded to them *as people*.

¹³ This aligns with the research of Pizam et al (2000) who found that for working tourists in Israel, the greater the intensity of social relationships between them and hosts, the more favorable their feelings towards their hosts, the greater their change in positive attitude toward their hosts and the destination as a whole, and the greater their satisfaction with their experience. Those staying and working upon Kibbutzim, who had the most intense social relationships with hosts, had the highest positive feelings towards hosts, experience and destination. Those developing only minor social relationships were shown to have the lowest positive feelings towards hosts, experiences and destination.

¹⁴ "[T]he host can take advantage of you, especially ... the lone traveller. You know? They get picked up, they've got no kind of escape route" (WWOOFer R).

Hosts have been shown to often give generously to WWOOFers outside of the basic exchange agreement also, to 'offset' their use of WWOOFers help, creating and feeding circumstances in which further cycles of reciprocation may be generated. This will occur in *chicken or the egg* fashion, to the extent that WWOOFers engage. To again quote Host JL, what is of most importance "is the degree to which they engage with what's going on".

The perception (rightly or wrongly) by one party that the other is unilaterally advantaged will obviously be detrimental to the exchange, especially to the trust that underpins it. Defences against this perhaps include both mutual modesty about what is given to the other, and/or acknowledgement and appreciation of the efforts of the other. Molm observes that reciprocal exchange, compared with purely negotiated exchange, reduces the differences in how actors in an unequal power relation perceive each other, since power differences accentuate the mechanisms underlying the effects of each structure. Power differences:

increase the risk and uncertainty of reciprocal exchange, particularly for disadvantaged actors, and they increase the salience of conflict in negotiated exchange — again, particularly for disadvantaged actors. An important consequence of these effects is that reciprocal exchange reduces the differences in how actors in an unequal power relation perceive each other (Molm 2010).

While power inequality reduces 'integration' in exchanges, Molm argues that its negative effects "can be countered by forms of exchange with unilateral giving":

Reciprocal exchange enables actors to overcome the divisions created by power and to develop the trust and affective bonds that promote productive exchange relations (Molm 2010, p127).

This serves to explain for example, the phenomenon of WWOOFers working beyond the call of duty for hosts, extending goodwill to build trust that will hopefully serve both parties to achieve a satisfying reciprocity. However, if perceptions of relative advantage/disadvantage are unable to be extinguished through reciprocal exchange efforts, *reciprocation* soon gives way to *exploitation*, and the promise of symbiosis yields to a sense of parasitism (refer to Figure 41, p358). Engagement weakens or

breaks down entirely, and the two parties begin the process of disengagement, which impacts in turn upon the outcomes possible for each party.

It was much pleasanter at home, when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits (Alice in Wonderland).

4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter found there is a convergence of opinion that WWOOFing is chiefly about social and cultural interaction and that it is an alternative to tourism, rather than a form of alternative tourism. This general level of agreement broadly defines WWOOFing and points to the existence of a shared understanding about the needs for WWOOFing to be mutually beneficial to achieve functionality. The mutual action of each party occurs around, or as a result of the micro socio-cultural interactions at the heart of the experience. Hence the term *engagement* was ineluctably identified as the key to understanding the motives, experiences and outcomes of hosts and WWOOFers, with WWOOFing defined as:

a human exchange activity built on principles of the organic movement that involves a process of engagement between two parties (hosts and WWOOFers) to achieve their mutual and individual goals, on a range of levels.

Additional support for the centrality of engagement was then found in recognising that WWOOFing involves engaging with people and places *as they are*, which represents a significant departure from most forms of tourism. WWOOFing in fact offers people an avenue for escape from 'tourism', or a doorway into a different, yet very ordinary sort of world normally inaccessible to 'tourists' who are constantly faced with the relentless, cyclical processes of commoditisation of people and places (Butler 1990). To do this, a degree of adventurousness, in the manner of Alice in Wonderland, was shown to be necessary.

There is no real place for the 'tourist gaze' in WWOOFing or its analysis, and it was argued that there is need for a shift to more emic, personal constructions of reality in the WWOOFing situation suited to the engagement at the heart of the experience. Thus existential authenticity was said to be a useful stance or tool for the WWOOFer in addressing themselves to the 'reality' co-created by them and their hosts. Sincerity was also considered to be a fundamental trait and goal of the experience that helped in

creating existentially authentic and personally meaningful, sometimes intimate experiences.

The high degree of complexity, ambiguity and liminal amorphousness inherent in the WWOOFing phenomenon and its relationship to tourism led to its consideration in terms of a ludic Wonderland: a sense of clear definition on these matters appears to be of little importance to the participants and ambiguity does not detract from the experience given that the 'feel' of WWOOF experiences is about embracing and entering an unknown world. Indeed, WWOOFing seems to be readily formulated within notions of boundlessness and 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000) and it was suggested therefore that it is related to a larger interest in ludic worlds in which people are relatively free to operate within broadly defined or limited norms to (co)create experiences with the others they encounter, by force of their own interactive efforts. This occurs in a *zone of engagement*, described as a natural or logical focal point in the course of this research.

Engagement was considered to be a part of the *process* of a WWOOFing exchange and a *pre-condition* or pre-disposition for a certain depth of exchange. Willingness to engage was explored in terms of the presence and nature of various conditions and attributes associated with people and places involved in WWOOFing. These combine to produce the *qualities of the exchange* overall and assessment by hosts and WWOOFers of these against their expectations contributes significantly to assessments of experiences and ultimately to experiential outcomes. Engagement is also an end '*product*' of an encounter or a *result* of exchange, culminating in connections made between people, and between people and places.

The zone of engagement is the stage for interactive, experiential learning (Kolb 1984) which itself can assist in the wider outcome of accumulating useful social capital (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000; Stehlik 2002). Focus on the processes in and qualities of this zone also helps to re-formulate a conception of tourist space "that can enable the tourist and host to meet and negotiate each other outside of the limiting tourist dialogue currently defining the field" (McRae 2003, p250).

Key stages of the journey into 'WWOOFerland' were explored, from initial host selection through to the decision to continue WWOOFing/hosting, or to terminate the experience. Gaining a sense of reciprocity of effort was shown to be a basis for a

properly symbiotic exchange, and the mechanisms for the perpetuation of this were explored in the context of the *structure* of the exchange.

Molm's work from the field of social psychology assisted in seeing that the WWOOF exchange operates on two interconnected levels. The primary level of a minimum negotiated exchange of work for food and accommodation is necessary but not sufficient to produce the degree of reciprocity and mutual trust generating significant outcomes. Beyond this bilateral exchange, particularly in the early stages of meeting a stranger, there is much value in additional forms of unilateral giving, where the return is not easily identified in terms of time or form. This act increases the sense of good will between parties and in turn, may later beget a return act of unilateral giving. Voluntary acts of reciprocal exchange add to the integrative and affective bonds experienced, acknowledging and affirming good intentions towards the other, resulting in greater trust and leading to the possibility of increased further engagement. They also contribute to reducing conflicts likely to arise due to any real or imagined unevenness that might be detected in regard to the core bilateral exchange, all of which will affect the durability of the exchange.

Many now seem to be seeking travel experiences different in character to commercially oriented and negotiated tourism encounters. One of the important ways in which the experience of WWOOFing is different is not only that it is de-commodified, but that it offers a different structure of reciprocity that allows for different ways of exchanging. Travel modes structured in such a way that one is able to, or even required to give and receive unilaterally as well as bilaterally, appear to facilitate the transcending of alienating barriers imposed by cash exchanges found in enclavic tourist spaces, to produce more personal or sincere encounters that meet the motivations of certain tourists. This also generates a range of benefits for hosts who significantly, retain power and autonomy over their situation in respect of the 'tourism' in their midst.

It was also argued that these processes produced *by* and resulting *in* engagement also mark another important difference between WWOOFing and commercial tourism. The engagement described here in relation to WWOOFing is critical to its 'success' and is a term that specifically requires mutuality or reciprocity of effort. Much tourism with a cultural component (Cohen 1988b; Craik 1997; Dearden and Harron 1994; Parsons 1997; Reisinger and Turner 2003) is premised on the maintenance of certain essential cultural qualities of hosts that form the basis for touristic interest (Hollinshead 1998). The idea, even in the most interactive of cultural tourism forms conceivable

(Rosenbaum 2007), despite rhetoric to the contrary, is to produce an encounter more akin to *immersion* than engagement, which was argued to involve a different ontological/epistemological regime that, as many scholars of tourism have found, is paradoxical and problematic to sustain while also having concern for 'objective authenticity'. WWOOFing seems to force us to take a look at the ontological underpinnings of and assumptions about tourism and this itself appears to provide a useful analytical pathway. Engagement, compared with *immersion*, leads in a different direction. It is premised on different motives, produces different experiences and outcomes and appears not to be so easily problematised by key paradoxes of authenticity, power and sustainability in tourism.

This chapter has brought together a wide range of material gathered from the field, and together with the two previous chapters, provides a *basis* for a grounded empirical account with more general theoretical reach than previously produced. It is the task of the following and final chapter to bring together the strands so far produced into a coherent explanatory weave.

CHAPTER 8: REFLECTIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

This research was generated in the first instance, by reflection upon personal experiences of WWOOFing and with that, an awareness that its use by international travellers seemed to be part of a broader emerging phenomenon. These personal experiences were themselves motivated by two overlapping ‘interests’ (see Chapter 4, Section 2) in:

1. travelling in and learning about the world in ways that provided for close, but *invited* encounters with people and places, which previous personal experience of travel suggested was not easy to access as a ‘tourist’.
2. learning from the practices of people seeking to live lightly upon the earth, while positively addressing environmental problems locally, through ‘earth repair’ and food production techniques that avoid use of polluting chemical inputs.

The research was framed by curiosity about whether this phenomenon had interesting wider implications for consideration of tourism, leisure and sustainability. WWOOFing in Australia had grown exponentially in the previous decade or more, at a greater rate than tourism visitation in that time. It has been widely discussed in popular media, off- and online, and as I subsequently found, more so than ‘alternative tourism’ or volunteer tourism for example, which had both been the subject of much academic interest in the same period. Very limited scholarly attention to this expanding, increasingly global phenomenon strongly suggested the need for further exploratory research.

While cognizant of some scholarly perspectives on WWOOFing, these did not seem to fully capture or represent this personal experience of, and interest in the subject and it was determined that further research was needed. The chief aim was to work within the social world of WWOOFers and hosts without presuming too much about them and to develop theory in light of findings made there, adopting the symbolic interactionist precept that if people define situations as real “they are real in their effects” (Dann 2002, p5).

The question that therefore guided the research and its presentation in this thesis was devised very broadly as:

What is the WWOOFing phenomenon about?

This question breaks down into a number of smaller questions concerning *where WWOOFers come from, what they seek, the nature of their experiences* and so on. Consideration of data collected on host and WWOOFer backgrounds, motives, experiences and outcomes served to answer many of these questions, but because WWOOFing lies beyond mainstream consumer culture and offers an alternative to the way people can travel, interact and create experiences, one of the 'big questions' about or implications of WWOOFing is that of its relationship to 'tourism' or consumption more generally. Indeed, travel forms that operate beyond the reach of commodification processes, beyond conceptualisations of tourism anchored in a generalised adherence to a neo-liberalist free market perspective, are growing in popularity. Couch Surfing, house swapping, Help-X and LETS-Travel have all emerged quite recently alongside of the WWOOFing exchange, yet to the present, such mechanisms in the domain of cashless 'alternative economies' (Gibson-Graham 2008) remain largely ignored among tourism scholars. New 'collaborative consumption' (Botsman and Rogers 2010) mechanisms such as Air B&B are also yet to be explored. Though WWOOFing is about four decades old, it is suggested that this research nevertheless steps into relatively new territory within the tourism academy. Even the significant effort to map the growth and character of 'alternative', sustainable and community-based tourism forms that seek to maximise locally 'positive' impacts of tourism, has not overlapped in any significant way with academic interest in WWOOFing, perhaps again because it operates on a non-monetary exchange basis that bears no resemblance to that which has in the minds of many participants, come to define tourism.

Yet since WWOOFing and tourism are closely entwined, this thesis is therefore part of an effort towards achieving an ontological reframing of tourism, by reading for and emphasising *difference* rather than reinforcing the dominant representation of tourism in '*the economy*'. In many ways, the relationship between tourism and WWOOFing has therefore been a central preoccupation of this thesis. It has been interpreted as much as possible through theoretical and empirical analysis of data representing participants' subjectivities, with a reflexive eye on the interpretive filtering of personal experience and a certain sympathy with the idea of producing a tourism related research inquiry that can, in the view of Gibson-Graham (2008, p620), "excavate the possible" that might otherwise be nihilated by capitalocentrism.¹

¹ "Through devoting academic attention to hidden and alternative economies [some academics] ... have constituted new objects of study and investigation, making them visible as potential objects of policy and politics... [These academics] are contributing in some way to making economic diversity more credible.

Given the range of data sources and mix of techniques used to approach this research, it should perhaps be expected that the nature of the relationship between WWOOFing and tourism might remain to some extent ambiguous at the end of this work. Indeed, constructions built from interpretation of the perspectives of multiple participants often are, but Uriely (2005) suggests there are grounds for accommodating pluralist conceptions of what is going on in any social phenomenon, provided there is no ultimate positivist requirement to produce a 'final', unassailable, universally 'true' standpoint. As stated in Chapter 4, knowledge itself is a construction and 'truth', regardless of the position taken on a continuum between hard positivism and extreme relativism, is at best, tentative. Ultimately, it is "a matter of the best-informed and most sophisticated construction on which there is consensus at a given time" (Schwandt 1994). Notably, knowledge constructions will be limited also by available resources of time, money and enthusiasm and are likely to eventually be renovated or replaced.

Even so, the task in the remaining space is to revisit conclusions reached in earlier chapters about macro-sociological and micro-social dimensions of WWOOFing and to attempt to plausibly weave them together in a manner of interest to tourism scholars. Recall that the work presented above and below has developed through cycles of interpretive analysis as part of a *constructivist* grounded theory approach. Analysis of multiple data sources has been informed also by the insider involvement of the researcher as a participant observer. The chasm between hard positivism and extreme relativism has been negotiated using a mixture of appropriate tools to achieve a systematic and grounded approach to data. While being aware of demands some might have for the production of an objective truth, in what follows the researcher is acknowledged to be represented to some degree as an active participant and even collaborator with other subjects in the co-production of shared knowledge. That is to say, in spite of all efforts to be free of prejudice in undertaking the research process, the researcher's interpretation and representation of participants' divergent views are acknowledged to be present in the following attempt to pull together a coherent and plausible explanation of what the WWOOFing phenomenon is about.

They are resisting the discursive erasure threatened by neoliberal theory, drawing attention to and thereby strengthening a range of economic practices that exist outside the purview of neoliberal studies" (Gibson-Graham 2008, p13).

2 NATURE OF THE PHENOMENON

Chapter 2 described the origins of WWOOF, outlining its original purposes and charting the moment it began to change shape and size in its spread from the UK. There are now WWOOF organisations in more than half the countries on the globe. Membership in Australia, particularly since the mid 1990s, has grown phenomenally and has continued to rise dramatically during the course of this research to the present (2005-2011).

What had been written about WWOOFing prior to this research demonstrated the diversity of hosts, properties and activities that WWOOFers may encounter and something of the nature of their experiences. WWOOF's relatively informal but dedicated relationship to the organic movement was noted, as was the point in history where its founding managers made the conscious decision to open WWOOF up more broadly to the many travellers that WWOOF perceived would make use of it. Tourism and the organic movement began to become strongly and irreversibly entwined in this pivotal moment, seen by many involved to have changed the character of WWOOFing in Australia irrevocably.

WWOOF undoubtedly began to be used increasingly for purposes quite specific to tourists and travellers, as the research demonstrates, because it lends itself so well to the achievement of important pursuits and goals of long-term, low budget travellers, not to mention it now being a legitimate means to extend a working tourist visa in Australia. The success of WWOOF (and other energy exchange based enterprises) testifies that there is (seen to be) room out there for new modes of travel, all of which should be further analysed at macro-sociological and micro-social levels through empirical and theoretical research.

Many general accounts of WWOOFing emphasise that it is fundamentally different from tourism because at its heart is meaningful contact with the 'real' Australia (on some accounts represented as also synonymous with 'alternative Australia'). This suggests the important possibility that by WWOOFing, tourists could become more like travellers, who are popularly represented as *people* who interact with true locals, rather than tourists, who mostly or only interact with other tourists and 'staff' within the tourism 'industry'. Since this is also an aim of many so-called 'alternative tourism' forms, it is natural to find that much of the literature and the organisation itself, sees WWOOF as both an alternative to and paradoxically also, a type of alternative tourism.

Early scholars with a focus on WWOOFing called it a “neglected” aspect of rural/farm tourism in New Zealand (McIntosh and Campbell 2001), demonstrating some key ideological differences between commercial farm tourism hosts and WWOOF hosts. McIntosh and Bonneman (2006) later explored such differences from the perspective of WWOOFers who in both cases, were deemed to be *tourists* seeking farm tourism experiences. But it has been shown that this does not adequately capture what contemporary WWOOFers are, or are seeking. WWOOFing is certainly different to commercial farm tourism, but is a tool used by a growing number of contemporary budget tourists/travellers seeking a flexible experiential pathway into the socio-cultural realm of Australian hosts. It is interactive and economical, but perhaps crucially for some, removed from the usual techniques of ‘touring’ that are almost entirely rooted in and determined by commodified or market based frames of reference. The growth of WWOOFing suggests the existence of a demand for such decommodified experiences as part of “a distinctive form of escape from mainstream ‘institutionalized’ tourism flows” (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001, p169), rather than farm tourism per se. It allows them to reach their goal of avoiding the ‘beaten track’ of institutionalized tourism (in the language of Cohen 1972; 1973), which is harder and harder to achieve (MacCannell 2001; Richards and Wilson 2004), and also allows these travellers to extend travel time. Freedom and flexibility are “crucial for the whole experience” (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001, p175), while many, but not all contemporary backpackers, have a tendency towards “rejection of the market driven paradigm” in favour of “more extended immersion experiences with landscape and culture” (Ateljevic and Doorne 2004, p71). WWOOFing is doubtless driven by this, with ‘experience seeking’ now a broadly shared concern (Tourism Australia 2006). A growing demand for ‘authentic’ experiences certainly stands as at least one of the well understood underpinnings of the phenomenal growth in WWOOFing, with its up front focus on experiencing ‘real’ Australia.

Another relevant broader tendency mentioned in the literature on tourism, is the call for tourism forms to become more ‘responsible’ on a range of fronts, which Stanford (2008, p270) identifies as requiring *respect and awareness, reciprocity, local economic contributions* and *engagement* with landscapes and people. In fact on this basis she claims WWOOFing is already a form of *responsible* tourism particularly *because* engagement is so crucial to the WWOOFing experience, as highlighted throughout this thesis.

Though WWOOFing is something that tourists do, whether it *is* tourism, prior to this research at least, seemed to remain something to be 'proven'. Indeed, Chapter 2 showed the need for weight to be given to alternative perspectives, including those of hosts, that remind us that WWOOFing has a number of attributes other than those concerned with the tourist experience, such as a focus on sustainability and social change.

3 A MACRO VIEW: WWOOFING AS TOURISM

Chapter 3 therefore supplemented and broadened the review of literature to investigate this central macro-sociological question, noting that tourism is nebulous and that a clear statement of its character is difficult to produce, even after many years of dedicated scholarship directed at it. This makes the important idea of 'alternative' tourism (AT) perhaps even more problematic to define, yet it suffices to depict as an umbrella term under which can be found many overlapping and continually (de-)differentiating tourism forms that share a common stance in relation to perceived negative impacts of 'conventional' tourism.

The desire to be alternative or new relative to something conventional or old, appears to be a driving force in much of human endeavor in societies that have enshrined the pursuit of novelty as a core value (Franklin 2003a) and in which personal distinction is a driver (Bourdieu 1984). In respect of travel, experiences that appear to get one closer to this 'edge' might be expected to flourish, for a time, if they generate suitable cultural capital (Riley 1995; Wheeler 1993). Certainly the existence and growth of AT since the 1970s suggests a sector already in a sense, primed for WWOOFing, or that WWOOFing offers an extension of the experiential possibilities found in alternative tourism forms.

Yet, the critiques that apply to AT do not readily apply to WWOOFing, since:

- WWOOFers do not pre-pay for experiences and therefore nobody stands to make short or long term profit from WWOOFing;
- WWOOFing is a relatively dispersed phenomenon, with the key action generally occurring away from ecologically fragile natural or culturally 'sensitive' environments;
- WWOOFing is initiated at the invitation of local landholders, not imposed upon them, and is reversible, unlike much tourism;

- the aim of the exchange for hosts, is commonly to sustainably utilise and/or 'improve' natural or modified environments, rather than solely to provide a touristic experience *of* such environments; and,
- hosts are free to refuse the request of WWOOFers to stay as it suits their needs, or to terminate the stay if it is not agreeable.

Notwithstanding these differences, WWOOFing certainly shares much with *any* and *all* of the forms of AT described in Chapter 3, and while AT has *some* utility in framing WWOOFing, it is difficult to specifically identify WWOOFing as a particular *form* or sub-type of AT. There is also scope for conceptualising WWOOFing from some of the theoretical considerations offered under the terms 'new tourism' and 'postmodern tourism', noting certain attitudinal traits they embody and the dissolution of certain earlier definitional 'boundaries' they represent. But again, it was difficult to say on theoretical grounds whether WWOOFing is a new form of *alternative* tourism or a *new* post-Fordist, customised tourism form, or an adjunct or alternative to tourism and therefore perhaps even a form of *post-tourism* (Feifer 1985). In short, the effort to identify WWOOFing from within the literature on tourism *types* pointed to the need to develop contemporary understanding through a collaborative process of exploration of WWOOFers' *and* hosts' experiences, from the ground up.

To sensitise the researcher in this process and to round out the literature review, consideration was also given to a selection of key concepts of tourism. In terms of tourist *motivation*, the ground covered:

- escape from everyday lives;
- escape from commodity relations;
- the search for authenticity;
- the intent to experience the (extra)ordinary lives of others; and
- the accumulation of cultural capital or 'distinction'.

In terms of tourist *experiences*, attention was drawn to both the *what* and the *how* of experiencing, with focus on the:

- consumption of tourist experiences and in particular, the tourist 'gaze' as a mode of consumption;
- experience of front (staged) and back stage ('real', 'authentic', behind the scenes) regions;

- idea of 'tourist space' as the place or context in which tourist experiences occur, including 'host-guest' relations and interactions; and the,
- fusing of tourism experiences with those of the everyday lifeworld.

In terms of *outcomes* of tourism experiences, it was found that many are possible, ranging from the satisfaction of 'lower level' motivations through 'higher' order concerns with self-awareness, self-development and fulfilment, in Pearce's (1993) Maslowian terms. Relative to broad understandings of conventional tourism though, descriptions of personal networks, friendships and relationships created between hosts and WWOOFers suggested outcomes that appear to go well beyond most tourist-host relations. Indeed, there was in some of the literature reviewed reason to begin to see interactions as central to the WWOOFing experience and its outcomes. Some existing literature demanded recognition that interpersonal *engagement* differentiates WWOOFing from even the most interactive of tourism forms, with attention to 'personal meaningfulness' 'intimacy', 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' in tourism encounters closely tied to this.

Some writers encourage delineation of the important idea of a *transcendence* of the self in and through experiencing 'others' encountered, particularly in 'volunteer tourism' situations (Wearing 2002; Wearing and Wearing 2001). A movement from the passive tourist gaze to more interactive and engaged forms of tourism can be noted to be occurring, even at the highly institutionalised end of tourism (Tourism Australia 2006). With increasing engagement with host people and places, there can be (but is not necessarily) a closing of the gap between 'self' and 'other' which *may* contribute to a demystification of the 'other' (Rojek and Urry 1997, p19). This forces need for awareness of the interpersonal, micro-social processes occurring at the heart of WWOOFing in the macro-sociological context of tourism encounters. The ubiquitous presence of commercial imperatives at the heart of the 'industry' that generally serves to bring tourists and hosts together (Minca and Oakes 2006) and the continuous establishment and expansion of new tourism 'frontiers' (Bennett 2007; Cater 2001; Pleumarom 2003; Urry 2002), do not ensure that power relations between hosts and tourists will be equitable, nor that the resulting outcomes for each party will be appropriately shared (Becton 2006; Briedenhann and Wickens 2004; Hall 2003; Reid 2003; Ryan 2002; Wearing and Wearing 2002). Indeed, without significant intervention in and support for a tourism development process, the gap may only be widened and stereotypes reinforced (Raymond and Hall 2008; Reisinger and Turner 2003), particularly where economic imperatives are the key motivations of 'hosts' or their

agents. This has been argued to be the case even in such forms as ‘pro-poor’ tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles in Scheyvens 2009), volunteer tourism (Birrell 2010; Klaushofer 2007; Richter and Norman 2010) and other ‘altruistic’ (Singh 2002) or purposeful (Brown and Lehto 2005) alternative tourism forms.²

It is at this point that the abovementioned ‘sincerity’ of both parties in the encounter (Taylor 2001) is of particular significance, which McIntosh and Bonneman (2006) noted was so much more apparent in the case of WWOOFing compared with commercial farm tourism. Although WWOOFing could certainly be cynically regarded as a way for tourists to access and consume the rural idyll (Page and Getz 1997), by operating outside of commercial imperatives in the often prosaic landscapes and ordinary homes of WWOOF hosts, WWOOFing quickly demystifies for many urban visitors the more romantic constructions of rural otherness (Rother 2009). By its nature, the WWOOF mechanism might be better seen as creating opportunities for people to become more like MacCannell’s (1976) “imaginative travellers”, inventively creating and experiencing subjectivities resistant to cultural determinism. His ‘Neo-Nomads’ of tourism in the postmodern era were seen to be able to cross cultural boundaries beyond the limits that frontiers present to tourists, and be welcomed into homes and communities. Cohen also argued that *some* tourists *are* capable of penetrating beyond the staged ‘tourist space’ and its false backs to observe ‘reality’, but that this “demands an effort and application, and a degree of sophistication which most tourists do not possess” (1979, p195).

Given the frustrating barrier dilemma that commerciality in tourism so often creates (Oakes 2006), one can see how WWOOFing was perceived and utilised by increasing numbers as a mechanism outside of commercial relations that requires and ultimately *forces* daily interaction, or *engagement* between strangers brought together in an effort to satisfy individual motives, without the assistance of intermediary ‘culture brokers’ (Smith 2001) or other agents of the tourism industry. WWOOFing produces both predictable *and* unforeseen outcomes, including a reduced gap between self and other brought about through prolonged mutual engagement, to achieve the shared goal of a successful exchange. Wearing (2002) suggests that when/if the *other* assumes as much importance as the *self*, de-centring of self allows us to push views of tourism

² These are sometimes criticised as being self-serving, conscience salving exercises that benefit the tourist more than the host community (Butcher 2005; 2007; Wheeler 1993; 2004), chiefly through generating and establishing ‘distinctive’ identities built upon accumulated cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; Coleman and Crang 2002; McCabe 2009; Riley 1995; Welk 2004).

beyond the boundaries of self-improvement, self-enhancement etc. This does not mean elimination of the idea of self in travel, but extends the way travel and self are conceptualised. In these terms, WWOOFing is an experience that devalues cultural hegemony associated with tourist–host relations and the possibility of creating (tourist or perhaps non-tourist) spaces that can generate *mutually* beneficial exchanges for all the selves involved. Such a de-commodified view, along with various other contributions, suggest the minimum basis of a theoretical foundation for seeing WWOOFing as a form of tourism.

Yet, this theoretically assembled account is not complete or fully coherent in reality, because it does not explain easily the many non-tourists that WWOOF, nor the hosts that have little to no interest in or connection to tourism, or to being the object of touristic interest. The review of literature at most allowed for the suggestion that WWOOFing is a hybrid or quasi-tourism form, exemplifying postmodernist/post-Fordist de-differentiation between various human spheres (Munt 1994; Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003; Urry 2002). Without additional, empirical research, it would be safer to be satisfied that “many tourists sometimes WWOOF”. But this only raises the question as to what tourists become when they do so? It also begged the question as to *why* they WWOOF, and so on. In short, the limits of the information available prior to this study created the need to do some in-depth exploratory research.

In doing so it was suggested that a wide view of WWOOFers be taken, in which they are first and foremost regarded as *people* engaged in a range of human-human and human-environment interactive exchanges in different spatial and temporal dimensions. Research then became a matter of exploring the phenomenon with WWOOFers and hosts, *including* but not assuming, its relationship with tourism. The aim was to liberate analytical thinking from constraints associated with allegiance to an ambiguous connection between the category ‘WWOOFer’ and the difficult category of ‘tourist’.

Thus a great deal of data was sought from both hosts and WWOOFers and brought together for analysis in the context of the above discussion, throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

4 HOSTS AND WWOOFERS CREATING AN EXPERIENCE

Chapters 5 and 6 produced a range of important findings about contemporary hosts and WWOOFers that provided a basis for exploring the WWOOFing phenomenon.

Hosts emerged as a diverse group of relatively well educated and well travelled people across all age groups, keenly involved in community based environmental repair and advocacy groups. They are located in rural and regional Australia for the most part, engaged in a range of types and scales of agricultural production with varying degrees of commercial focus. There is a high level of kitchen garden production at varying degrees of intensity and relatively limited levels of formal organic certification.

Hosts were generally positive about their involvement given the balance of benefits accrued, particularly the cultural exchange aspect, achieved by creating and exploring an interactive, interpersonal space with WWOOFers. The social dimension of this was also acknowledged as important, more so on the whole than the physical help. Nevertheless, WWOOFers play an important role in assisting producers at different scales in Australia, at least in the margins of the Australian organic food sector, which has been steadily expanding over the past decade into the mainstream. WWOOFer inputs have been found to sustain for some, an interest in and commitment to organic methods, in part because such methods are labour intensive.

Hosting provides the opportunity to promote a broader understanding of the importance and techniques of agricultural and lifestyle sustainability, but many make it clear that few WWOOFers arrive with shared concerns about the need for growing and consuming local organic produce or engaging in earth repair activities. Many regard WWOOFers as primarily looking for a cheap way to travel, to experience rural life and to save money, but again, were generally positive about the role they played in their lives. Many could find common ground, underlying 'goodness' and even optimism through their experiences of hosting people of different ages and cultures.

Despite limited shared interests, a willingness to help generally ensures that WWOOFers are able to meet hosts' goals, providing a basis for a "symbiotic relationship" (Host survey participant) through which both parties can gain sometimes surprising outcomes. Friendships, understanding and personal development are all possible 'side-effects' of the exchange as well as renewed appreciation of the value of trusting strangers. The sometimes powerful and transformative effect of hosting was

often explained in terms of the removal of the human exchange process from the effects of monetary interchange, with discoveries of the “commonalities of humanity” and the richness of life “when no money stuff is involved” (participant host). The qualitative effects on this can be difficult to measure, but are positive on balance. Inevitable disappointments and dissatisfactions - sometimes linked to the view that “WWOOFers are changing” and becoming more like experience-seeking tourists - may account along with other reasons for regular host turnover, which could be the subject of more detailed research. But overall host numbers continue to expand in Australia and elsewhere because for some period at least, hosting produces benefits in a range of forms that outweigh the costs involved doing so.

WWOOFers are predominately young, female, long-term independent international travellers. They are mostly urban and well educated, with memberships used pragmatically to achieve a range of motivations, particularly meeting local people and experiencing natural, outback and rural environments in Australia. Most want to encounter wildlife and to get away from urban centres which are of limited interest as experiential foci in Australia at least.

WWOOFing facilitates being “part of an Australian family and way of life” and given a ‘tight budget’, saving money and travelling cheaply *is* important to many. But much of the motivation can be reasonably seen in the context of the most common motivations for ‘journeying’ among long-term budget travellers, which is “social interaction with local people” (Obenour 2004, p3). WWOOFing provides opportunities for interaction in which there is a learning process through engagement with the daily lives of the visited culture and often also in the form of shared emotional connections through time spent directly with individuals of that culture. Numerically, WWOOFers are mostly identifiable with Nimmo’s ‘Type 2’ WWOOFer who are similar to ‘mainstream’ backpackers with interests in recreational activities and the generalized desire to experience novel activities, but who distance themselves from those who they regard as having little interest in learning about other cultures. Surveyed (but not interviewed) WWOOFers were found to mostly lack the ‘critical political analysis’ of Nimmo’s (2001a) ‘Type 1’ WWOOFers, which aligns them more with the ideological agenda of WWOOF. A multi-levelled search for reasons for this *composition* and *distribution* of WWOOFer types has been a part of this thesis. History shows that the organisation itself encouraged more tourists to WWOOF in the hope that a wider audience would appreciate its aims, philosophies and techniques, while the emergence of alternative, new, postmodern and

post-tourism forms in response to conventional tourism hints at broader forces at play in the social and psychological horizon of those who come to WWOOF.

But much of the search has been conducted at the micro-social level of interactions at play in the WWOOFing encounter, because these are crucial to the experience and its perceived 'success' and thus, probably also to its phenomenal growth. Its reported importance within overall travel experiences and its very high positive rating were significant at the personal or individual level and the strongly positive assessment of WWOOFing is connected to a perception that it delivers on key sought after experiences *and* saves economic resources, often while en route to other destinations. This has produced something of a WWOOFer 'trail' that mirrors to some extent the larger 'institutionalised' backpacker trail within Australia, but WWOOFers with a travel agenda are able to flexibly exit and enter this trail as needed.

The *qualities* and *foci* of WWOOFing experiences combine to produce a distinctive 'feel' involving informality, spontaneity, trust, initiative and varying degrees of mutuality in the creation of a shared and often personally meaningful experience. This suits the interests of those long term budget travellers that seek escape from mainstream or institutionalized travel (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001; Cohen 1979; Obenour 2004; Wilson and Richards 2004) and who above all, value experiential engagement. Such engagement produces opportunities for self-awareness and self-development on various fronts, as well as the development of important relationships that some would argue are more likely to be fostered *because* of the inherent communality of effort involved and the generally more informal and open environment than might be typically found in any equivalent commodified tourism setting (Conway 1999).

It was found that change in attitude towards nature or the environment more generally was common among WWOOFers, including increased appreciation of organic produce/practices and the nexus between organic production and wider sustainability goals. In line with findings of other studies available on WWOOFers and alternative tourists more broadly, some WWOOFers reported experiencing significant inspiration and related resolutions were made to alter their lives in terms of how they travelled, engaged with community, or in regard to future involvement in environmental protection activities and/or living sustainably.

This study concludes that the experience is on the whole successful in fulfilling the main aims of both parties, but that success depends upon engagement in the specific

circumstances found, with some acceptance of highly variable 'standards' of compensation, in order to ensure reciprocity and thereby generate collective feelings and responses that comprise, generate and sustain the experience and make possible the (inter)personally significant and meaningful (McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006) outcomes reported.

It is important that positive views of WWOOFing are reinforced largely by word of mouth endorsements among those seeking some form of refuge from institutionalised tourism (Ateljevic and Doorne 2001) or from the touristic (Franklin 2003a). With the growth of the internet since the mid 1990s also, word of mouth information transfer capacity has grown exponentially, which is certain to have partly underpinned the successful growth and spread of WWOOFing since that time. New social media and its near ubiquitous presence and accessibility will doubtless further impact on the phenomenon in interesting ways, while the organisation itself will further be forced to wrestle with the realities of 'competition' from other peer-to-peer alternative travel exchanges which have mushroomed in recent years.

Yet WWOOFing is likely to remain unique among these, not only because of its organic focus, but due to the particular nature, 'feel' and structure of the exchange, explored and elaborated in Chapter 7.

5 A MICRO VIEW: WHAT HAPPENS IN WWOOFERLAND

The experiential 'zone of engagement' provides the physical and psychological space in which the WWOOFing exchange takes place, is experienced and assessed. The micro-social processes that occur here produce unique effects on participants and understanding these is necessary if we are to grasp WWOOFing as the macro-social phenomenon it has become.

A general convergence of opinion emerged among hosts and WWOOFers that WWOOFing is *chiefly* about social and cultural interaction, untempered by a cash exchange, making it typically more 'genuine' than tourism for both parties. It is thus mostly regarded as an alternative *to* tourism, provided that it operates in practice in a mutually beneficial fashion. This is not to say that *all* participants viewed WWOOFing in these terms nor that tourists cannot or do not WWOOF. But for most, the issue is the character of WWOOFing experiences and what happens to *people* when they enter and return from 'WWOOFerland'.

I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think. Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle (Alice in Wonderland).

In realising the centrality of engagement as a 'core category', WWOOFing was progressively defined as:

A human exchange activity built on principles of the organic movement that involves a process of engagement between two parties (hosts and WWOOFers) to achieve their mutual and individual goals, on a range of levels.

One party *performs* the role of the WWOOFer, who works in exchange for meals and accommodation for a specified amount of time on tasks set by the other party, the host. WWOOFing involves *engaging* with people and places in their homes as they are, in contrast to most forms of tourism and tourist accommodation. There is limited room to hold strongly to expectations about 'standards' of food and accommodation matched to expenditure for example, and crossing into the unknown of the hosts' realm requires a degree of adventurousness. Entering is akin to opening a doorway into a different, yet ordinary sort of world - without 'tourists'. Those who enter, particularly those coming from playing the role of tourists, need to become more 'like themselves' in order to pass successfully through and to remain there. There is limited place for the 'tourist gaze' or any other sort of touristic 'consumption' of hosts (MacCannell 1992; 2001) and WWOOFers must adapt immediately to the situation in which they find themselves if they wish to stay. This requires dispensing with preconceptions and drawing on an ability to iteratively construct a reality suited to engagement with hosts and their places *as they find them*. It suggests the need for a stance on the part of *both* parties that will best assist them in addressing themselves to the building and assessment of their 'co-created reality'. Because of the basic desire and need for ongoing interaction and reciprocal exchange to sustain the experience, sincerity between strangers becomes an important ingredient in establishing trust and helping to create existentially authentic, personally meaningful and sometimes intimate experiences (Conran 2006; McIntosh and Bonnemann 2006).

The sincerity of either party can be called into doubt at times. But, the WWOOFing arrangement mitigates against one-sided benefits working in favour of one party for

very long, as both hosting and WWOOFing takes significant amounts of physical and emotional energy. Ultimately, hosts can terminate the experience, while WWOOFers can leave at any time. Further, once the engagement begins, in practice work itself often facilitates micro-social dynamic interactions which govern the progress, nature and outcomes of the experience for both parties. This thesis has provided detailed elaboration of these interactions.

The journey into 'WWOOFerland' involves various stages, from the commencement of engagement at initial host selection right through to disengagement. From the beginning the need for tangible reciprocity is critical, received as part of an initial extension of goodwill, to be progressively built upon in developing and expressing an overall trust. Each party undergoes a series of cycles of assessment of reality against expectations as the experience unfolds, providing feedback about what might need to be added to (or possibly subtracted from) the situation to achieve mutual satisfaction.

WWOOFers are concerned with their treatment in terms of conditions, physical surrounds, the work and any residual risk or safety concerns. People attributes and skills are important contributing qualities of the exchange for both parties, mostly signified by overall treatment or attitude towards one another. Building trust is crucial, achieved through the extension of goodwill in the manner of a scaffolding that supports a structure that eventually stands on its own through accomplishment of an interlocking trust. The basic expected exchange of food and accommodation for half a day of work is a form of bilateral giving which is important, but not necessarily sufficient to ensure mutual trust and reciprocity. Unilateral giving over and above baseline expectations (where returns are not guaranteed), especially early in meeting a stranger, *can* demonstrate and generate trust by increasing good will between parties. Voluntary acts of reciprocal exchange add to the integrative and affective bonds experienced, acknowledging and affirming good intent, producing greater trust and the increased likelihood of further engagement. They can also reduce conflict that might arise if real or imagined unevenness is felt to characterise the core exchange. Unilateral giving therefore promotes a greater degree of inter-personal engagement, if intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are mutually satisfied, the durability of the exchange can be positively affected. Longer exchanges are more likely to be more engaged exchanges, with engagement itself becoming an outcome of an experience in the form of sincere, possibly intimate human connections. Such connections exemplify and signify 'existentially authentic experiences', the creation of which draws attention back to the

nexus and tension between the micro-social interactions and macro-sociological trends discussed above.

Figure 43 below endeavours to map this relationship in connection with the many strands identified above and to provide a visual basis for the final effort to now establish what this thesis tells us the WWOOFing phenomenon is about.

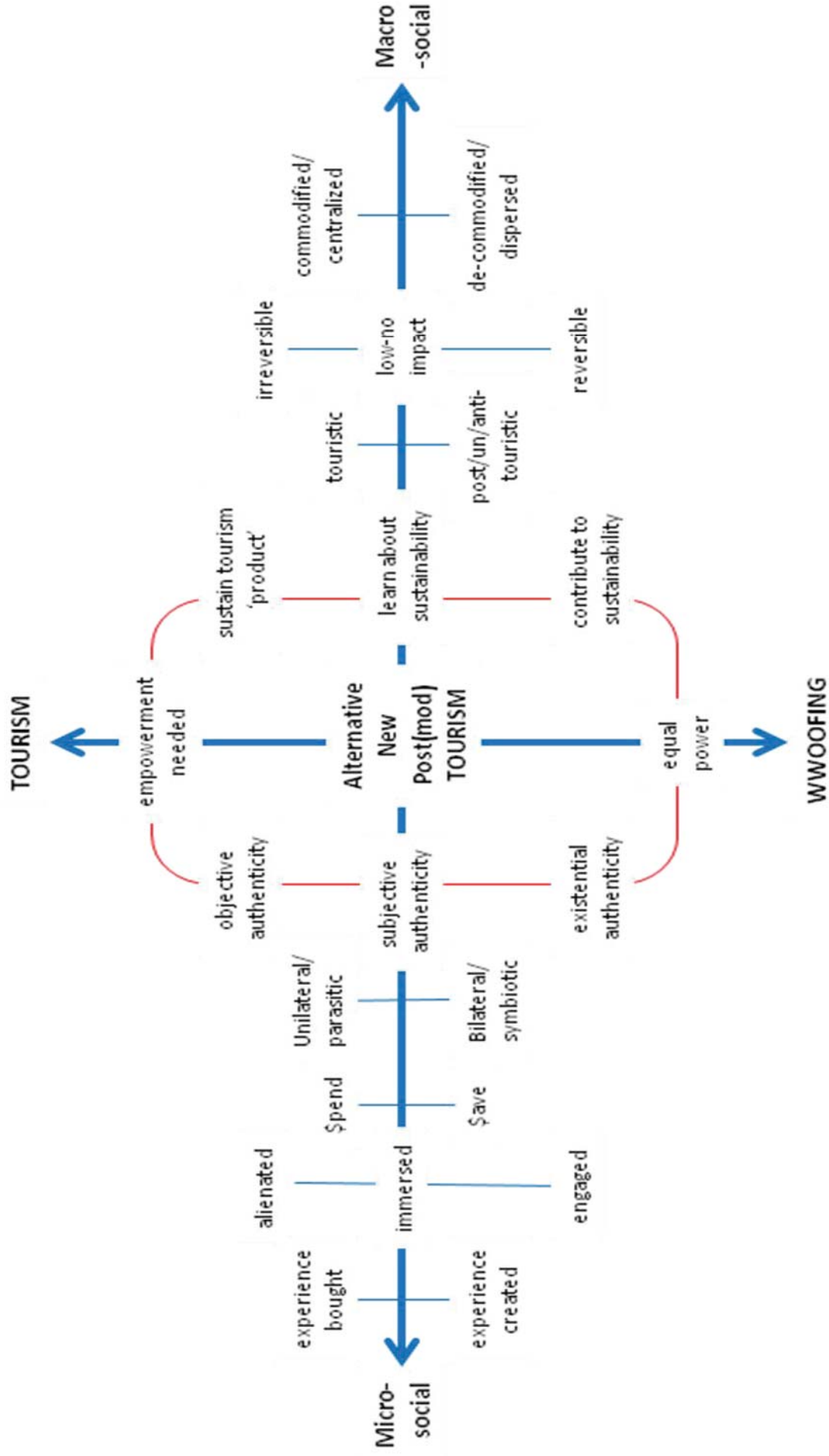
6 WHAT THE WWOOFING PHENOMENON IS ABOUT

While the activity of tourism continues to expand and both differentiate and de-differentiate (Urry 2008), this thesis has endeavoured to explore an emergent and largely unnoticed tourism related phenomenon. It is quite different in character to commercially oriented tourism forms which many apparently consider limit possibilities for intimate and sincere encounters with 'authentic others'. Compared with even the most interactive of known tourism forms, WWOOFing is an experience that offers a unique basis of exchange and structure of reciprocity, with characteristic results for those that try it even as a minor component of their travels. The structure described not only 'customises' the experience, but modulates the extent to which the interaction becomes one occurring between people, rather than between service providers and consumers, which some might paint as inescapable:

"Tourist or traveller, we are simply customers/clients to be targeted, wooed and seduced by industry" (Wheeller 1992).

WWOOFing facilitates a transcending of otherwise alienating barriers found in tourism forms built upon cash-based exchange (see Figure 43). Subject to the effort made, encounters may meet the motivations of certain tourists who, as MacCannell (1976) suggested, want to "abjure commercialised entertainments" and to set their own "touristic itineraries". WWOOFing is a mechanism that allows suitably motivated tourists to step away from the disappointments of segregation from the real people that live in non-commercialized places, and to find a way to have encounters that are more personal or sincere with such people. The *modus operandi* and 'feel' is distinctly un-touristic and has been shown to differ in intent and outcome in relation to tourism forms that are predicated on the near impossible ontological/epistemological regime of being a fly on the wall. Experiences are not bought, but created with others and in the process, when it works well, appear to approximate something we might call *symbiosis*. Both parties are able to have their distinct needs met and the extent to which this is so

Figure 43: Micro and Macro-Social Dimensions of WWOOFing and Tourism



- unlike in the tourism realm where this is a perpetual concern - is due to the efforts they make *as people*.

It is not the case with WWOOFing, particularly as it is in impoverished or so-called 'under'-developed communities where tourism might be presented as a development solution, that hosts need to be suitably educated, empowered and trained to realise full benefits for themselves and their communities (Scheyvens 2002). WWOOF hosting side steps myriad difficulties that this top-down, trickle-down economic *development* approach creates (the pros and cons of which are still hotly debated). In Australia at least, WWOOFing generates a range of bottom-up benefits for hosts who significantly, retain power and autonomy over their situation in respect of the 'tourism' in their midst.¹

Compared with much tourism development, the involvement of WWOOF hosts is mostly irreversible. It does not appear to create negative impacts upon the cultural integrity and ecological sustainability communities (Becton 2006): no new infrastructure is required and hosts are able to refuse visitors, regulate their flow and behaviour as needed, or entirely withdraw from the scheme if/when needed. In short, power is relatively well distributed in both hosts' and WWOOFers' hands.

There are reasons to regard WWOOFing as different from and yet as part of tourism. Individual participants have drawn unique definitional lines in understanding this relationship, but a positioning of WWOOFing in respect of tourism and leisure appeared to be of varying importance to participants in any case. These concepts themselves are regarded by many as fluid, with a high degree of definitional distortion and liminal amorphousness suggesting that WWOOFing is a hybrid form of experience which itself contributes to its sometimes ludic, somewhat folksy character and feel. In entering WWOOFerland and embracing the unknown, feelings of adventurous, liminal boundlessness and ambiguity can be explored or ignored, as experiences are co-created with the otherness encountered (Hollinshead 1998). This highlights the central role of engagement and the need to understand it from a range of perspectives, but also suggests that tourism may usefully be able to be defined in terms of the extent to which it sits between alienation from and engagement with 'the other'. This is for Frow, key to the authentic tourist experience of late modernity. 'The other' must be defined by the absence of design or of calculated self-interest or self awareness to be

¹ In this context also, WWOOFing practiced in developing countries may also side step difficult questions about the relative economic disparity that underpins a global system that enables tourists to enter and consume within impoverished communities at their leisure (Bennett 2008; Noronha 1999).

authentically encountered, and necessarily therefore *outside* of exchange value and the commodity relations 'circuit' (Frow 1997). For tourists however, access to 'the other' is generally *only* available through participation in this circuit, ultimately representing "one form of the basic contradictions of the tourist experience" (McRae 2003, p246; see also Oakes 2006).

The key difference between tourism and WWOOFing is brought into focus by considering that by WWOOFing one does not get very far for very long in gazing upon or using other "common-sense understandings of how to be a tourist" (McRae 2003, quoting Edensor, p241) to consume experiences of hosts as objects of touristic curiosity. There is limited chance even to *immerse* oneself in the world of hosts either, without giving them something back, or *engaging* with that world, problematizing any desire one might have with 'objective authenticity'.

A tourist may move from alienation to immersion into the lives and places of others through participating in a range of tourism forms (see Figure 43, p390), but the basis of these is essentially the same in two respects:

- 1 there is assumed to be an objectively knowable reality which can be experienced; and,
- 2 such experiences can be (or must be) purchased.

If the intention is to experience the essence of the 'other' (cultural or natural) through immersion, it is expected (by the paying customer) that at least *during* the experience, such essences are not to be altered and that certain standards that adequately meet the specific cash exchange 'value' will be met. While acknowledging that ludic disregard for authentic otherness abounds amongst many tourists with different agendas, it remains clear that for those that WWOOF, the form of the exchange necessitates that the idea of immersion gives way to (the need for) engagement, and to the extent that engagement occurs, tourism appears to give way to another type of experience that can only be judged in terms of its existential authenticity. For when hosts and WWOOFers engage, they agree to change each other's reality. WWOOFers cannot be overly concerned with the question of the 'objective' authenticity of the host, since although they are outside of commodity relations 'as WWOOFer's find them', both are also already changing *through* the engagement process. Anticipated 'essences' are soon swept aside by dynamic interpersonal interactions which become part of a mutual experience. Pre-conceptions give way to the extent that relationships develop and each party is then only able to authentically 'represent' themselves as

dynamic entities undergoing transformation. Given different ontological/epistemological underpinnings and thus relationships to the idea of 'the authentic', *engagement* leads in a different direction to *immersion*, with different results.

Much of tourism may aim to produce immersed experiences which provide scope for experienced objective authenticity for the participant, but noting (1) the value of interactive experiential learning; (2) the futility of attempting to be a fly on the wall, and (3) the perversity of tourism as "an objective structuring of others, while the tourist remains untouched and unmoved" (McRae 2003, p242), this thesis presents some evidence to support the hope of Conran (2006, p275) that the humanist desire for reciprocal interactions ultimately prevails and the "intimate experience supersedes the desire for object authenticity" (see also Obenour 2004; Wearing and Wearing 2002; Wearing 2002; Wearing, McDonald et al. 2005; Wearing and Neil 2000; Wearing and Wearing 2001).

Even if this hope were not achieved by an eventual *natural* triumph of humanism in tourism, by looking at WWOOFing this work has come to suggest the structure of experiences may be a critical factor. The circumstances of WWOOFing effectively *force* a move along the ontological spectrum, experienced in terms of increasing degrees of human connection, ranging from alienation, through immersion, towards engagement at the other end. As this spectrum is traversed, the epistemological foundation of the tourist experience also shifts from positivist/objectivist towards constructivist (see Figure 43, p390). That is, the experience needs to be assessed less in relation to an objective reality and more as one which is created in and relative to the moment and the efforts that underpin it. Increasing degrees of engagement of tourist and host selves shifts the relevance and viability of various modes of authenticity, again, away from objective, towards existential authenticity (Pearce 2005).

This not to say that those who WWOOF entirely or permanently embrace changed ontological and epistemological standpoints, but just that for the time they are in a WWOOFing encounter, such shifts are necessary to some degree and the extent to which they are embraced and occur, helps in producing a better fit and better outcomes in that circumstance. To some extent, this is an issue of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1988), and it is perhaps conversely true that resistance to these shifts in the WWOOFing situation, is an important element in many a failed experience.

7 POWER, AUTHENTICITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

All of this sets out a foundation for future detailed consideration of the important relationships between power, authenticity and sustainability in the tourism context. Because successful tourism products carry with them dilemmas in terms of managing increasing demand, the issue of carrying capacity has to be addressed and ultimately, the sustainability of a tourism product becomes a concern for both future tourists and the host communities that have come to depend on tourism (Butler 1992; Wahab and Pigram 1997; Wall 1997). This issue tends to be either unaddressed and destinations undergo unfettered life cycle processes at the whim of market forces, or is addressed in terms of guarding or sustaining the ecological and cultural base for tourism to be able to continue. Here, the essential and distinctive qualities of the tourism product, as advertised and expected, are to be preserved and promoted, whether a 'pristine rainforest' or a 'typical street scene'. As many have previously observed, this often produces demands for fortifications and concentrations of the 'essential' qualities (and local distinctiveness) that will produce a degree of authenticity acceptable to a tourist market.

7.1 Authenticity

The degree to which tourism itself begins to diminish the possibility for objectively authentic experiences has been a concern for tourists and scholars, and the extent to which this is so, the subject of debate. One choice for tourists and the industry, is to move on to new 'unspoiled' frontiers in search of the still authentic (Bennett 2008; Cohen 2004b; Coleman and Crang 2002) and 'alternative tourism' techniques, destinations and stances have been pioneered that hope to achieve authentic experiences to some extent. Eventually there is a need to accommodate the tourist and tourism infrastructure in the frame, undermining the degree of objective authenticity achievable, always just out of reach for *the tourist* (Minca and Oakes 2006; Oakes 2006).

Another choice as a tourist, is to accept or embrace the 'inauthentic' or at least, to work with it and therefore to not be disappointed by it. Indeed, there is room to celebrate the touristic and to opt to remain uncritical of it as a stance to the world as a whole (Franklin 2003a). This valid choice accommodates the tourist within the frame of reference, with their own subjective relationship to the authenticity of their situation (see Figure 43, p390).

But the existence of this choice does not seem to alter the belief for some, despite the careful analyses of many tourism scholars that suggests otherwise, that somewhere out there it is (still) possible to experience 'true' authentic otherness. This fuels touristic endeavors by 'pioneering' individuals (Pryor 1997) and an industry that emerges in response, to create new 'authentic' tourism frontiers. While the development of a sustainable tourism discourse has flourished in recent years, it has been largely focused on the notion of sustaining natural environments and the tourism experiences built around them, or various other 'attractions' and the livelihoods of the communities connected with them, as they approach 'carrying capacity' (Saarinen 2006). But there are various opinions in the context of demands for poverty alleviation and development needs through tourism, about *what* is to be sustained? *Who* is to sustain it? And *for whom* it is to be sustained? These are very important questions in the sustainable tourism field. Yet most of these questions do not seem to apply if asked in connection with WWOOFing.

7.2 Power

This is partly because tourism scholars have not yet concerned themselves with tourists experiencing, learning about and contributing to more sustainable production and consumption efforts in relatively prosaic environments, with its different configuration of power, authenticity and sustainability. As Saarinen notes, sustainability is a social construct that refers to:

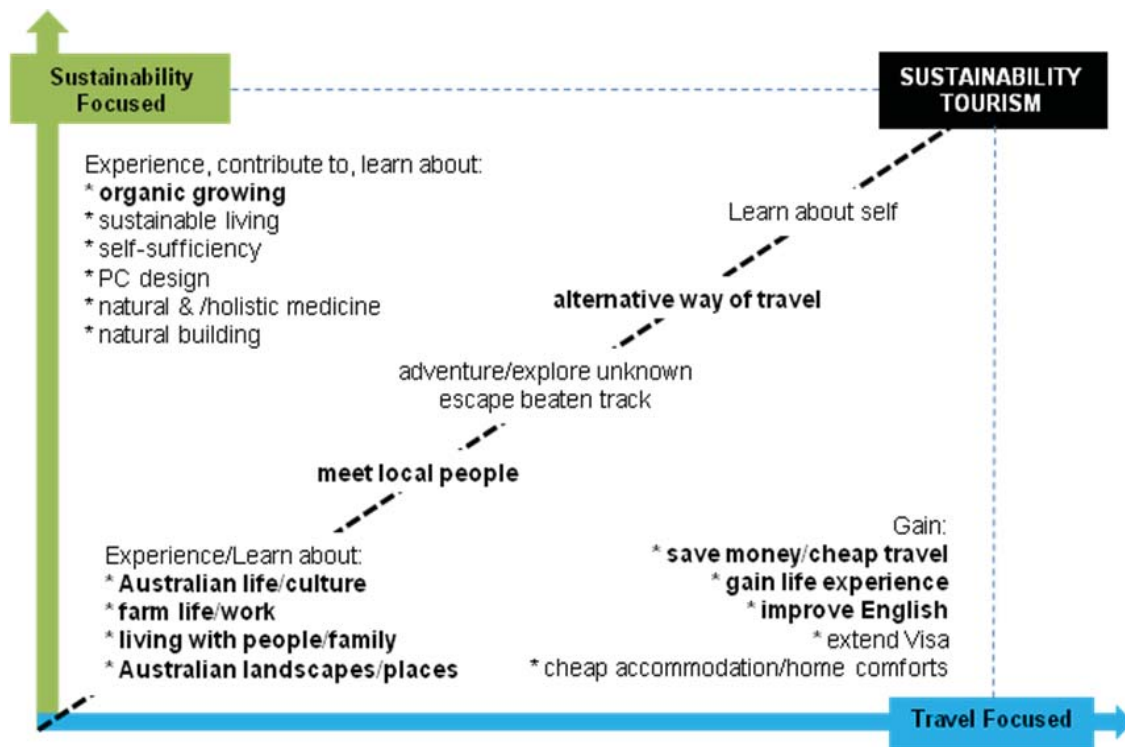
the maximum levels of the known or perceived impacts of tourism that are permissible in a certain time-space context before the negative impacts are considered to be too disturbing from the perspectives of specific social, cultural, political, or economic actors who possess sufficient power over the chosen indicators and criteria" (Saarinen 2006, p1130, emphasis added).

Sufficient power is indeed in the possession of WWOOF hosts, brought about through the removal of a cash based, tourist centred valuation of their interactive experience, diminishing the basis for demands from tourists for objective authenticity as well. This implies that the *sustainability* of the 'tourism product' is also not readily able to be framed in terms of preconceived static essences and nor therefore do representatives of 'a culture' need to be locked and bound in place for touristic consumption. Rather, they are free to evolve 'independently' from the many potentially negative impacts brought to bear on host communities by tourism.

7.3 Sustainability

This thesis raises an important future line of inquiry regarding the relationship between sustainability and tourism. Firstly, WWOOFing is relatively sustainable in avoiding the construction of specialised accommodation infrastructure. Beyond comparing favourably with simplistic ‘certified sustainable’ labelling schemes that might typify the usual approach to wrestling with making tourism more sustainable in biophysical terms, very few have considered the role of the behaviour of tourists in the socio-cultural sustainability of host communities (see Reisinger and Turner 2003). But a high degree of *respect and awareness, reciprocity, local economic contribution* (broadly interpreted) and *engagement* between host and guest have been thought to mark WWOOFing as ‘responsible tourism’ as well (Stanford 2008).

Figure 44: WWOOFing as Sustainability Tourism²



WWOOF has always been concerned with the promotion of sustainability, aiming to assist the organic movement which maintains that organic production is demonstrably more sustainable than conventional fossil fuels based agriculture that results in polluting ‘externalities’ that have never been fully costed in human health or ecological impact terms. The organic sector has grown significantly alongside of WWOOFing for a

² Top 10 freely selected motives of surveyed WWOOFers shown in bold.

number of decades, while WWOOFing was itself opened up to tourism. It has also been 'hijacked' by tourists in some respects and altered as a result, with many hosts having to absorb the impacts associated with its increasing use within a 'tourism experience'. But given the power retained by hosts and the mechanisms at the heart of the WWOOF exchange, it is unlikely that WWOOFing would be critically altered by these facts. Even if WWOOFers are indeed mostly 'tourists', what matters is what happens to those tourists in the process: *what do they become in the act of WWOOFing? And what do they take away from their experiences?*

It has been argued that they temporarily become more like their pre-tourist selves who must co-create an experience, without application of value-for-money standards and conditions as reference points. Submitting to this can produce significant outcomes, but importantly, an increased awareness about local scale efforts towards sustainability, about responsibilities in respect of global sustainability issues, and a range of practical techniques for attempting to contribute to its achievement in the process. Naturally, there is some important contestation regarding definitions of, let alone the means for achieving a 'sustainable future' (see Beder 1993; Robinson 2004; Saarinen 2006), and there is certainly variability of local practices among hosts within the global host community. To the degree that many WWOOF hosts might be accurately seen as pioneers or guardians of 'techniques for a sustainable future' (Jamieson 2007) though, there is something of particular value offered by the WWOOF mechanism: exposure to ideas and practices that orient them to more sustainable forms of producing, consuming and living, while gaining the opportunity to travel in a generally more sustainable and more intimate fashion. It is of course the important task of WWOOF organisations and WWOOFers together, to help to ensure that their host members are indeed, true to these intentions.

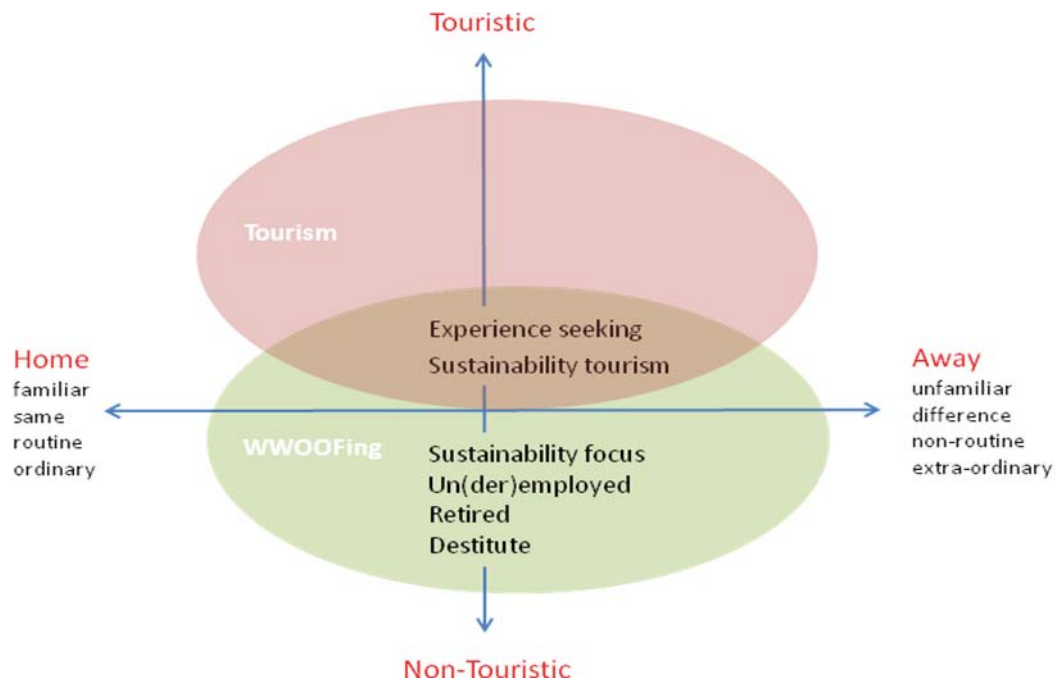
This thesis has also made it clear that WWOOFers are not all motivated equally. Certainly the majority are akin to Nimmo's 'Type 2' WWOOFers (Nimmo 2001a) - international tourists, travellers or backpackers seeking to meet locals, try out a novel experience and/or seek to travel on the cheap some distance away from the beaten track. But in amongst the majority of experience seeking users of WWOOF, there are less well known types, focused in the manner of special interest or educational tourists, on *learning about* and/or *learning for sustainability*. Most participants located for interviews seemed more like *people* that had particular, purposeful and sometimes unique intentions regarding WWOOFing in terms of its ideological orientation and its 'uses'. They were either deliberately learning (and offering) specific skills and methods

for sustainable living, or were fulfilling larger, sometimes career and research oriented objectives relating to the need for global efforts to produce a more sustainable governing paradigm (Oskamp 2000). This is where Maycock describes many WWOOFers as seeking to return to and connect with the land in response to various crises associated with modern living, using WWOOFing to gather “the basic skills of agricultural living” (Maycock 2008, p284). Here it is tempting to recall Cohen’s (1979) phenomenological typology characterising some tourists as akin to pilgrims, in this instance undertaking a tour in order to move towards one’s spiritual centre (as a sustainability oriented *existential tourist*).

When an interest in sustainability itself is *combined* with tourism, tangible learning outcomes can be produced and valuable contributions to sustainability oriented hosts can result. It is tempting to articulate this as *sustainability tourism*, with WWOOFing representing its initial, pioneering expression (Figure 44). Such WWOOFers doubtless overlap with those described by Nimmo (2001a) as having a ‘critical political awareness’ of global issues of sustainability (‘Type 1 WWOOFers’). They may also be connected with the so-called ‘new’ or ‘other postmodern’ tourists that (rightly or naively) want to travel in line with this awareness and their ideals (Fennell 2004; Holden 2000; Munt 1994; Swarbrooke and Horner 1999; Uriely, Reichel et al. 2003; Weaver 2002). This was also the initial view of van Radars (1994) in contrasting WWOOFers and ‘regular’ backpackers in the mid 1990s, but as we saw earlier, she and other hosts have more recently suggested that relative proportions of such WWOOFers began to change with its increasing merging with the mainstream of tourism.

It is generally to be agreed along with many research participants, that sustainability focused or ‘Type 1 - critical political’ WWOOFers are currently relatively limited in numbers. But in terms of the contemporary WWOOFing phenomenon, there are also other known WWOOF user ‘types’ to be explored and described, including travelling retirees, the unemployed and the destitute (see Figure 45 below). Further targeted research might identify the extent to which these ‘types’ are distinct or blend together, or what the effects might be as both tourism and interest in organics and consciousness about global sustainability expand and blend.

Figure 45: WWOOFing and Tourism



Here it is worth cautiously recalling Maycock’s recent optimistic characterisation of WWOOFers as individuals increasingly aware of organic farming and the importance of localising of food sources, with WWOOFing part of the expression of their search for “opportunities to become more ethical consumers by forming meaningful connections with their food sources” (2008, p83), while *The Scientific American* suggests WWOOFing in America represents a ‘success in sustainability’ (Chinn 2008). We now know that hosts do benefit in multiple ways from the input of WWOOFers and to the extent that hosts are pioneers and guardians of techniques for a sustainable future, WWOOF not only offers a challenge to the way we think about the interactions possible between hosts and tourists, but also how we might frame the concept of ‘sustainable tourism’. Moscardo (2008) recommended innovation in thinking about sustainable tourism, suggesting it should be conceived in terms of the extent to which it is an activity that contributes towards achieving sustainable development. It was in this vein that she urged we might see WWOOFing. Potts and Harill (1998; 2002) argued for a ‘travel ecology’ that contributes to backyard restoration efforts everywhere, which offers another useful framing. In fact, when we acknowledge that there are numerous, complex and difficult ecological restoration problems to overcome in Australia and elsewhere, as well as need to supply more and more food and fibre through sustainable farming techniques that ultimately relies on physical labour, it is hard not to take a keen interest in the role that WWOOFers might already be playing towards

meeting these ends, in many cases, doing work for which “government funding is usually not available” (Cosgrove 2000, p40). This is therefore an appropriate context in which to consider the suggestion of one host that there is need for a significant scaling up of the sorts of efforts WWOOFers and hosts make together in addressing these problems through new public policy orientations:

I'd really like to see it become a thing where you got hoards of young people travelling around Australia, trying to find out about life, life on the land... to address the problems of Landcare and ... [the] environmental crisis, which ... involves planting stuff and fencing ... It's the 'Ask what you can do for your country', you know?... I mean, I firmly believe that all our environmental problems are just gonna get worse and worse and probably we'll reach a point of no return where we've really fucked things because we didn't do anything about it. And we didn't have any labour (Host D).

8 A CONTRIBUTION AND AN OPENING

This thesis has addressed itself to the phenomenon of WWOOFing and sought to find out what it is all about. Along the way it has contributed to our understanding of:

- What WWOOFing is;
- Who uses WWOOFing and why;
- What WWOOFing does; and,
- How it works.

WWOOFing and its phenomenal growth and spread, invites us to take a new look at some old issues in the study of tourism and leisure. This thesis has built upon useful insights of others who commenced this effort, but it is hoped that it has been shown why and how there was room to travel further, and in different directions as well, particularly by critically questioning whether we can merely assume that WWOOFing *is* tourism.

This study has contributed to an ontological reframing of tourism by examining something that appears as a reflected, mirror image of it. WWOOFing does share many similarities with tourism and indeed for some, is tourism. But by ‘reading for difference’ (Gibson-Graham 2008), it is also ultimately and paradoxically, its ‘exact opposite’. It has always operated ‘beyond the looking glass’, outside of tourism, while yet being attractive to tourists and opening up to them and embracing them as they

seek a range of things, including for some, conscious “refuge from a touristic world” (Franklin 2003a).

The importance and meaning of the phenomenal growth of WWOOF by tourists has been explored in two main contexts. Firstly, this thesis has shown that the majority wanting to use it to meet and have experiences with local people perhaps indicate a dissatisfaction with those frustrating paradoxes of tourism that maintain a distance between tourist and host. This has brought into focus the significance of de-commodified forms of engaged interactivity, and with it, the possibility of breaking through some of the key paradoxes associated with the nexus between power, authenticity and sustainability in tourism.

WWOOFing has spawned and is now in a sense rivalled by a number of additional symbiotic travel modes as well that might be justifiably seen as part of emerging alternative economies and/or the so-called collaborative consumption movement. These constitute the sharing of power in ways that represent challenges to ‘traditional’ modes of tourism built upon notions of experiential consumption, chiefly achieved through monetary exchange. But crucially, and perhaps as loosely predicted by MacCannell, WWOOFing appears to be among other things, a mechanism that allows travelling people to go beyond boundaries that have generally contained ‘tourists’, particularly those which prescribe tourism as a form of consumption at all (Meethan 2001).

The old distinction that many make between tourists and travellers may have its critics, may be imprecise and may indeed prop up some egos in pursuit of identity distinction though explorations of the extraordinary ‘periphery’ (Desforges 2000; McCabe 2009; Wearing and Wearing 1992; Welk 2004; Wheeler 1993; 2004). But perhaps why many don’t like tourists and don’t want to appear to be one, apart from being alienated from people and places visited and apart from being a target and the possible object of local disdain, is that a tourist is (rightly or wrongly) often seen as “someone who just comes and goes without giving anything” (research participant in Wearing 1998a). Tourism involves being selfish as it has been largely constructed as an activity that revolves around the purchase of experiences that satisfy individual motives. Despite the contemporary milieu of individualism, pure selfishness surely also remains distasteful and increasingly in connection with tourism, has some degree of (unwanted) guilt associated with it (Butcher 2005). WWOOFers give something directly of themselves for the immediate benefit of hosts, which seems to many to be less ‘selfish’ than giving

cash, which is an abstract and distorted representation of giving, the actual value of which is beyond the control of the parties involved. In hindsight, the desire to meet people, to escape from tourists/tourism and from feeling selfish in a growing context of awareness of impacts of tourism, was always likely to spawn new ways to travel. Why it should also be viewed by many participants as being more 'real' than tourism is because it operates outside of commoditised relations that are rightly or wrongly considered less *sincere*.

The second context in which this phenomenon has been explored is critical to a minority of the current WWOOF membership who are sustainability focused. This thesis raises the possibility that WWOOFing is at the heart of an emerging movement not only *away* from alienated consumptive modes of travel, but towards more a purposeful, educative travel form that has been expressed tentatively here as *sustainability tourism*. A start has been made in establishing an understanding of this phenomenon in Australia, but what this means for tourism in future and elsewhere is unclear and bound to be fertile ground for research.

Newer exchange based travel modes based on peer-to-peer/Web 2.0 foundations may impact on WWOOF's popularity, or it may continue its expansion alongside of them, becoming one of a broader range of contemporary travel tools and trends that crucially reshape tourism. It may of course remain a marginal phenomenon that reaches a peak, or fades away. However, at least two concurrent forces appear to be likely to ensure that WWOOFing will continue to play an important and interesting role in the future of tourism.

Firstly, if increasingly stressful urban existences in tourism generating regions are as alienated from nature as suggested by eco-psychologists (Conesa-Sevilla 2006; Rayner 2005) and this does underpin related desires for contact with nature and the (imagined purity of) the past, encounters with remaining, peripheral nature and culture will increasingly be sought (Fennell 2004; Holden 2000; Rosenbaum 2007; Schultz 2000). New 'ecotourism' developments in such areas are certain to represent one neo-liberalist 'solution' (Brown and Hall 2000) to this 'problem', probably alongside of the expansion of nature theme parks and other entrepreneurial hyper-realities that target collective nature deficits and a thirst for novelty. But as this thesis has suggested, there remains in WWOOFing an expression of a growing desire to get behind perceived facades and to be involved, learning or engaged while travelling with a degree of purpose. Further research could readily be tailored to better understand this aspect of

this phenomenon. A particular focal point that would help to articulate some of the key findings presented here particularly concerning the decommodified nature of WWOOFing, would be to compare experiences of WWOOFers with those of travellers at commercial farm tourism operations, or with those who work on commercial farms for money. More generally, if there is value in the notion that WWOOFing *is* an alternative to tourism, there may be value in mounting a further targeted research enquiry that specifically articulates the means by which WWOOFing facilitates phenomenological journeys ‘beyond tourism’ and the extent to which such journeys actually shape tourism in their wake.

The second force that will ensure WWOOFing will continue to play an important role in the future of tourism relates to the increasing critical scrutiny given to human actions in terms of their sustainability. It seems likely that any travel form that operates with and for increased sustainability should flourish, particularly in combination with so many other experience oriented attributes. Relatedly, this thesis provides evidence that WWOOFers are making some level of contribution towards the ongoing transition to more sustainable agricultural production and consumption patterns. While this particular aspect had been a key interest of the researcher prior to commencing this research, further delineation of this aspect of WWOOFing would be of interest to a range of applied social science scholars. Furthermore, WWOOFing may well begin to occur more frequently in urban settings also, such as community gardens, as localisation of food supply becomes of greater interest or concern. Further research into urban WWOOFing contexts might well also be fruitful.

Finally, the spread and uptake of WWOOFing across the globe, particularly into less developed countries and regions that will doubtless be exposed one way or another to tourism, should also be of future interest, particularly to those concerned with ‘best practice’ community based tourism forms. Increasing relative income disparity between WWOOFers and hosts in more ‘peripheral’ contexts should represent an interesting focal point for the future study of WWOOFing and the ways in which this moderates experiences and plays out globally should offer much additional insight into this phenomenon.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acott, T. G. and S. H. Howard (1998). "An Evaluation of Deep Ecotourism and Shallow Ecotourism." Journal of Sustainable Tourism **6**(3): 238-253.
- Adamson, J. (2005). "Eco-tourism: why it isn't easy being green." Retrieved April 2005, from <http://www.positivetourism.com/>.
- Ahuja, A. (2006). "Are you experienced?" The Times (online) Retrieved February 11, 2006.
- Albury, R. (1983). The politics of objectivity. Waurn Ponds, Vic, Deakin University Press.
- Amandolare, S. (2009, 2009). "Sustainable Farm Tourism Gains Popularity in US." Sustainable Travel Retrieved 20 February 2011, 2011, from http://www.travelmole.com/stories/1134387.php?mpnlog=1&m_id=s~Y!_rT_md.
- Anon. (1998). Backpackers Prove to be Willing Workers. The Yarram Standard. Yarram, Victoria.
- Anon. (2003). Down to Earth Volunteers. Mother Earth News. **Feb/Mar 2003**: 13.
- Anon. (2006). WWOOFers Get Down and Dirty: Canadians learn about organic farming. The Northern Star. Lismore, NSW: 7.
- Ap, J., and Var, Turgut (1990). "Does tourism promote world peace?" Tourism Management **11**(3): 267-273.
- Ashley, C., R. Dilys, et al. (2001). Pro-Poor Tourism Strategies: Making Tourism Work for the Poor: a review of experience. Pro-Poor Tourism Report.
- Ateljevic, I. and S. Doorne (2001). Nowhere Left to Run: a study of value boundaries and segmentation within the backpacker market of New Zealand. Consumer Psychology of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure (vol 2). J. A. Mazanec, A. G. Woodside and G. I. Crouch. Oxfordshire, CABI Publishing: 169-186.
- Ateljevic, I. and S. Doorne (2004). Theoretical Encounters: A review of backpacker literature. J. Wilson and G. Richards. Clevedon, Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 60-76.
- Atkinson, M. (n.d.). A Personal Insight into Self-Sufficiency. Grass Roots. **80**.
- Atkinson, P. and M. Hammersley (1998). Ethnography and Participant Observation. Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage: 110-136.
- Austrade. (2005). "Opportunities, trends and characteristics for Australian suppliers." Retrieved 26 October, from http://www.austrade.gov.au/australia/layout/0,,0_S2-1_-2_-3_PWB1106308-4_-5_-6_-7_,00.html.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006). Quarterly Results of the International Visitor Survey for 2006. International Visitor Survey. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Canberra, Tourism Research Australia.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (various years). Census of Population and Housing. Canberra.
- Ayikoru, M. (2009). Epistemology, Ontology and Tourism. Philosophical Issues in Tourism. J. Tribe. Bristol, Channel View Publications: 62-79.
- Bagadzinski, W. (2002). "The Eco-village Movement: A discussion of Crystal Waters and the Global Ecovillage Network, and their relation to social movement theory." Journal of Protest and Globalisation(Special Issue): 12-19.
- Barbour, R. S. (2001). "Checklists for improving rigour in qualitative research: A case of the tail wagging the dog?" British Medical Journal **322(7294)**: 1115.
- Barbour, R. S. and M. Barbour (2003). "Evaluating and Synthesizing Qualitative Research: the need to develop a distinctive approach." Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice **9**(2): 179-186.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). Liquid Modernity. Cambridge, Polity.

- Beard, J. and M. G. Ragheb (1983). "Measuring Leisure Motivation." Journal of Leisure Research **15**(3): 219-228.
- Becton, S. (2006). Community Development Through Tourism. Canberra, Landlinks Press.
- Beder, S. (1993). The Nature of Sustainable Development. Newham, Vic, Scribe Publications.
- Behera, M. C., Ed. (2006). Globalizing Rural Development: Competing Paradigms and Emerging Realities, Sage.
- Bennett, R. J. (2007). Moving off the Beaten Track: Developing a Critical Literacy in Backpacker Discourse. Perth, School of Media, Communications and Culture, Murdoch University: 450.
- Bennett, R. J. (2008). Entering the Global Margin: Setting the 'Other' Scene in Independent Travel. Tourism and Mobilities: Local-Global Connections. P. M. Burns and M. Novelli. Oxfordshire, CABI: 133-145.
- Berger, P. and T. Luckmann (1966). The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Co. Inc.
- Biological Farmers of Australia (2006). Organic Annual 2006 - Edition 3.
- Biological Farmers of Australia (2010). Australian Organic Market Report 2010. Brisbane, BFA.
- Birrell, I. (2010). Before you pay to volunteer abroad, think of the harm you might do. The Observer, Guardian: 39.
- Blamey, R. and V. Braithwaite (1997). "A Social Values Segmentation of the Potential Ecotourism Market." Journal of Sustainable Tourism **5**(1): 29-45.
- Boissevain, J. (1996). Coping with Tourists: European reactions to mass tourism. Oxford, Berghahn Books.
- Bonneman, S. (2003). Insights into the Visitor Experience of Willing Workers On Organic Farms in New Zealand. Cologne, University of Cologne/Lincoln University: 187.
- Boorstin, D. J. (1987). The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America. New York., Atheneum.
- Bordessa, R. (1993). "Geography, Postmodernism and environmental concern." Canadian Geographic **37**(2): 147-155.
- Botsman, R. and R. Rogers (2010). What's Mine is Yours: how collaborative consumption is changing the way we live. London, HarperCollins.
- Boudry, M., S. Blancke, et al. (2010). "Irreducible incoherence and intelligent design - A look into the conceptual toolbox of a pseudoscience." Quarterly Review of Biology **85**(4): 473-482.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. London, Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). "The essence of neoliberalism." Le Monde Diplomatique **12**.
- Boyle, D. (2003). Authenticity: brands, fakes, spin and the lust for real life. London, Flamingo/Harper Collins.
- Briedenhann, J. and E. Wickens (2004). Community involvement in tourism development: white elephant or empowerment? Reinventing a tourism destination: facing the challenge. S. Weber and R. Tomljenovic. High Wycombe, UK, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, CAB International: 167-177.
- Britton, R. A. (1977). "Making tourism more supportive of small state development: the case of St. Vincent." Annals of Tourism Research **6**(5): 269-278.
- Brown, F. (2000). Tourism Reassessed: blight or blessing? Melbourne, Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Brown, F. and D. Hall (2000). **Introduction: The Paradox of Peripherality**
Tourism in Peripheral Areas: Case Studies. F. Brown and D. Hall. Sydney, Channel View Publications: 1-6.

- Brown, S. and X. Lehto (2005). "Travelling with a Purpose: Understanding the Motives and Benefits of Volunteer Vacationers." Current Issues in Tourism **8**(6): 479-496.
- Bryman, A. and R. G. Burgess (1994). Analyzing Qualitative Data. London, Routledge.
- Butcher, J. (2005). "Sun, sea and saving the world: travel snobs have turned holidaymaking into a moral dilemma." Retrieved 11 August 2005, from <http://www.spiked-online.com/>.
- Butcher, J. (2007). Ecotourism, NGOs and Development. London, Routledge.
- Butler, R. (1992). Alternative Tourism: The Thin End of the Wedge. Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism. V. L. Smith and R. W. Eadington. West Sussex, Wiley and Sons Ltd: 31-46.
- Butler, R. W. (1990). "Alternative tourism: Pious hope or Trojan horse?" Journal of Travel Research **3**(1): 40-45.
- Caissie, L. T. and E. A. Halpenny (2003). "Volunteering for nature: motivations for participating in a biodiversity conservation volunteer program." World Leisure Journal **45**(2): 38-50.
- Campbell, C. (1987). The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Cater, E. (1987). "Tourism in the least developed countries." Annals of Tourism Research **14**: 202-206.
- Cater, E. (2001). "The Space of the Dream: A case of mis-taken identity?" Area **33**(1): 47-54.
- Chalmers, A. (1999). What is this thing called science?: An assessment of the nature and status of science and its methods. St Lucia, Qld, University of Queensland Press.
- Chantal, Y. and R. J. Vallerand (2000). "Construction and validation of a new measure of motivation toward volunteerism." Loisir et Société **23**(2): 477-508.
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded Theory: objectivist and constructivist methods. Strategies of qualitative inquiry. N. K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage: 249-291.
- Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded Theory in the 21st Century: applications for advancing social justice studies. The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Chinn, A. (2008). "Organic Farms Say "WOOOF"." Scientific American, Earth 3.0 (Special Edition) **18**(5): 12.
- Clark, N. (2003). The Play of the World. Using Social Theory: Thinking through Research. M. Pryke, G. Rose and S. Whatmore. The Open University, London, Sage.
- Clarke, P. (2004). Global spread for organic skills. (Cover story). Farmers Weekly, Reed Business Information Ltd. **141**: 89.
- Clawson, M. and J. Knetsch (1966). Economics of outdoor recreation. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press.
- Clifford, J. (1986). Introduction: Partial Truths. Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus. Berkeley, University of California Press: 1-26.
- Cohen, E. (1972). "Towards a sociology of international tourism." Social Research **39**(1): 164-182.
- Cohen, E. (1973). "Nomads from affluence: notes on the phenomenon of drifter tourism." International Journal of Comparative Sociology **14**: 89-103.
- Cohen, E. (1979). "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences." Sociology **13**: 179-201.
- Cohen, E. (1988). "Authenticity and commoditization in tourism." Annals of Tourism Research **15**: 371-386.
- Cohen, E. (1988a). "Traditions in the qualitative sociology of tourism." Annals of Tourism Research **15**(1): 29-46.

- Cohen, E. (1988b). "Authenticity and commoditization in tourism." Annals of Tourism Research **15**(3): 371-386.
- Cohen, E. (1995). Contemporary tourism - trends and challenges: Sustainable authenticity or contrived post-modernity? R. Butler and D. Pearce. London, Routledge.
- Cohen, E. (2004a). Backpacking: Diversity and Change. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 43-59.
- Cohen, E., Ed. (2004b). Contemporary Tourism: Trends and Challenges. Contemporary Tourism: Trends and Challenges. Oxford, Elsevier.
- Cohen, E. (2004b). Contemporary Tourism: Trends and Challenges. Oxford, Elsevier.
- Cohen, E., Ed. (2004c). Introduction. Contemporary Tourism: Trends and Challenges. Oxford, Elsevier.
- Coleman, S. and M. Crang (2002). Grounded Tourists, Travelling Theory. Tourism: Between Place and Performance. S. Coleman and M. Crang. New York, Berghahn Books: 1-19.
- Commonwealth Government of Australia (1992). National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development. Canberra, Australian Government.
- Conesa-Sevilla, J. (2006). Ecopsychology as Ultimate Force Psychology: a biosemiotic approach to nature estrangement and nature alienation. Bloomington, Xlibris Corporation.
- Connor, H., J. Mandell, et al. (2008). "The Food Crisis Comes Home: empty food banks, rising costs - symptoms of a hungrier nation." Food First Backgrounder Vol 14, No 3. Retrieved 20 November, 2008, from <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/node/2294>.
- Conran, M. (2006). "Commentary: Beyond Authenticity: Exploring Intimacy in the Touristic Encounter in Thailand." Tourism Geographies **8**(3): 274-285.
- Conway, H. (1999). Working Holidays: its better to unwind doing something active. Resurgence: 30-31.
- Cooper, M. (2001). "Backpackers to Fraser Island: why is ecotourism a neglected aspect of their experience?" Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism **1**(4): 45-59.
- Cooper, M., K. O'Mahoney, et al. (2004). Backpackers: Nomads Join the Mainstream? An Analysis of Backpacker Employment on the 'Harvest Trail Circuit' in Australia. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 180-195.
- Coppard, S. (2006). "How it all Began." Retrieved 16 Dec, 2007, from http://www.wwofinternational.org/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=34.
- Cosgrove, L. (2000). WWOOFing in Tasmaina. Issues: 38-41.
- Craik, J. (1997). The Culture of Tourism. Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory. C. Rojek and J. Urry. London, Routledge.
- Crandell, L. (1987). The social impact of tourism on developing regions and its management. Travel, tourism and hospitality research. J. Ritchie and C. Goeldner. New York, Wiley.
- Crouch, D. (2007). The Power of the Tourist Encounter. Tourism, Power and Space. A. Church and T. Coles. London, Routledge
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1988). The flow experience and its significance for human psychology, Cambridge University Press.
- Cupchik, G. (2001, February 2001). "Constructivist Realism: An Ontology That Encompasses Positivist and Constructivist Approaches to the Social Sciences." Forum: Qualitative Social Research Retrieved 1, 2.
- Curtis, A. and T. De Lacy (1996). "Landcare in Australia: Does it Make a Difference?" Journal of Environmental Management **46**: 119-137.

- Curtis, R. (2005). Backpacker's Field Manual : A Comprehensive Guide to Mastering Backcountry Skills. Westminster, MD USA, Crown Publishing Group.
- D'Amore, L. (1988). Tourism - the world peace industry. Tourism - a vital force for peace. L. D'Amore and J. Jafari, D'Amore and Associates: 7-14.
- D'Sa, E. (1999). "Wanted: tourists with a social conscience." International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management **11**(2/3): 64-68.
- Dann, G. M. (2002). The Tourist as a Metaphor of the Social World. The Tourist as a Metaphor of the Social World. G. M. Dann. Wallingford, UK, CAB International: 1-17.
- Dann, G. M. S. (1977). "Anomie, ego-enhancement and tourism." Annals of Tourism Research **4**: 184-194.
- Davidson, L. (1995). From Barbeques at Bondi to Biodynamic Bananas. From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality: Cooperative Lifestyles in Australia. W. J. Metcalf. Sydney, UNSW Press: 41-56.
- de Botton, A. (2002). The Art of Travel. London, Penguin Books.
- de Graaf, J., D. Wann, et al. (2001). Affluenza: The all Consuming Epidemic. San Fransico, CA, Berret-Koehler.
- de Kadt, E. (1992). Making the Alternative Sustainable: lessons from development for tourism. Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism. V. Smith and R. W. Eadington. West Sussex, Wiley and Sons Ltd: 47-75.
- de Young, R. (2000). "Expanding and Evaluating Motives for Environmentally Responsible Behaviour." Journal of Social Issues **56**(3): 509-526.
- Dearden, P. and S. Harron (1994). "Alternative Tourism and Adaptive Change." Annals of Tourism Research **21**(1): 81-102.
- Denzin, N. K. and Y. Lincoln (2003). Introduction. Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. N. K. Denzin. Thousand Oaks, Sage: 1-45.
- Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln, Eds. (1994). Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln (1998). Introduction to the Volume. Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Desforges, L. (1998). Checking out the Planet: global representations/local Identities and youth travel. Cool Places. T. Skelton and G. Valentine. London, Routledge: 175-192.
- Desforges, L. (2000). "Traveling the world: Identity and Travel Biography." Annals of Tourism Research **27**(4): 926-945.
- Desforges, L. (2000). "Travelling the World: Identity and travel biography." Annals of Tourism Research **27**(4): 926-945.
- Devlin, C. (1998). WWOOFing for your Supper: the WWOOF experience. Permaculture International Journal: 29-31.
- DeWeese, T. (2004). "Sustainable Development" is the Evil You Face. 5th Annual Freedom 21 Conference, Reno, Nevada.
- DEWSRB (2000). Harvesting Australia: Report of the National Harvest Trail Working Group. Canberra, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business/Commonwealth of Australia.
- Deziel, S. (2005). You're killing me with kindness. Maclean's. **118**: 54.
- Dimitri, C. and C. Greene (2000). Recent Growth Patterns in the U.S. Organic Foods Market, Economic Research Service, USDA.
- Doherty, M. (1997). The visitors who like hard work: WWOOFers know holidays weren't meant to be easy. Sunday Examiner. Tasmania: 16-17.
- Dowden, R. (1992). Eco-missionaries preach the new gospel in Africa. Independent.
- Edensor, T. (2001). "Performing tourism, staging tourism: (re)producing tourist space and practice." Tourist Studies **1**(1): 59-81.
- Elsrud, T. (1998). "Time creation in Travelling: the taking and making of time among women backpackers." Time and Society **7**(2): 309-334.

- English, J. (2007). Cultivating new farmers: new organic programs are teaching young people the skills they need to make a living on the farm. Mother Earth News. **220**: 80-85.
- Fagence, M. (2003). Tourism and Local Society and Culture. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International: 55-78.
- Falk, I. and S. Kilpatrick (2000). "What *is* social capital? A study of interaction in a rural community." Sociologica Ruralis **40**(1): 87-110.
- Faranda, M. (2009). Big Sky, Allen & Unwin.
- Farrell, B. H. and D. Runyan (1991). "Ecology and tourism." Annals of Tourism Research **18**(1): 26-40.
- Farrer, G. (1999). WWOOF Your Way Around the World. The Sunday Age. Melbourne.
- Feifer, M. (1985). Going Places. London, Macmillan.
- Fennell, D. A. (2004). Deep ecotourism: seeking theoretical and practical reverence. New horizons in tourism: strange experiences and stranger practices. T. V. Singh. Cambridge, MA, CAB International: 109-120.
- Fennell, D. A. and K. Przeclawski (2003). Generating Goodwill in Tourism through Ethical Stakeholder Interactions. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International: 135-152.
- Fenton Huie, S. (n.d.). Way to go on a shoestring. Source unknown.
- Flick, U. (2002). An Introduction to Qualitative Research. London, Sage.
- Franklin, A. (2001). "The Tourist Gaze and Beyond: an interview with John Urry." Tourist Studies **1**(1): 5-22.
- Franklin, A. (2003a). Tourism: an introduction. London, Sage.
- Franklin, A. (2003b). The Tourist Syndrome: An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman. Tourist Studies. **3**: 205-217.
- Franklin, A. and M. Crang (2001). "The Trouble with Tourism and Travel Theory." Tourist Studies **1**(1): 5-22.
- Friend, T. (2005). He's Been Everywhere, Man. The Good Weekend: 20-25.
- Frow, J. (1997). Time and Commodity Culture: essays in cultural theory and postmodernity. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Fukuyama, F. (2002). Their Target: The modern world. Newsweek: Special Davos Edition, Newsweek. **December 2001 to February 2002**: 52-60.
- Gardner, S. (1995). WWOOFing - a family affair. Earth Garden. **91**: 72-73.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2008). "Diverse Economies: Performative Practices for 'Other Worlds'." Progress in Human Geography **32**(5): 613-632.
- Gillespie, E., L. Burgess, et al. (2008). "The Slow Travel Manifesto." Retrieved 20.12.2008, 2008.
- Glaser, B. (2001). The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description. Mill Valley, Ca, Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). Theoretical Sensitivity. Mill Valley, Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1992). Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis. Mill Valley, Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2002). "Constructivist Grounded Theory?" Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research **3**(3).
- Glaser, B. G. and A. Strauss (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory, Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago, Aldine Publishing Co.
- Global Exchange. (2005). "Reality Tours." Retrieved 15 October, 2005, from <http://www.globalexchange.org/tours/>.
- Goffman, E. (1974). Frame analysis: An essay on the organisation of experience. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press.
- Gottlieb, A. (1982). "Americans' Vacations." Annals of Tourism Research **9**: 165-187.
- Graburn, N. (2001). Secular Ritual: A General Theory of Tourism. Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century. V. Smith and M. Brent. New York, Cognizant Communications Offices: 42-50.

- Graburn, N. (2002). The Ethnographic Tourist. The Tourist as a Metaphor of the Social World. G. M. S. Dann. Wallingford, UK, CAB International: 19-39.
- Green, D. (1980). Working Weekends on Organic Farms. Organic Growing. **Spring**.
- Green, J. (1998). "Commentary: Grounded theory and the constant comparative method." British Medical Journal **316**(7137): 1064.
- Greenwood, D. J. (1989). Culture by the pound: An anthropological perspective on tourism as cultural commoditization. Hosts and guests: The anthropology of tourism. V. L. Smith. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Grosz, E. (1995). Women, chora, dwelling. Postmodern Cities and Spaces. Watson and K. Gibson. Oxford, UK, Blackwell: 47-58.
- Guba, E. and Y. Lincoln (2005). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences. The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research. N. K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. London, Sage: 191-215.
- Guba, E. and Y. S. Lincoln (1994). Competing Paradigma in Qualitative Research. Handbook of Qualitative Research. N. K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks: 105-?
- Gubrium, J. F. and J. A. Holstein (1997). The New Language of Qualitative Method. New York, ?
- Hall, B. (2003). "What is Ethnography?" Retrieved October 2005, 2005, from <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthro/CPIA/METHODS/>.
- Hall, C. M. (2003). Politics and Place - an analysis of power in tourism communities. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International: 99-113.
- Hall, C. M. (2005). Tourism: rethinking the social science of mobility. Essex, Pearson Education.
- Hamilton, C. (2009). "Affleunza." Retrieved 18 August 2009, 2009, from <http://www.clivehamilton.net.au/cms/index.php?page=affleunza>.
- Hammersley, M. (1999). "Some Reflections on the Current State of Qualitative Research." Research Intelligence(70).
- Harrison, D. (2008). "Pro-Poor Tourism: a critique." Third World Quarterly **29**(5): 851-868.
- Harvey, D. (1990). The Condition of Postmodernity: an inquiry into the origins of cultural change. Massachusetts, Blackwell.
- Henderson, K. A. (1981). "Motivations and perceptions of volunteerism as a leisure activity." Journal of Leisure Research **13**: 208-218.
- Henderson, K. A. (1984). "Volunteerism as leisure." Journal of Voluntary Action Research **13**(1): 55-63.
- Henderson, K. A. (1991). Dimensions of choice: A qualitative approach to recreation, parks and leisure research. Pennsylvania, Venture: State College.
- Herbert-Cheshire, L. (2000). "Contemporary strategies for rural community development in Australia: a governmentality perspective." Journal of Rural Studies **16**: 203-215.
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2003). "Reconciliation tourism: tourism healing divided societies!" Tourism Recreation Research **28**(3): 35-44.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.
- Holden, A. (2000). Environment and Tourism. New York, Routledge.
- Holden, P. (1984). Alternative tourism: Report on the workshop on Alternative Tourism with a focus on Asia. P. Holden. Bangkok, Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism.
- Hollinshead, K. (1998). "Tourism, Hybridity and Ambiguity: the relevance of Bhabha's 'third space' cultures." Journal of Leisure Research **30**(1): 121-156.
- Hong, E. (1985). See the world while it lasts: The social and environmental impact of tourism with special reference to Malaysia. Penang, Consumers Association of Penang: Malaysia.

- Howard, R. (2007). "Five backpacker tourist enclaves." International Journal of Tourism Research **9**(2): 73-86.
- Hughes, E. and L. Stitt (2008). As is: Secrets to Having Enough. Communities. **141**: 38-75.
- Hughes, G. (1995). "The Cultural Construction of Sustainable Tourism." Tourism Management **16**(1): 49-59.
- Huxley, L. (2004). "Western Backpackers and the Global Experience: an exploration of young people's interaction with local cultures." Tourism Culture and Communication **5**(1): 37-44.
- Idelbrook, C. (2007). Live on less and love it! Try these 75 inspiring ideas and enjoy life more while spending and consuming less. Mother Earth News. **224**: 34-38.
- IFOAM. (2008). "Uniting the Organic World." Retrieved 23 February, 2008.
- Iso-Ahola, S. (1982). "Towards a social psychology of tourism motivation: a rejoinder." Annals of Tourism Research **9**: 256-261.
- Jack, G. and A. Phipps (2005). Tourism and Intercultural Exchange: Why Tourism Matters. Clevedon, Channel View Publications.
- Jackson, P. A. (2003). "Space, Theory and Hegemony: The dual crises of Asian area studies and cultural studies." Sojourn **16**(1): 1-41.
- Jafari, J. (1987). "Tourism Models: the Sociocultural Aspects." Tourist Management **8**: 151-159.
- Jafari, J. (1990). "Research and scholarship: the basis of tourism education." The Journal of Tourism Studies **1**(1): 33-41.
- Jamal, T. and A. Stronza (2008). "'Dwelling' with ecotourism in the Peruvian Amazon." Tourist Studies **8**(3): 313-335.
- Jamieson, F. (1991). Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. London, Verso.
- Jamieson, P. (2007). The Wild Green Yonder: ten seasons volunteering on New Zealand's organic farms. Auckland, New Holland.
- Jenkins, R. (1992). Pierre Bourdieu. London, Routledge.
- Jerums, G. (1996). A Working Holiday on a Farm? Try WWOOFing. Hostel Travel. **Winter**: 22-23.
- Johnston, A. M. (2003). Exercising Indigenous Rights in Tourism. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International Publishing: 115-134.
- Johnston, B. (1993). "Breaking out of the tourist trap." Cultural Survival Quarterly **14**(1): 2-5.
- Kain, D. and B. King (2004). Destination-Based Product Selections by International Backpackers in Australia. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 196-216.
- Keedle, J. (2008). A growing field: get the dirt on organic farming (career spotlight). Career World. **37**: 16-18.
- Kelly, I. (1997). "Study Tours: A Model for 'Benign' tourism?" Journal of Tourism Studies **8**(1): 42-51.
- Kelly, J. (1983). Leisure identities and interactions. London, Allen and Unwin.
- Kelly, J. R. (1996). Leisure. Boston, Allyn and Bacon.
- Kendall, J. (1999). "Axial Coding and the Grounded Theory Controversy." Western Journal of Nursing Research **21**(6): 731-757.
- Kinder, C. (2005). Delaying the real world. Philadelphia, Running Press.
- Klaushofer, A. (2007). "Gap-year 'Voluntourists' Told not to Bother." Retrieved 21 August 2008, 2008, from <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/>.
- Klein, M. (n.d.). WWOOFing in Oz: sharing work with hosts around the world. Transitions Abroad. **43**.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). "Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development." Retrieved 9 September 2009, 2009.

- Kollmuss, A. and J. Agyeman (2002). "Mind the Gap: why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior?" Environmental Education Research 8(3): 239-260.
- Kottler, J. (1997). Travel That Can Change Your Life: how to create a transformative experience. San Fransisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Kowalski, S. (1993). Biodynamic Farming and WWOOFing in Australia. Acres. Noosaville, Qld.
- Krippendorf, J. (1987). The Holiday Makers: understanding the impact of leisure and travel. Oxford, Heinemann Publishing.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1962). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago, Imprint, Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Larson, E. D. (2000). Hands-On Harvesting: Volunteers Get Dirty on International Organic Farms. E Magazine: The Environmental Magazine. 11: 46.
- Lash, S. and J. Urry (1994). Economies of Signs and Space. London, Sage.
- Latour, B. (2005). Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Lawton, G. (2005). "What is Permaculture?" Retrieved 29 September, 2005, from http://permaculture.org.au/index.php?page_id=28.
- Lefebvre (1991). The Production of Space. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Leiper, N. (2004). Tourism Management. Sydney, Pearson Education Australia.
- Lincoln, Y. and E. Guba (2000). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences. Handbook of Qualitative Research. N. K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Locker-Murphy, L. (1996). "Backpackers in Australia: a motivation based segmentation study." Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing 5(4): 23-45.
- Lockie, S., K. Lyons, et al. (2002). "Eating 'Green': Motivations Behind Organic Food Consumption in Australia." Sociologia Ruralis 42(1): 23-40.
- Loker-Murphy, L. and P. L. Pearce (1995). "Young Budget Travelers - Backpackers in Australia." Annals of Tourism Research 22(4): 819-843.
- Lyons, K. and S. Wearing (2008). Volunteer Tourism as Alternative Tourism: Journeys Beyond Otherness. Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism: International Case Study Perspectives. K. Lyons and S. Wearing. Oxfordshire, CABI: 3-11.
- MacCannell, D. (1976). The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- MacCannell, D. (1992). Empty meeting grounds: The tourist papers. London, Routledge.
- MacCannell, D. (2001). Remarks on the Commodification of Culture. Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century. V. Smith and M. Brent. New York, Cognizant Communications Offices: 380-390.
- MacDonald, G. J. (2006). Travel globally, spend locally. Christian Science Monitor.
- Macey, D. (2000). The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory. London, Penguin Books Ltd.
- Madden, R. (n.d.). A wellie good time WWOOFing. unknown.
- Madeley, J. (2002). Food for All: the need for a new agriculttture. London, Zed Books.
- Makyut, P. and R. Morehouse (1994). Beginning Qualitative Research: a philosophic and practical guide. London, The Falmer Press.
- Maoz, D. (2004). The Conquerors and the Settlers: Two Groups of Young Israeli Backpackers in India. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 109-122.
- Marshall, G. (1998). Dictionary of Sociology. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Masey, D. (2003). Imagining the Field. Using Social Theory: Thinking through Research. M. Pryke, G. Rose and S. Whatmore. London, Sage.
- Maslow, A. (1970). Motivation and Personality, Harper & Row.
- Mason, J. (2002). Qualtiative Researching. London, Sage.

- Mathieson, A. and G. Wall (1982). Tourism: Economic and social impacts. England, Longman.
- Matos, R. (2004). Can Slow Tourism Bring New Life to Alpine Regions? The Tourism and Leisure Industry: shaping the future. K. Weiermair and C. Mathies. New York, Haworth Hospitality Press: 93-105.
- Maxey, L. (2006). "Can we sustain sustainable agriculture? Learning from small-scale producer-suppliers in Canada and the UK." The Geographical Journal **172**(3): 230-244.
- Maycock, A. (2008). "World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF)." Journal of Agricultural & Food Information **9**(4): 282-288.
- McCabe, S. (2002). The Tourist Experience and Everyday Life. The Tourist a Metaphor of the Social World. G. M. Dann. Wallingford, UK, CAB International: 61-75.
- McCabe, S. (2009). Who Is a Tourist? Conceptual and Theoretical Developments. Philosophical Issues in Tourism. J. Tribe. Bristol, Channel View Publications: 25-42.
- McGehee, N. G. (2002). "Alternative tourism and social movements." Annals of Tourism Research **29**(1): 124-143.
- McGehee, N. G. and W. Norman (2002). "Alternative Tourism as Impetus for Consciousness-Raising." Tourism Analysis **6**: 239-251.
- McIntosh, A. and S. Bonnemann (2006). "Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF): The Alternative Farm Stay Experience?" Journal of Sustainable Tourism **14**(1): 82.
- McIntosh, A. and T. Campbell (2001). "Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF): a neglected aspect of farm tourism in New Zealand." Journal of Sustainable Tourism **9**(2): 111-127.
- McIntosh, A. and A. Zahra (2007). "A Cultural Encounter through Volunteer Tourism: Towards the Ideals of Sustainable Tourism?" Journal of Sustainable Tourism **15**(5): 541-556.
- McLaren, D. (1998). Rethinking Tourism and Ecotravel: the paving of paradise and what you can do to stop it. West Hartford, Connecticut, Kumarian Press.
- McRae, L. (2003). "Edward Said and a politics of meeting and movement." Tourist Studies **3**(3): 235-251.
- McVey, R. (1998). Globalisation, Marginalisation and the Study of Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian Studies: Reorientations. Ithaca, Cornell University: 37-64.
- Meethan, K. (2001). Tourism in Global Society: place, culture, consumption. New York, Palgrave.
- Mieczkowski, Z. (1995). Environmental issues of tourism and recreation. London, University Press of America.
- Mieke, A. M. (1994). "Untitled Report on Research into WWOOFer motivations compared with Backpackers in the Cairns and Atherton Region of Queensland." Unpublished.
- Migration Expert (2008) "Immigration needs to open doors to more than 96,000 farm workers in Australia." Australian Immigration News **2009**.
- Miles, M. B. and A. M. Huberman (1994). Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage.
- Minca, C. and T. Oakes (2006). Introduction: Travelling Paradoxes. Travels in Paradox: remapping tourism. C. Minca and T. Oakes. Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield: 1-21.
- Minichiello, V., R. Aroni, et al. (1995). In-Depth Interviewing: principles, techniques, analysis. Sydney, Longman.
- Molm, L. (2010). "The Structure of Reciprocity." Social Psychology Quarterly **73**(2): 119-131.
- Moore, M., M. Townsend, et al. (2007). "Linking Human and Ecosystem Health: The Benefits of Community Involvement in Conservation Groups." Ecohealth **3**: 255-261.

- Morrison, A., S. Hsieh, et al. (1995). "Segmenting the Visiting Friends and Relatives Market By Holiday Activity Participation." Journal of Tourism Studies **6**(1): 48-63.
- Moscardo, G. (2008). "Sustainable tourism innovation: Challenging basic assumptions." Tourism and Hospitality Research **8**: 4-13.
- Moser, H. (1999, April 18, 1999). "Thick Description and Abduction: Paradigm Change in Social Research." Praxisforschung Retrieved June 23, 2004, (Accessed June 23, 2004), from <http://www.schulnetz.ch/unterrichten/fachbereiche/medienseminar/paradigms.htm>.
- Mowforth, M. and I. Munt (1997). Tourism and Sustainability: New Tourism in the Third World. London, Routledge.
- Munt, I. (1994). "The "Other" Postmodern Tourism" Culture, Travel and the New Middle Class." Theory, Culture and Society **11**: 101-123.
- Murphy, L. (2001). "Exploring social interactions of backpackers." Annals of Tourism Research **28**(1): 50-67.
- Nash, D. (1989). Tourism as a Form of Imperialism. Hosts and Guests: the anthropology of tourism. V. L. Smith. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press: 37-54.
- National Farmers' Federation (1998). Hand in Hand: Farming Sustainably. Australia.
- Navarre, E. (1994). Cheap Hands: they work for tucker. The Sunday Mail. Brisbane.
- Neulinger, J. (1982). To leisure: An introduction. Boston, Allyn & Bacon.
- Nimmo, K. (2001a). Willing workers on organic farms: a case study. Wellington, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ: 205.
- Nimmo, K. (2001b). Willing workers on organic farms: a case study (summary prepared for WWOOF New Zealand). Wellington, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ: 34.
- Noronha, F. (1999). "Culture Shocks." In Focus(Spring): 4-5.
- Novelli, M. (2005). Niche tourism: contemporary issues, trends and cases. Amsterdam; Sydney, Elsevier.
- O'Dell, T. and P. Billing, Eds. (2005). Experiencescapes : tourism, culture and economy. Copenhagen, Copenhagen Business School Press.
- O'Reilly, C. (2006). "From Drifter to gap year tourist: Mainstreaming Backpacker Travel." Annals of Tourism Research **33**(4): 998–1017.
- Oakes, T. (2006). Get Real! On being yourself and being a tourist. Travels in Paradox: remapping tourism. C. Minca and T. Oakes. Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield: 229-253.
- Obenour, W. (2004). "Understanding the Meaning of the 'Journey' to Budget Travellers." International Journal of Tourism Research **6**: 1-15.
- OFA (2006). Organic Industry Booming (Media Release June 23 2006), Organic Federation of Australia.
- Ollenburg, C. (2006). Farm Tourism In Australia: A Family Business and Rural Studies Perspective. School of Environmental and Applied Sciences. Brisbane, Griffith University. **Doctor of Philosophy**: 294.
- Organic Monitor (2003). The Global Market for Organic Food & Drink: 147.
- Organic Trade Association. (2011). "Industry Statistics and Project Growth." Retrieved 7 April, 2011, from <http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/business.html>.
- Oskamp, S. (2000). "Psychological Contributions to Achieving an Ecologically Sustainable Future for Humanity." Journal of Social Issues **56**(3): 373.
- Page, S. and D. Getz (1997). The Business of Rural Tourism. London, International Thompson Business Press: 3-37.
- Parsons, M. G. (1997). Encounters in Touriculture: Indigenous cultural tourism in contested domains. Unpublished PhD Thesis,. Lismore, NSW, School of Tourism and Hospitality, Southern Cross University.

- Pearce, D. G. (1992). Alternative Tourism: concepts, classifications and questions. Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism. V. L. Smith and R. W. Eadington. West Sussex, Wiley and Sons Ltd: 15-30.
- Pearce, P. (1993). Fundamentals of tourist motivation. Tourism Research: critiques and Challenges. D. Pearce and R. Butler. London, Routledge: 113-134.
- Pearce, P. (2005). Tourist Behaviour: Themes and Conceptual Schemes. Clevedon, Chanel View Publications.
- Pearce, P. L. (1990). The Backpacker Phenomenon: preliminary answers to basic questions. Townsville, James Cook University.
- Pearsall, J. (n.d.). Permaculture: Learn by Experience the WWOOF Way. Healthy Options. **vol unknown**: 72-73.
- Peet, R. (1999). Theories of Development. London, Guilford Press.
- Pidgeon, N. and K. Henwood (1996). Grounded Theory: practical implementation. Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences. T. John. Leicester, UK, Richardson BPS Books: 86-101.
- Pine, J. and J. Gilmore (1999). The Experience Economy. Boston, Harvard Business School Press.
- Pizam, A., N. Uriely, et al. (2000). "The Intensity of Tourist-Host Social relationships and its Effects on Satisfaction and Change of Attitudes: The case of working tourists in Israel." Tourism Management **21**(4): 395-406.
- Platz, M. (2003). This was a real down-to-earth vacation. Christian Science Monitor. **95**: 16.
- Pleumarom, A. (2003). Our World is Not For Salë: The disturbing implications of privatization in the tourism trade. International Seminar on Tourism: Unfair Practices - Equitable Options, Hanover, Germany, DANTE/ The Network for Sustainable Tourism Development.
- Pollard, L. (1993). WWOOFing About. Earth Garden. **86**: 80-82.
- Pollard, L. (1996). WWOOFer's Tales: feedback shows WWOOFers are satisfied. Earth Garden. **March-May**: 64-65.
- Pollard, L. (1997a). Japanese Tales. Earth Garden. **98**: 46-47.
- Pollard, L. (1997b). Renewal Season for Hosts. Earth Garden. **99**: 46-47.
- Pollard, L. (1998). WWOOFing and Other Cultures. Earth Garden. **March-May**: 72-73.
- Pollard, L. (1999). Willing Workers. Community Quarterly: 45-46.
- Pollard, L. (n.d.). Letter to the Editor, unpub.
- Pollard, L. (n.d.). The WWOOF Story.
- Pollard, L. (n.d.). WWOOFing Around the World. New Traveller: 20-21.
- Pollard, L. (unpub). "The WWOOF Story." unpub.
- Poon, A. (1989). Tourism, Technology and Competitive Strategies. Wallingford, CAB International.
- Poria, Y., R. Butler, et al. (2003). "Revisiting Mieczkowski's conceptualization of tourism." Tourism Geographies **5**(1): 26-38.
- Potts, T. D. and R. Harrill (1998). "Enhancing Communities for Sustainability: a travel ecology approach." Tourism Analysis **3**(3,4): 133-142.
- Potts, T. D. and R. Harrill (2002). Travel Ecology and Developing Naturally: making theory - practice connections. Sustainable Tourism: a global perspective. R. Harris, T. Griffin and P. Williams. Sydney, Butterworth Heinemann: 45-57.
- Pretty, J. (1994). "Alternative Systems of Inquiry for a Sustainable Agriculture." The Institute of Development Studies Bulletin **25**: 37-48.
- Pryor, M. (1997). "The Traveller as a Destination Pioneer." Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research **3**: 225-237.
- Raymond, E. and C. Hall (2008). "The development of cross-cultural (mis)understanding through volunteer tourism." Journal of Sustainable Tourism **16**(5): 530-543.
- Rayner, L. (2005). "Ecological Collapse, Trauma Theory and Permaculture." Gatherings July 2005. Retrieved December 11, 2008, 2008, from

http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/archive2/ecological_collapse.html#top.

- Reason, P. (1998). Three Approaches to Participative Inquiry. Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage. **2**: 261-291.
- Redwood, J. (1998). Sven's Story. Earth Garden. **Dec-Feb 1998**: 46-49.
- Redwood, J. (2005). The ABC of WWOOF Hosting. Earth Garden. **Sept-Nov 2005**: 30-32.
- Reid, D. G. (2003). Tourism, Globalisation and Development. London, Pluto Press.
- Reid, J. M. (1988). Entrepreneurship as a community development strategy for the rural south. The Rural South in Crisis: Challenges for the Future. L. J. Beaulieu, West View Press: 325-343.
- Reisinger, Y. and L. W. Turner (2003). Cross-Cultural Behaviour in Tourism: Concepts and Analysis. Sydney, Butterworth Heinemann.
- Richards, G. and J. Wilson (2004). Backpacker Icons: Influential Literary 'nomads' in the Formation of Backpacker Identities. The global nomad : backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 123-145.
- Richards, G. and J. Wilson (2004). The Global Nomad: motivations and behaviour of independent travellers worldwide. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 14-39.
- Richards, G. and J. Wilson (2004). The Global Nomad: motivations and behaviour of independent travellers worldwide. The global nomad : backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 14-39.
- Richards, G. and J. Wilson (2004a). The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications.
- Richards, G. and J. Wilson (2004b). "Travel Writers and Writers who Travel: Nomadic Icons for the Backpacker Subculture? ." Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change **2**(1): 46 - 68
- Richter, L. and A. Norman (2010). "AIDS orphan tourism: A threat to young children in residential care." Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies in press.
- Rifkin, J. (2000). The Age of Access: The new culture of hypercapitalism, where all of life is a paid-for experience. New York, Tarcher/Putnam.
- Riley, P. J. (1988). "Road Culture of International Long-term Budget Travellers." Annals of Tourism Research **15**: 313-328.
- Riley, R. W. (1995). "Prestige-worthy tourism behavior." Annals of Tourism Research **22**(3): 630-649.
- Ritzer, G. (2004). The Globalization of Nothing. Thousand Oaks, CA, Pine Forge Press.
- Ritzer, G. and A. Liska (1997). 'McDisneyization' and 'post-tourism': complementary perspectives on contemporary tourism. Touring Cultures. C. Rojek and J. Urry. London, Routledge.
- Robinson, J. (2004). "Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development." Ecological Economics **48**: 369-384.
- Roe, D., H. Goodwin, et al. (2004). Pro-poor tourism: benefiting the poor. New horizons in tourism: strange experiences and stranger practices. T. V. Singh. Cambridge, MA, CAB International: 147-161.
- Rojek, C. (1993). Ways of escape: Modern transformations in leisure and travel. London, Macmillan.
- Rojek, C. (1995). Decentring Leisure: Rethinking leisure theory. London, Sage Publications.
- Rojek, C. and J. Urry (1997). Transformations of Travel and Theory. Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory. C. Rojek and J. Urry. London, Routledge.

- Ron, A., A. Shani, et al. (2008). "Eco-leisure: theory and practice." Leisure/Loisir **32**(1): 47-64.
- Rose, G. (2003). A Body of Questions. Using Social Theory: thinking through research. London, Sage; The Open University.
- Rosenbaum, A. (2007, November 21, 2006). "Crossing the Eco-Cultural Divide." Planeta Forum Retrieved July 2007, 2007, from www.planeta.com.
- Ross, G. (1997). "Backpacker Achievement and Environmental Controllability as Visitor Motivations." Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing **6**(2): 69-82.
- Rother, F. (2009). Adventures and Misadventures with the WWOOF Volunteer Program (online). T. Abroad.
- Ryan, C. (1997a). The Chase of a Dream, the End of a Play. The Tourist Experience. C. Ryan. London, Cassell: 1-24.
- Ryan, C. (1997b). Similar Motivations - Diverse Behaviours. The Tourist Experience: a new introduction. C. Ryan. London, Cassell: 25-47.
- Ryan, C. (2002). "Equity, management, power sharing and sustainability - issues of the 'new tourism'." Tourism Management **23**: 17-26.
- Ryan, C., B. Trauer, et al. (2003). "Backpackers - what is the peak experience?" Tourism Recreation Research **28**(3): 93-98.
- Ryan, R. M. and E. L. Deci (2000). "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions." Contemporary Educational Psychology **25**: 54-67.
- Saarinen, J. (2006). "Traditions of sustainability in tourism studies." Annals of Tourism Research **33**(4): 1121-1140.
- Saglio, C. (1979). Tourism for discovery: a project in Lower Casemance, Senegal. In Tourism -passport to development? Perspectives on the social and cultural effects of tourism in developing countries. E. deKadt. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Said, E. (2000). Reflections on Exile. London, Granta Books.
- Saul, J. R. (1995). The Unconscious Civilisation. Camberwell, Victoria, Penguin Books.
- Saul, J. R. (2001). On Equilibrium. Camberwell, Victoria, Penguin Books.
- Scheyvens, R. (2002). "Backpacker tourism and Third World development." Annals of Tourism Research **29**(1): 144-164.
- Scheyvens, R. (2003). Local Involvement in Managing Tourism. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International: 229-252.
- Scheyvens, R. (2009). "Pro-Poor Tourism: is there value beyond the rhetoric?" Tourism Recreation Research **34**(2): 191-196.
- Schmetzer, D. (n.d.). Realising the Dream. Grass Roots: 6-8.
- Schatz, M. and R. Walker (1995). Research as Social Action: new opportunities for qualitative research. London, Routledge.
- Schultz, P. (2000). "Empathizing With Nature: The Effects of Perspective Taking on Concern for Environmental Issues." Journal of Social Issues **56**(3): 391.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry. Handbook of Qualitative Research. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage: 118-?
- Shepherd, R. (2002). "Commodification, culture and tourism." Tourist Studies **2**(2): 183-201.
- Shih-Jang, H. (2004). "The Effects of an Environmental Education Program on Responsible Environmental Behavior and Associated Environmental Literacy Variables in Taiwanese College Students." The Journal of Environmental Education **35**(2): 37-48.
- Shiva, V. (2009). Soil Not Oil: climate change, peak oil and food insecurity, Zed Books.
- Sibuet, J. C. (1998). "Northeast Atlantic passive margins - Paleoconstraints during rifting." Bulletin de la Société géologique de France **4**(4): 515.

- Simpson, K. (2004). "Doing development': the gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development." Journal of International Development **16**(5): 681-692.
- Singh, S. and T. V. Singh (2004). Volunteer tourism: new pilgrimages to the Himalayas. New horizons in tourism: strange experiences and stranger practices. T. V. Singh. Cambridge, MA, CAB International: 181-194.
- Singh, S., D. J. Timothy, et al. (2003). Tourism and Destination Communities. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, UK, CAB International Publishers: 3-17.
- Singh, T. V. (2002). "Altruistic tourism: another shade of sustainable tourism. The case of Kanda community." Tourism (Zagreb) **50**(4): 361-370.
- Singh, T. V., Ed. (2004). New Horizons in Tourism: Strange Experiences and Stranger Practices. Cambridge, MA, CABI.
- Slaughter, L. (2004). Profiling the International Backpacker Market in Australia. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 168-179.
- Smith, V. (2001). The Culture Brokers. Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century. V. Smith and M. Brent. New York, Cognizant Communications Offices: 275-282.
- Smithson, A. (2009). A Year in the (risky) Life of an Organic Farmer. The Organic Way Magazine: 28-30.
- Sorensen, A. (2003). "Backpacker ethnography." Annals of Tourism Research **30**(4): 847-867.
- St George, L. (2005). Organics Flourish at Whatitiri. The Report. Whangarei, NZ: 20-21.
- Stanford, D. (2008). "Exceptional Visitors': Dimensions of tourist responsibility in the context of New Zealand." Journal of Sustainable Tourism **16**(3): 258-275.
- Statham, C. (2003). WWOOF to it. Get up and Go (online).
- Statham, C. (2005). A Farm in the City. Earth Garden: 41-43.
- Stebbins, R. and M. Graham, Eds. (2004). Volunteering as Leisure, Leisure as Volunteering. Oxfordshire, CAB International.
- Stehlik, T. (2002). "Willing workers on organic farms: Cultural exchange and informal adult learning in an organisation that is voluntary, non-profit and environmentally friendly!" Australian Journal of Adult Learning **42**(2): 220-226.
- Stoddart, H. and C. M. Rogerson (2004). "Volunteer tourism: the case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa." GeoJournal **60**(3): 311-318.
- Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (1990). Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (1994). Grounded Theory Methodology: an overview. Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage. **2**: 158-183.
- Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (1998). Basics of Qualitative Research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Strong, G. (2008). Regenerative Agriculture: the case for dialogue with nature. Biodiversity: Integrating Conservation and Production. T. Lefroy, K. Bailey, G. Unwin and T. Norton. Collingwood, Victoria, CSIRO: 75-87.
- Swarbrooke, J. and S. Horner (1999). Consumer Behaviour in Tourism. Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Taylor, C. and H. Little (1997). Entrepreneurship in New Zealand Farming: A Study of Alternative Enterprises on Farms - Summary Findings and Policy Implications. Wellington, Ministry of Agriculture.
- Taylor, J. (2001). "Authenticity and sincerity in tourism." Annals of Tourism Research **28** (1): 7-26.

- Telfer, D. J. (2003). Development Issues in Destination Communities. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International: 155-180.
- Thornton, K. (2003). What is a gap year worth? Times Educational Supplement. **Dec 2003**: 19.
- Timothy, D. J., S. Singh, et al. (2003). Understanding Tourism and Destination Communities. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International: 273-276.
- Timothy, D. J. and C. Tosun (2003). Appropriate Planning for Tourism. Tourism in Destination Communities. S. Singh, D. J. Timothy and R. K. Dowling. Wallingford, CAB International Publishing: 181-204.
- Tomaszewski, L. E. (2003). Peripheral travelers: how American solo women backpackers participate in two communities of practice, Texas A&M University.
- Tourism Australia (2006). A Uniquely Australian Invitation: the experience seeker (brochure), Commonwealth Government of Australia.
- Trainer, F. E. (1985). Abandon affluence! London, England, Zed.
- Trainer, T. (1989). Developed to Death. London, Greenprint.
- Trainor, P. (2008). See the Country, Save the Planet. This Magazine. **Jan/Feb 2008**: 32-33.
- TravelSmart Victoria (n.d.). Theories and Models of Behaviour Change. Melbourne, Australia, Victorian State Government.
- Turner, R., G. Miller, et al. (2001). "The Role of U.K. Charities and the Tourism Industry." Tourism Management **22**(5): 463-472.
- Uriely, N. (2005). "The Tourist Experience: Conceptual Developments." Annals of Tourism Research **32**(1): 199-216.
- Uriely, N. and A. Reichel (2000). "Working Tourists and their Attitudes to Hosts." Annals of Tourism Research **27**(2): 267-283.
- Uriely, N., A. Reichel, et al. (2003). "Volunteering in tourism: additional thinking." Tourism Recreation Research **28**(3): 57-62.
- Urry, J. (2002). The Tourist Gaze. London, Sage.
- Urry, J. (2008). Foreword. Tourism and Mobilities: Local-Global Connections. P. M. Burns and M. Novelli. Oxfordshire, CABI: xiv-xv.
- van Raders, A. M. (1994). WWOOF: a new style of backpacking. Queensland, Australia, Unpublished: 16 pages.
- Vanhove, N. (1997). Mass Tourism: benefits and costs. Tourism, Development and Growth: the challenge of sustainability. S. Wahab and J. Pigram. London, Routledge: 50-77.
- Vansittart, K. (2002). Helping Hands. Canadian Geographic. **122**: 38.
- Veal, A. (1997). Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism: a practical guide. Great Britain, Pearson Profession Ltd.
- Venetoulis, J. and C. Cobb (2004). The Genuine Progress Indicator: 1950-2000 (2004 Update): Measuring the Real State of the Economy. Sustainability Indicators Program. Washington D.C., Redefining Progress: 26.
- Vogt, J. (1976). "Wandering: youth and travel behaviour." Annals of Tourism Research **4**(1): 25-41.
- Volunteering England. (2005, 2005). "What young people want from volunteering." Research Bulletin. Retrieved December, 2005, from www.volunteeringengland.org.
- von Foerster, H. (1990). Ethics and second-order cybernetics: Constructions of the Mind. International Conference, Systems and Family Therapy: Ethics, Epistemology, New Methods, Paris.
- Wagenaar, H. (2003). The (Re-)discovery of Grounded Theory in Postpositivist Policy Research. ESF Workshop on Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences, Vienna.

- Wahab, S. (1997). Sustainable Tourism in the Developing World. Tourism, Development and Growth: the challenge of sustainability. S. Wahab and J. Pigram. London, Routledge: 129-146.
- Wahab, S. and J. Pigram (1997). The Challenge of Sustainable Tourism Growth. Tourism, Development and Growth: The Challenge of Sustainability. S. Wahab and J. Pigram. London, Routledge: 3-13.
- Wahab, S. and J. Pigram, Eds. (1997). Tourism, Development and Growth: The Challenge of Sustainability. London, Routledge.
- Wall, G. (1997). Sustainable Tourism - Unsustainable Development. Tourism, Development and Growth. S. Wahab and J. Pigram. London, Routledge: 33-49.
- Wang, N. (2000). Tourism and Modernity: Sociological Analysis, Permagon.
- Wang, N. (2002). The Tourist as Peak Consumer. The Tourist as a Metaphor of the Social World. G. M. S. Dann. Wallingford, UK, CAB International: 281-295.
- Ward, G. (1997). Postmodernism. London, Hodder Headline.
- Ward, J. (1995). A Brief History of WWOOF. East Sussex, WWOOF UK.
- Wearing, B. and S. Wearing (1988). "All in a day's leisure': gender and the concept of leisure." Leisure Studies 7: 111-123.
- Wearing, B. and S. Wearing (1992). "Identity and the Commodification of Leisure." Leisure Studies 11: 3-18.
- Wearing, B. and S. Wearing (1996). "Refocusing the tourist experience: the flaneur and the choraster." Leisure Studies 15: 229-243.
- Wearing, M. and S. Wearing (2002). Western Tourism, Hegemony and Third Space: re-presenting post-colonial otherness. Journeys into Otherness. K. Hollinshead and C. De Burlo. Guernsey, Channel Island Press.
- Wearing, S. (1998a). The Nature of Ecotourism: the place of self, identity and communities as interacting elements of alternative tourism experiences. School of Environmental and Information Sciences. Albury, Charles Sturt University.
- Wearing, S. (2001). Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that Make a Difference. Oxfordshire, CAB International.
- Wearing, S. (2002). Re-centring the self in volunteer tourism. The tourist as a metaphor of the social world. G. M. S. Dann: 237-262.
- Wearing, S. (2003). "Volunteer Tourism." Tourism Recreation Research 28(3): 1-104.
- Wearing, S., A. Deville, et al. (2008). The Volunteer's Journey Through Leisure into the Self. Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism: International Case Study Perspectives. K. Lyons and S. Wearing. Oxfordshire, CABI: 63-71.
- Wearing, S., M. McDonald, et al. (2005). "Building a Decommodified Research Paradigm in Tourism: The Contribution of NGOs." Journal of Sustainable Tourism 13(5): 424-439.
- Wearing, S. and J. Neil (1997). Sustainable tourism that counts: ecotourism, volunteerism and serious leisure, presented at the International Tourism Research Conference. Tourism Research: Building a Better Industry. Manly, Sydney.
- Wearing, S. and J. Neil (1999). Ecotourism: Impacts, potentials and possibilities. Oxford, Butterworth Heinemann.
- Wearing, S. and J. Neil (2000). "Refiguring self and identity through volunteer tourism." Loisir et Société 23(2): 389-419.
- Wearing, S. and B. Wearing (2001). "Conceptualizing the selves of tourism." Leisure Studies 20(2): 143-159.
- Wearing, S. and M. Wearing (1998b). Decommodifying ecotourism: rethinking global-local interactions with host communities. World 14th Congress on Sociology, Montreal.
- Weaver, D. B. (1992). "Contention for Deliberate Alternative Tourism." Annals of Tourism Research 19(4): 788-791.
- Weaver, D. B. (1998). Ecotourism in the Less Developed World. Wallingford, CAB International Publishing.

- Weaver, D. B. (2002). "The evolving concept of ecotourism and its potential impacts." International Journal of Sustainable Development 5(3): 251-264.
- Welk, P. (2004). Anti-Tourism as an Element of Backpacker Identity. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon, Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 77-91.
- Westerhausen, K. and J. Macbeth (2003). "Backpackers and Empowered Local Communities: Natural Allies in the Struggle for Sustainability and Local Control?" Tourism Geographies 5(1): 71-86.
- Whatmore, S. (2003). Generating Materials. Using Social Theory: thinking through research. M. Pryke, G. Rose and S. Whatmore. London, Sage, The Open University.
- Wheeller, B. (1990). "Responsible tourism." Tourism Management 11(3): 262-263.
- Wheeller, B. (1992). "Is progressive tourism appropriate?" Tourism Management: 104-105.
- Wheeller, B. (1993). "Sustaining the Ego." Journal of Sustainable Tourism 1(2): 121-130.
- Wheeller, B. (2004). "The Truth? The Hole Truth. Everything but the Truth. Tourism and Knowledge: A Septic Sceptic's Perspective." Current Issues in Tourism 7(6): 467-477.
- Willer, H. and M. Yussefi (2004). The World of Organic Agriculture: statistics and emerging trends. Bonn, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.
- Wilson, J. and G. Richards (2004). Backpacker Icons: Influential Literary "nomads" in the Formation of Backpacker Identities. The global nomad: backpacker travel in theory and practice. G. Richards and J. Wilson. Clevedon ; Buffalo, N.Y., Channel View Publications: 123-145.
- Woehler, K. (2004). The Rediscovery of Slowness, or Leisure Time as One's Own and As Self-Aggrandizement? The Tourism and Leisure Industry: shaping the future. K. Weiermair and C. Mathies. New York, Haworth Hospitality Press: 83-92.
- Wong, J. and J. Sheth (1985). Explaining Intention-Behaviour Discrepancy - a Paradigm. Advances in Consumer Research E. C. Hirschman and M. B. Holbrook. Provo, UT Association for Consumer Research. 12: 378-384.
- Wood and House (1991). The Good Tourist. ??, ??
- WTO (2005). "Use Tourism in War on Poverty" - World Leaders Urged, WTO Press and Communications Department.
- WWOOF Australia (2004). The Australian WWOOF Book. Buchan, Victoria, WWOOF Australia.
- WWOOF Australia (2004). pers. comm.
- WWOOF Australia (2004). WWOOF Australia Book. Buchan, Victoria, WWOOF Australia.
- WWOOF Australia (2005). WWOOF Australia's Independent List of World Wide Hosts from Countries without their own WWOOF group. Buchan, Victoria, WWOOF Australia.
- WWOOF Australia. (2008). "Guidelines for Hosts." Retrieved 23 February, 2008, from http://www.wwooof.com.au/WWOOF_host_info.html#Host%20Guidelines.
- WWOOF Australia (2009). The Australian WWOOF Book. Buchan, Victoria, WWOOF Australia.
- WWOOF New Zealand (2004). WWOOF New Zealand Book. Nelson, NZ, WWOOF NZ.
- Wymer, W., D. Self, et al. (2010). "Sensation Seekers as a Target Market for Volunteer Tourism." Services Marketing Quarterly 31(3).
- Zimmermann, F. M. (1995). "Third World Tourism. Focus on Southeast Asia. Alternative tourism as a stimulus for mass tourism and sociocultural change -

German - Spreitzhofer,G." Mitteilungen Der Osterreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft **137**: 541-541.