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**VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS:
MOTIVATION, EXPERIENCES AND
PERCEIVED CAREER EFFECTS**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

At Massey University, Albany

New Zealand

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2004



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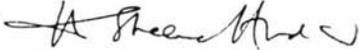
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Dust

**It would be dishonest to pretend I went
Because I wanted to turn the
Desert into a garden
Or to realise dreams
That were thousands of years old**

**I went because it was different
Because I had nothing else to do
Because it was a road
That might not have an end**

**I knew I would not stay forever
I never thought of tying my future
To this newness
I knew I would take the road back one day**

**But perhaps carrying with me
A particle
Of the nights silence
Of the day's honesty**

Yael Dayan

A poem in the foyer of VSA Head Office, Wellington

**Burdened by anxiety and fear,
Beset by temptation and guarded by spiritual powers,
The seeker pursues his/her way along the path of life
Seeking ever a "better way"**

Samuel Claggett Chew

ABSTRACT

This study concerns self initiated volunteer expatriation. Drawing on data from interviews and test results from a cohort of 48 New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad volunteers, it explored their experiences as overseas volunteer development workers.

Most literature concerning expatriates focuses on the expatriate assignment of managers. By comparison volunteer development workers remain an under-researched group. Moreover, much of the expatriate management literature and the volunteer development worker literature adopts a positivist approach using quantitative methodologies and large scale studies and consider expatriates from a managerial perspective, leaving the perspective of the individual relatively unexplored. This study seeks to focus on volunteer development workers, using qualitative as well as quantitative methodology and considering individual rather than organisational attitudes and behaviour. As a theoretical backdrop, the concepts of “protean” career, (Hall, 2002), “hero’s journey”, (Osland, 1995) and “career competencies” (De Fillippi & Arthur, 1996) were used as frameworks to assist understanding.

The study was longitudinal, and focused on a one-year cohort (2001) of volunteers who provided information on three occasions – before, during, and immediately after their assignment. The study used a mixed- methodology design i.e. was both quantitative and qualitative using both in depth interviews and psychometric testing. The study suggests alternative ways of exploring volunteer expatriation with a specific focus on repositioning the individual at the centre of the study.

The study began by focusing and identifying the personalities, (as indicated by the Five Factor Model NEO- PR questionnaire) career values, (as indicated by the Career Orientation Inventory, previous career, attitudes to career and motivation to volunteer (the last two being assessed by a pre-departure structured interview. The experience of VSA assignments was explored by means of a mid-assignment email questionnaire. A second post assignment interview elicited further data on volunteers’ experience of VSA, their evaluation of that experience in retrospect, and their plans for further career development. The NEO and COI were re-administered to check changes over time.

The study indicated that self direction, challenge, adventure and personal resilience were dominant themes in the attitudes to career, motivations and experiences of the VSA assignment. Openness and agreeableness, significantly greater than population norms were dominant and stable personality traits. In addition, the study reported volunteers’ perceived effects of the VSA experience relating to self and career in the forms of increased technical and personal skills, self awareness and challenges to their values. Such outcomes of the study support the use of the “protean “career model (Hall, 1976; Hall, 2002; Briscoe & Hall, 2003) as a way to understand the career transitions made by the volunteers. It also substantiated Osland’s (1990; 1995) notion of the metaphor of the hero’s journey as an adventure and framework to understand volunteer expatriation and VSA phenomena. In addition, the outcomes supported a model of understanding career competencies as career “capital” used as a framework to understand volunteer motivation and the VSA assignment experience as a career episode.

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PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PAPERS

Refereed Journal

Hudson, S. (2004). Volunteering overseas: a career episode. *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*. 25, (1), 9-17.

Conference papers

Hudson, S. 'First World voices in third world countries: voices of self-directed inter-cultural career development.' Paper presented at the EGOS Colloquium, Barcelona, 4-7 July, 2002.

Hudson, S. 'The Effects of Volunteer Service Abroad Assignments on the Careers of volunteers'. Paper presented at the Careers Research Conference, Wellington, 22-23 November 2001.

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Chapter one Introduction

1.1 Introduction

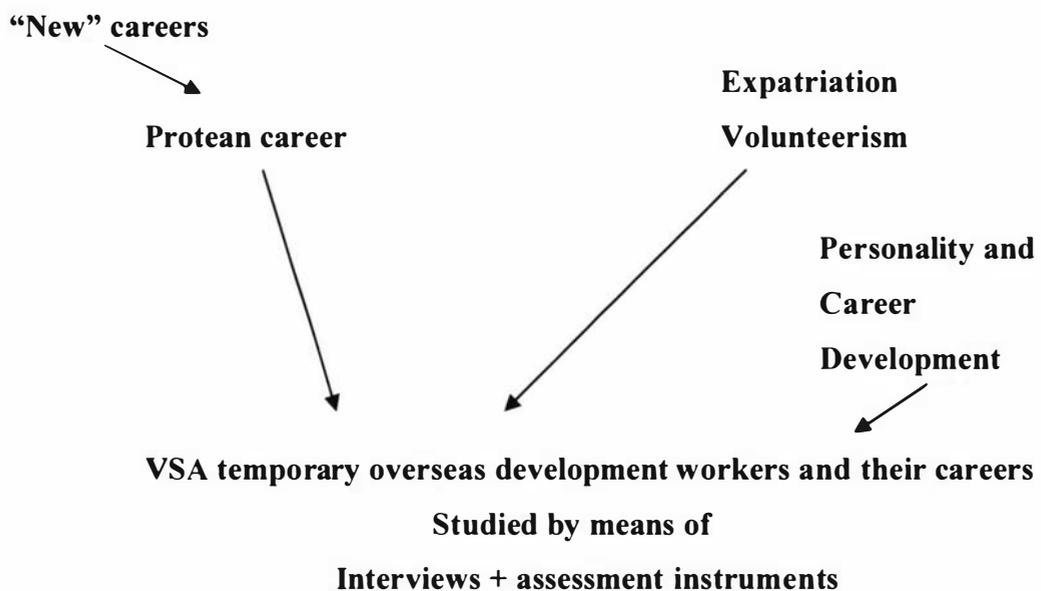
“Couple jetting to Tanzania to help out”. So reads a by-line in the Cook Strait News on 4th April 2003. The story tells of a local GP and his wife, a nurse, who are about to fly out to take up a New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad assignment in a small hospital on the lower slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The story talks about their “long held dream”, their wish to have a “challenge of the unknown” and to be “outside their comfort zone” both physically and psychologically. They will have a huge “learning curve” in both language and differing medical conditions. Finally the story concludes by saying that they may return to their practice after the assignment but they are open to options.

Such a story is fairly typical of the anecdotal descriptions of Volunteer Service Abroad assignees setting off on their assignments. These kinds of stories have been heard in New Zealand for fifty years but until now there has not been a study which looks in detail at the personalities, values and motivation of those who volunteer and are accepted for assignments nor of the impact of the assignment on their lives and careers.

The focus of this longitudinal, multi-method study is temporary, volunteer, overseas development workers and their careers. Such a design allows for the exploration of the experiences of VSA workers, (also an example of self initiated expatriation, an under-explored field of study). The research focuses on why the workers went and takes into account previous work experience as a potential stimulus as well as considering inferred stimuli in the VSA workers’ personalities. It also considers the VSA workers’ experience of volunteer development work in terms of how it affects personality, values and career development.

The significance and timeliness of this study can be found in the context of the debate on so called “new” careers particularly the protean career. The study also uses theoretical constructs from the disciplines of individual psychology and considers contemporary trends towards increased international mobility, including expatriation. (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Study framework



1.2 My personal experience as a stimulus for this study

1.2.1 Practice base

This study is practice driven. My role and personal interest in New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) underscores Denzin’s (1989b) statement that choice of research topic “represents a highly personal decision” (p.76). I will outline the aspects and contexts which led me to begin this study. Two threads were interwoven, firstly my own voluntary work with VSA and secondly my work as a career practitioner/counsellor and trainer of career counsellors.

Although I have not been a participant in the VSA programme, I had, like many who do participate, a personal dream to take part. For the past ten years I have

been involved as a volunteer psychologist/counsellor in the selection process of volunteers and in their debriefing on return. During this time I also conducted some research for VSA (Hudson, 2000) relating to the coping strategies of volunteers. Through the years of selecting and debriefing different volunteers I became fascinated by both the calibre and the dynamism of the applicants and by what they had done with their careers and lives before the assignment and what they did on return. This was particularly heightened when, by chance, I debriefed three volunteers whom I had originally selected two and a half years before and was able to reflect with them on their motivation and goals before they departed compared to their expectations and experience. I was also able to find out what they planned to do next. I was fascinated by the changes they were making in their lives which raised questions about the impact of the VSA experience on volunteers' lives and careers. After this, I expressed my interest in researching the field of volunteers' careers and VSA was supportive.

1.2.2 Career theory integration

The second thread was that during the past few years I had been involved in developing and lecturing on an educational programme for career counsellors. This involved me in further personal study of career theory in the disciplines of both individual psychology and Human Resource Management, and this gave me potential theoretical frameworks for the study of the volunteers. I found an extensive body of literature in the discipline of psychology, particularly career counselling and career development, and this prompted me to consider personality, values and developmental processes as key influences on volunteers. There was an equally extensive body of literature on "new" careers which led me to consider how a career episode such as a VSA assignment might be understood in terms of the "new" career literature and theories of the early twenty-first century. The VSA episode is characteristically a break from continuity in the direction of mobility, change and internationalisation – common characteristics of what are now claimed to be "new" career forms.

1.2.3 Expatriation

Once I had started to review the wider parameters of literature for the study, I became aware of a considerable body of literature relating to expatriate management most of which was based on studies which were quantitative, retrospective and dealt with corporate assignments and which did not offer explanation of the motives and outcomes of overseas *volunteers*. Some of the quantitative literature related to expatriate selection and adjustment was useful and contributed to the use of the personality measurement instruments (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). The few exceptions in the expatriate literature were Joyce Osland's metaphorical analysis of expatriate managers, (1995; 1990), Kerr Inkson et al.'s (1997) study of young New Zealanders going on their OE (overseas experience) and later Julia Richardson's study of expatriate academics (2002), all retrospective but all using a qualitative methodology which allowed much deeper analysis of the expatriate experience and which again resonated with the theory and rhetoric of "new" careers.

Still finding nothing that particularly addressed the careers of volunteer development workers, I decided to start this study. Since I had no imposed time frame I decided to use the natural length of time of the VSA assignment as my temporal parameter which would also give the added benefit of a longitudinal perspective.

My rationale was that whether I approve of globalisation or not, it is proceeding, and careers are becoming international. Careers take place across international boundaries and, simultaneously, boundaries between paid work and other segments of individuals' lives (family relationships, leisure, volunteer work) are becoming more blurred. The underlying assumption is that career development may come from any segment including volunteering overseas.

Overseas volunteers appear to combine, in their career behaviour, the common 21st century trends of career mobility, project careers, self-direction of career, boundary-crossing and intercultural experience, in a unique and informative way. This leads to the question: how far does this unique combination of features

enable the expatriate volunteer experience to illuminate the understanding of careers; and the related question how far does the experience affect the careers of those who undertake it? These questions prompted this study.

1.2.4 Other factors

There were other benefits for this study from my previous involvement with VSA; not least the staff support in facilitating contact with participants both before departure and on return but also their interest and personal encouragement to me while I was conducting the study. This personal involvement and experience in the organisation, which is the context for this study, not only had significant influence on the choice of research topic, but also sustained my enthusiasm during the long process of doctoral research.

1.4 The study

This study explored how the 2001 cohort of selected volunteers experienced their volunteer assignment.¹ It used a mixed methodology approach, with quantitative data and qualitative data informing each other. Semi structured interviews were used both pre, during and post to answer more general questions related to “what is going on?”(Bouma, 2000) and standard psychometric instruments and questionnaires were used to test hypotheses in pre and post departure phases and to answer specific questions.

1.5 Research objectives

General:

To examine the demographic and personality characteristics of the selected VSA volunteers, their motivation to expatriate, their experience of VSA and the perceived impact of the assignment experience on their lives and careers.

¹ The volunteers in this study are those who have been selected by VSA. The relatively small numbers of applicants who do not get through the selection process were not included in this longitudinal study.

Specific:

Objective 1. To contribute new empirical data about the backgrounds, motivations, personalities, values of overseas volunteer development workers and their attitudes to their careers and working lives.

Related hypotheses: hypotheses 1a,1b,1c,1d,1e and 1f will be introduced as they relate to the relevant literature in chapters three and four.

Objective 2. To explore the nature of individuals' experiences of volunteering overseas as a previously unresearched theme: in particular, salient experiences, positive and negative features, self-perceived adjustment and effects perceived retrospectively.

Related hypotheses: hypotheses 2a and 2b will be introduced as they relate to the relevant literature in chapter four.

Objective 3. To contribute to career theory by adding data from and interpretation of the careers of, a specific group whose career transitions could now be viewed in different ways given the dominance of the "new" career discourse; and to specifically investigate the degree of fit of VSA volunteer development workers to the protean career ideal.

1.6 Overview of the thesis

Chapter two:

The participants in this study were selected by New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA), and their assignments were negotiated by VSA. By way of background, chapter two describes the philosophy, organisation and framework of VSA and how the process of volunteering is managed. Some comparisons are made with other volunteer development worker schemes and a review of their studies particularly in relation to the effect of volunteering on careers. This

chapter will also debate some of the issues of development work and VSA's stance in that debate.

Chapter three:

Chapter three reviews research and relevant literature related to volunteering and to expatriation. The metaphor of the hero's journey (Campbell, 1968) is explored and its potential relevance to this study outlined.

Chapter four:

This chapter reviews theories of career and their possible usefulness and relevance to the careers of the volunteers in this study. Traditional and "new" career theories or models are examined and reviewed with a particular focus on the "protean" career.

Chapter five:

Chapter five reiterates the research objectives and related hypotheses and describes the research process. The research questions and hypotheses are derived from three main sources: first, from the themes and gaps in the literature identified in chapters two, three and four; second, from my own experience of working as a volunteer involved in selection and debriefing of volunteers.

The research process includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. This chapter includes descriptions of the collection of data, the use of personality inventory information, the coding and methods of analysis of qualitative data using the computer programme NVivo.

Chapters six, seven, eight and nine:

These four chapters present the research findings. Chapter six addresses the first objective and the six related hypotheses by focusing on the personality profiles and career values of the participants and their careers and lives before they

decided to volunteer to do the VSA assignment. Chapter seven also addresses the first research objective centring on the motivation of the volunteers' choice of a VSA assignment. Chapters eight and nine address the second research objective by exploring the experiences of the volunteers while they are on assignment and their experience and future career direction respectively. Chapter nine also addresses the two hypotheses which are related to the stability of personality traits and career values. Objective three will also be addressed in all three chapters. In addition to addressing the respective research objectives and hypotheses, the findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical frameworks used. Where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative findings are brought together.

Chapter ten:

This chapter concludes the thesis. It discusses the findings in chapters, six, seven, eight and nine in the light of related theoretical frameworks and areas of literature. It outlines the findings of the study in relation to the objectives and hypotheses and summarises the study's theoretical and empirical contributions. The chapter notes the limitations of the study and draws attention to further possible areas for research.

Chapter Two Volunteer Service Abroad

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes Volunteer Service abroad (VSA), the organisation which recruits and provides a context for New Zealand volunteers who have chosen to work overseas for a period of one to two years in a voluntary capacity, and is also the organization which has provided the subjects for participation in this study. The effects on careers of volunteering overseas from New Zealand and other countries are also discussed.

2.2 Context

Volunteer Service abroad (VSA) is an international development agency based in New Zealand which recruits skilled New Zealanders to work with local communities and organisations in developing countries throughout Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Since its establishment in 1962, VSA has sent more than 2000 volunteers to work with partner organisations in 30 countries. VSA is similar in its aims to national volunteer development organisations in Europe and Australia but is not part of any particular related worldwide movement. However the CEOs of sister organisations such as Peace Corps, AVI (Australia), VSO (UK) and APSO (Eire) meet biannually to exchange ideas.

2.2.1 VSA: philosophy and objectives

For three decades, New Zealand's official development assistance programme has been managed by the Development Co-operation Division of the Ministry of foreign Affairs and Trade. VSA has worked in partnership with this division pursuing its own programme within and supported by the broader NZODA framework. During this time priorities for development have evolved significantly from a focus on capital aid and technical assistance in the 1970's through to the more diverse support for infrastructure development, export growth, industry, health and education that characterised the 1980's; and finally to the greater emphasis on issues such as poverty, human rights, gender and the

environment in the 1990's. Such changes have been driven by both New Zealand government involvement and consultation in various countries and changing attitudes to aid and development. From the initiation of the Marshall Plan of 1947 through to the 1970's the development debate was about the conditions and consequences of development and there was little questioning of the positive outcomes. The modernisation theory of the US economic historian Rostow underpinned development work (1959). However from the 1970's critical questions were more persistently raised regarding issues of dependency and what constituted "progress". Poverty alleviation, social equality, gender equity and environmental sustainability have been more recently advanced as important goals which VSA espouses (2002). However development and aid to third world countries continues to be a controversial and challenging debate set within echoes of colonisation and first world trade advantage. VSA has grappled with this debate and now takes the stance that it describes its volunteers as New Zealand development workers working with agencies to fashion "new responses to the belief that we have responsibilities and obligations to all those with whom we share our planet" (Richards, Rose & Schwass 2002, p.12).

In July 2002, after this study had started, a new agency was created to oversee New Zealand's Official development assistance: NZAID. It came into being after a review of NZODA identified several areas for improvement and the belief that the government's official aid and development programmes could be more effectively targeted and managed by an agency with greater autonomy. The new CEO of NZAID, a former VSA volunteer, stated that he wished relationships with stakeholders to be "open, constructive and two-way" and hoped that agencies such as VSA would contribute to "development thinking." This was taken by VSA to mean that it would continue to be supported financially and be in dialogue with New Zealand's development strategies.

The motives and effects on volunteers in the field of development, such as those in this study, could have been studied within the discipline of development studies which may have raised different research questions. It was not my intention to do that although where relevant, when development issues arise in the volunteers' stories, they have been addressed.

VSA is a non-profit organisation with no political or religious ties and is registered as an incorporated society. NZAID currently provides 90% of its funding and the balance is raised from investments and from the contribution of members, corporate donors and the general public. VSA is a form of overseas aid which “funds people not projects” (VSA website, 2003) and has as its mission statement, “To contribute to the development process by meeting the human resource needs of partner communities, primarily in the Pacific, Asia and Africa, by assisting them to achieve their own positive and sustainable development outcomes through providing highly skilled New Zealanders.” Thus the objectives of VSA are external to the volunteers who take part. When VSA advertises the overseas assignments they appear in the national newspapers like any other jobs and it is either assumed by VSA that prospective volunteers will know and espouse the organisation’s objectives or they will learn about them after applying. Further, none of the possible personal benefits or outcomes is advertised. This is in contrast to organisations such as the Peace Corps, Australian or European Volunteer Service which promise their activities will provide intrinsic benefits to those who participate. Such intrinsic benefits resulting from a VSA assignment experience are known only by anecdote, and a clearer understanding of the effects of the VSA experience on the volunteer and their career is the purpose and focus of this research.

2.2.2 Governance

VSA is governed by an elected and appointed council comprised of 12 members who are elected by the general membership of VSA. It has as its patron the Governor General, a president and kaumatua (Maori elder) and fifteen VSA branches throughout New Zealand who nominate council members. These members, made up of mainly returned volunteers, provide a wide range of services to the organisation, particularly in the recruitment of potential volunteers.

The national office in Wellington, with a paid and full time staff of 24, is managed by a CEO and five units: Recruitment and Selection, External Relations, IT and Planning, Corporate Services and the International Programmes Units

which are subdivided based on geographic regions. There are also VSA field representatives employed for each major region and the total budget for the year ending 30th June 2003 was \$5,308,625.

2.2.3 Recruitment and selection

Volunteers are recruited for their professional experience, their qualifications and their ability to share skills, knowledge and energy with the communities into which they are placed. VSA places strong emphasis on transferring skills from volunteers to partner organisations and communities which can be non-governmental, community based, local or national government organisations. On assignment, volunteer work in a wide range of fields and for many types of employer, usually for two years.

The creation of a volunteer assignment begins with an approach to VSA by associates of one of these local organisations, through the VSA field officers or NZAID, for specific assignments. The field officer then liaises with the relevant programmes unit manager at head office and after a full investigation with regards to the position, accommodation and living arrangements, a job description is written. The VSA recruitment section then checks its database for interested volunteers to match specific skills and interests. It also advertises assignments in the national press and through its network of local branches and members.

The selection process is extremely thorough. Application forms are extensive and a minimum of three confidential referee forms must be submitted before paper selections are made. Usually, three to four candidates are invited to Wellington to be part of the two-day selection process although more recently two candidates for the one position are the norm. I am advised that VSA has evolved its selection process over the past 40 years through experience, international comparison and discussion. The use of psychometric testing has been debated by successive managers but the high cost has been stated as the prohibiting factor and VSA believes it does volunteer selection effectively without psychometric testing using skilled volunteer interviewers. However both

the CEO and recruitment manager are extremely interested in the use of the NEO- PR with the selected volunteers in this study. VSA has not previously subjected its interview process to such a comparison.

The selection process consists of: information presentations and videos, unstructured discussion used as an evaluative tool for communication and team participation and an assignment briefing by the Programme Manager. This is followed by a second day involving: an interview by a panel of expert advisors focusing on technical skills and an individual interview focussing on personality attributes and psychological suitability.

The key areas of personal suitability (as opposed to professional suitability) on which these individual interviews focus are: ability to manage self in response to unfamiliar circumstances and setbacks, to manage relationships, diversity and assignment activities, (show initiative). The interview process also aims to assess: ability to maintain effective communication with others, ability to adapt sensitively to a wide range of differing values and norms, especially culture and gender, ability to establish positive workplace relationships and ability to balance professional and community focus. Such a group of attributes will be noted later in the study as being similar to those tested by the personality instrument chosen for the study.

2.2.4 Briefing

Successful applicants are advised and attend briefing and training about VSA procedures during a three-day session in Wellington. The briefings (four each year) aim to: provide information, encourage information-seeking, discuss the role and responsibilities of volunteers/VSA, discuss both theoretical and practical aspects of development and explore cross-cultural and gender awareness.

Occasionally volunteers withdraw their application at this point; when the reality of what a VSA assignment means is fully explored. Information regarding development can sometimes challenge volunteers at this point and personal issues can become clearer. This was true for one of the volunteers in this study who

withdrew his application after the briefing session, due to a realisation that his personal issues needed to be attended to before he chose to live in an isolated part of the Pacific.

In addition to the briefing programmes, volunteers are also required to complete a variety of medical examinations and procedures and they may need to learn the language of their country of destination. They are also required to sign a 24-page contract with VSA which is not a contract of employment but one of sponsorship.

In some cases volunteers who meet the psychological requirement may not suit a particular assignment professionally and will request to be kept on the database and informed as further possible assignments arise. VSA's database records potential volunteers' qualifications, skills and countries of interest.

2.2.5 On assignment

After departure, the volunteers are "employed" by the partner organisation in that they work for the partner organisation rather than VSA. These can vary from local NGOs such as women's health groups, to religious aid groups such as the Quakers, and from tertiary education establishments to government departments or banks. The role of VSA becomes more that of a background support structure with contact through the local field officer or the programmes officer in the relevant unit in Wellington.

In 2002-2003 a total of 121 volunteers were working in 14 countries.

Assignments completed were in a variety of sectors:

Training and Education	44%
Economic Development	14%
Community Development	8%
Health	13%
Infrastructure	13%
Agriculture and natural resources	8%

The majority of the assignments were for two years with the shorter terms found mainly in the “special circumstance” areas such as post-war Bougainville, East Timor, and the remote Tokelau Islands.

2.2.6 Contracts and Conditions

Volunteers are provided with one return airfare to their country of destination. While on assignment, volunteers have free accommodation and utilities and they are paid an allowance for food etc. which reflects the local standard of living costs. This is paid into their bank account and is usually paid by the partner organisation. On some assignments, where the partner country has a particular bilateral arrangement with New Zealand, VSA actually pays the volunteer. Volunteers also have insurance for medical expenses and for unexpected requirements to return to New Zealand because of ill health of family members. Volunteers receive a mid term allowance to allow them to take some leave and on completion of their assignment when they return to New Zealand they are entitled to a resettlement grant.

For volunteers who are well established financially these allowances can be supplemented by their savings or allow them to save finances in New Zealand but for many volunteers, including many in this study, these allowances are all they have to live on during the assignment and the resettlement grant gives them approximately three weeks to get somewhere to live. So although perhaps it might be perceived that these are not “real” volunteers because they are being paid, it is a minimal amount with which to live in the assigned country.

2.2.7 Demographics of volunteers

The average age of volunteers (47) has increased dramatically since 1962 when it was twenty. This may be both as a result of the fact that the assignments now require greater qualifications and work experience than they used to and also that the age of the volunteers choosing to apply has risen. The gender split varies from year to year but over the past five years it has been around 50% female 50% male.

During its first ten years VSA recruited 318 school-leavers. However, after an important conference in 1974, a change in policy relating to changing attitudes to development, driven by both returned volunteers and representatives from the volunteer countries, meant more specialist and trained people were recruited.

In 1977, there were eight volunteers who had their spouse and children with them but over the past few years assignments where families can be accommodated have been fewer. In the 1990's the numbers of volunteers in the field per year remained steady around 100.

2.2.8 Looking to the 21st century

In his 1999 VSA Report, the then CEO Terry Butt emphasised VSA's challenge for the future. The needs of the international countries are for more and more skilled and experienced volunteers. Meanwhile changing economic circumstances of New Zealanders in terms of student fees and personal superannuation requirements make volunteer recruitment less easy. To meet this challenge VSA has considered more flexible terms and conditions of service for volunteers; it has also embarked on new marketing strategies to "sell" itself to as wide a range of age groups as possible. Terry Butt reported on the success of this more flexible approach particularly in Timor in 2001 and 2002 (VSA Annual Report 2001-2002, 2002-2003).

VSA has also formed a partnership with a New Zealand engineering company which will encourage its employees to volunteer for VSA and offer them on going technical advice for the duration of the assignment. The principal of the company is a former volunteer who believes that "it is important for its younger staff to gain international experience and volunteering is one way to achieve this" (VSA, 2002).

In 2003, as part of its five year strategic plan, VSA launched a new school leaver scheme. The pilot programme involved a small group of young people volunteering in Papua New Guinea in the same community with ex VSA volunteer adult mentors supporting them.

Some of the assignments over the last two years were:

- Airport security training in Bhutan working for the Bhutanese government.
- English language advisor at the Institute de Technologie, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- Horticultural advisor, Binh Dinh Department of Rural Development, Viet Nam.
- Carpenter with the Village Industries Research and Training Unit, Bougainville.
- Lecturer in Special Education at the National of University of Samoa.
- Human resource advisors at the Bulilima Mangwe Rural Council, Zimbabwe.
- Woman's advisor to the Vanuatu Ministry of Women's Affairs, Advisor to the Community Infrastructure Programme in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Assignments are usually for one person but when the volunteer has a partner, whether or not they wish to accompany the volunteer, they also attend the selection process and are interviewed together. Much of the focus of the assessment interview is on the partner relationship and if children are able to fit the assignment situation they are also interviewed with the family. Sometimes assignments are available for both partners and recently some effort has been made by VSA to scope the situation for possible volunteer work for the accompanying partners. In this study the few “unassigned spouses” were treated as individual volunteers and all of them found voluntary work within a few months of arrival.

2.2.9 Return from assignment

On return from their assignment, volunteers attend a meeting with various members of VSA staff, including their unit programme manager, at the National Office in Wellington within 30 days of the completion date of the assignment. It is a debriefing regarding the assignment and any financial or administrative details and includes a confidential debriefing relating to personal matters with one of the selection advisors who completes a brief report and may request VSA

to provide career or other counselling for the volunteer. Evaluation of success of the assignment is based on the timely return or otherwise of the volunteer together with written reports emailed to the programme manager by the volunteer prior to completion of the assignment and verbal reports of the volunteer during the debriefing day. There are no other specific performance measures and I found it difficult to obtain any evaluation from the partner organisations apart from informal comments to VSA field officers. It is of interest to note that the new CEO appointed in 2004 has stated her intentions to study performance measures of other overseas development organisations.

Some return volunteers become involved in the local branch activities or in selection panels for volunteers but there is no returned volunteer organisation such as the huge Returned Peace Corps Volunteer network in USA.

2.3 Comparisons of voluntary development work overseas

A personal survey by the author of several volunteer overseas agencies indicated that apart from the Peace Corps there have been only two recent return volunteer research studies by VSO (UK) and by AVI (Australia) both in 1998. However information regarding recruitment and age of volunteers is also of relevance to this study.

2.3.1 Recruitment policy

VSO, Peace Corps and some of the other international voluntary aid agencies in Australia, Ireland, Canada, Japan and United Nations recruit “volunteers” then find an assignment to fit. The assignment profiles are frequently “hands on” without the “shared skill” philosophy of VSA.

In contrast, VSA advertises specific assignments and takes applications as a result of these as well as checking its database of interested people. To fulfil the requirements of qualifications, experience, and ability to share skills means that the volunteers are usually older. The VSA method is because at the heart of VSA's philosophy lies the belief that development assistance works best when

local communities and organisations set their own goals and determine the type of assistance required to achieve them. In many cases, what are needed most to effect positive change are not money or physical resources but skills, human resources and organisational capability. Volunteers are in fact invited by the partner organisations to be change facilitators and they “share their skills”; they do not take over the job or the situation. The types of positions now being requested of VSA by countries require volunteers to be well qualified or trained and to have considerable experience in their profession or work.

In these areas New Zealand volunteers contribute, transferring their skills, experience, and energy to strengthen local capacity to solve local problems. A successful assignment by VSA’s definition is one where the volunteer effectively makes himself or herself redundant as measured by an indication from the local “employer”, the local VSA field representative and the volunteer that the task has been accomplished.

VSO (UK) has seen a falling number of volunteers and has recently launched a new scheme (Whitehead, 1999) in which it appeals to employers' self interest in a drive to recruit accountants, managers and business advisors to take up to a year working on schemes overseas. It lures them with the prospect of developing overseas markets for their own companies. This kind of bi-lateral aid is in stark contrast to VSA's present philosophy, however, the difficulties noted by VSA in 2001 in recruiting volunteers for some positions has led to VSA providing optional lengths of time for assignments.

The US Peace Corps on the other hand has seen a rise in applications (Kirschten, 1999) and the US Congress approved a 50% increase in the agency's budget from 1998-2003. Three fifths of the volunteers are now women responding to demand for women to work in Third World Women’s projects. In Peace Corps there are still 40% of volunteers who serve as teachers but there are an increasing number of volunteers who work in environmental protection, business development and health care, straight aid positions where the volunteer goes and does the job. Thus the increasing diversity of volunteer backgrounds leads to increasingly diverse assignments.

2.3.2 Age of volunteers

Most studies of volunteering overseas indicate that in other countries volunteers tend to be much younger than those from VSA. A recent newspaper report (2000) noted that the average age of a British VSO volunteer was “**now 35,**” a more recent phenomenon. The average age of Peace Corps volunteers, now 29, is still low; however there has been an increase in older volunteers with 7% now over the age of 50 compared to 1-2 % in the 1960's. This compares with the New Zealand VSA average age of 47, which it has been for the past five years. This difference in average age may be related to the fact that the recruitment policies of VSO and the Peace Corps area different to that of VSA.

2.4 Career effects: New Zealand

Few studies have attempted to study the effect of volunteering in countries other than the volunteer's. In New Zealand, Ward and Kennedy (1994) considered the psychological and socio-cultural adjustment over time of fourteen VSA volunteers; the study was quantitative and the focus on cross-cultural transition issues. Their findings related to psychological issues of cultural identity, socio-cultural adaptation and cross-cultural adaptation but they did not address volunteer career issues. A more recent New Zealand study (Hudson, 2000) focused particularly on the coping skills of New Zealand volunteers in the field and although this study did not address career implications it confirmed that certain personal attributes and personal abilities were conducive to perceived successful volunteer assignments.

2.5 Career effects: overseas

VSO, the British Volunteer Service Overseas organisation, conducted a major retrospective study (1998) into the effect of the volunteer experience. This was a comprehensive survey of 4500 volunteers from the early 1960's to 1998. 1454 ex-volunteers returned the questionnaire and the 523 from the period 1995-1997 were asked some questions related to the effect of the volunteer experience on their career and further employment. Results show that 51% of the volunteers

thought that their work as a volunteer had had a positive influence on their career development while 12% thought it had hindered it. Thirty-seven per cent said their current employer had a positive attitude to their VSO experience and 8% said their employer had a negative attitude. Thirty-seven per cent stated that having been a volunteer had helped them find work while 28% thought it had not affected them in finding work. Regarding types of employment: 15% returned to their previous job, 37% continued in the same line of work (as before VSO) and 13% went into different work. Fifteen per cent took up paid development work.

Further details showed that 12% of the volunteers took further education courses immediately following VSO, 43% found a job within 3 months (details of further time not noted), 42% considered the first job was a stop gap only and 29% considered the first job as a permanent one.

This study was retrospective and no comparison was made of age, gender or occupational types with the career outcomes reported. The bulk of the questionnaire focused more particularly on wider opinions and attitudes to development and to continued interest in VSO rather than psychological effects or career implications. The questionnaire left no room for further expansion on comments, which expressed “positive effect on career” or “hindered” career.

Overall, the results suggested that the VSO assignment caused short-term disruption to volunteers’ careers immediately after return, but had long-term career benefits for many including their choice of work.

Also in 1998, the Overseas Service Bureau, the umbrella organisation for AVA (Australian Volunteers Abroad) commissioned a comprehensive retrospective study on returned volunteers (Reark Reseach, 1998). The purpose was to evaluate the effects of assignments on Australians who work abroad under the AVA programme. The impact was reviewed along the dimensions of attitudes and values, personal development, acquired skills, impact on career development, ongoing involvement with issues of development and involvement with local Australian community. The results of the survey showed that 68% of the returned volunteers thought the experience had a major impact on personal development

and values and a further 26% thought it had some impact. The results relating to careers showed that 33% of the returned volunteers in the survey had returned to the same job or employer, 34% returned to the same job with a new employer and 33% did not return to same type of occupation. Of the latter 33%, 17% sought a deliberate career change, 5% could not get a job in the same occupation, 5% went overseas again, 3% got married or focussed on home duties and children and 1% went into full time study. The even split between returning to the same situation and moving to a new situation suggests that prediction of career outcomes following VSA may be difficult.

The above study compared results with different cohorts by decade. Some interesting differences result when comparisons are made with those returning to work. Forty-three per cent of those returning in the 1990's and not returning to the same employer said it had been difficult to find a job. This 43% contrasts with those volunteers going in the 1980's where 22% said it had been difficult to find a job and those going in the 60's /70's where 13 % said it had been difficult. The number interviewed who had not returned to the same employer was 392. This was a retrospective study and after 30-40 years difficulties may be remembered less. Nevertheless the study suggests that volunteers year by year find themselves returning to ever more difficult job markets. It is also important to consider the economic context of employment of the 80's/90's with earlier times.

A further relevant result is that 59% of returned volunteers thought the overseas assignment had enhanced their career prospects and 10% thought it had hindered or made no difference to their career prospects. This was fairly consistent in each decade. These results between studies are fairly consistent but give little explanation. These results support the VSO (UK) research in suggesting that a volunteering assignment has positive long-term career impacts.

The United States Peace Corps sends more volunteers overseas than any other agency and provides a "Re-entry Bibliography", available on its web site, for their returning volunteers. This bibliography consists of self-help strategies, reports of published and unpublished research on returned volunteers'

experiences, and workshops. A study by Alverson (1977) investigating why volunteers were not coping and why there was such a “returned early” rate suggested lack of thorough selection. Other research done was the longitudinal study by Starr (1994) of twenty-one Peace Corps Volunteers. In this qualitative work Starr studied and compared the lives and attitudes of the volunteers twenty years on from their assignment time. Starr found that the volunteer experience was typically a “turning point in their life course” (p.137) and that volunteers used the time as a “sanctioned withdrawal from conventional society in order to discover their true self and prepare for adult commitment” (p.146). However, the average age of the volunteers at the time of their assignment was twenty-two, much younger than VSA volunteers, and they were inexperienced in the work force and usually straight out of college. Their assignments were almost all as teacher aides to help with the teaching of English, science and mathematics and quite different from the type of assignments and expectations which VSA espouses today. These differences limit the relevance of the Starr study to the present one.

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) conducted a retrospective survey (EVS, 2000) on 245 participants on the impact of their youth volunteer programme. This programme is for a shorter time than VSA, usually three months, and is for young people who are unemployed. Statistical surveys are brief and results showed generally that the experience of working in another country helped the young people to mature and develop interpersonal skills and confidence.

An Irish study (MacLachlan & Carr, 1999) recommended evaluating the use of psychometric instruments in the selection of volunteers for the Agency for Personal Services Overseas (APSO). At present, VSA does not use psychometric instruments in selection and has some interest in the outcome of the use of these tools with the volunteers in this study.

In another study Kealey (1990) studied Canadian Technical Advisors Overseas and compared cross-cultural adjustment and assignment effectiveness. His results suggest that such a comparison is significant for any expatriate workers, including those in this study.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided background information about VSA and a context for the study. It has described the organisation of VSA, its philosophy and position in the development debate, its funding, objectives and governance and the changes in focus in development work which have occurred. Issues relating to how VSA advertises the assignments were raised as an area related to this study and the tension between cost and potential use of psychometric instruments introduced. VSA's interest in the psychometric measurements and the themes related to personality as an outcome of this study have been likened to an audit of the selection process of the participants.

Mention was made of VSA's required attributes for successful volunteer selection and the impetus this gave for the decision to use the NEO- PR instrument in this study. The process of the assignment's creation and implementation was described and something of past demographics and possible future directions included. The chapter also discussed comparison of VSA with other overseas development agencies including their relevant studies related to the effect of volunteer assignment work on careers.

While completing the study I liaised with personnel in different parts of the organization at different times. During the first phase, contact was with the staff in the recruitment and selection unit and as the assignments moved on; contact was with staff in the various regional programme units. The fact that I had been involved in selection and debriefing made the working relationship with VSA personnel more straightforward.

The next chapter will review the research and literature related to volunteering and expatriation.

Chapter Three Literature: Volunteering and Expatriation

3.1 Introduction

The participants in this study were volunteers and they were participating in a volunteer overseas development programme. This chapter reviews the relevant literature in the fields of volunteering and working overseas both paid and unpaid. In 3.2 I will review the literature relevant to the study of volunteering in general and this is followed in 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 by consideration of literature relevant to the process of expatriation for both volunteer and paid workers.

3.2 Volunteering

3.2.1 Definitions

In the discipline of sociology, volunteering means any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause (Wilson, 2000). This definition does not preclude volunteers from benefiting from their work, but whether these benefits can include material rewards is open to debate. Some scholars believe that work is not truly volunteered if it is remunerated in any way (Smith 1992). As noted in chapter two, VSA describes its development workers as volunteers and they are paid a local wage equivalent, so the decision to use the description of “volunteer” is outside this study’s control.

Whether or not the definition of volunteering should include some reference to intentions is also the subject of debate. Some think the desire to *help others* is the basis of volunteering. Others subscribe to the view that volunteering means *acting to produce a “public” good* and that no reference to motive is necessary. The recent emphasis on volunteering as a productive activity in organisations termed “organisational citizenship” (Somech, 2004) is compatible with this behavioural approach because volunteering is simply defined as an activity that produces goods and services at below market rate; no reference needs to be made to the reasons for the activity (Wilson, 2000).

Wilson (2000) also suggests that volunteering is part of a general cluster of helping behaviours, entailing more commitment than spontaneous assistance but being narrower in scope than the care provided to family and friends. He suggests that it is useful to distinguish it from social activism as they might well attract different people. However, as Wilson argues, it is often social circumstances that help determine the meaning of these two roles of volunteer and social activist and their relation to each other and there is no good reason to study them separately. Such an argument might suggest that this study should sit in the discipline of development studies and be reviewing issues of aid and neo colonialism. I do not propose to consider the literature in that discipline further but am mindful of it as a background context in which development volunteer workers could be considered.

3.2.2 Incidence of volunteering

Having some sense of the proportion of the population in general who volunteer may help to set the group in this study in a societal context.

Undertaking voluntary work is a relatively common activity in countries with a Judeo-Christian tradition. Statistical information provided by Independent Sector (1996) suggested that 56% of the adult population of the United States engaged in volunteer activity and 25% of them devoted five or more hours per week to volunteer service. Twenty-eight per cent of Britons give their time to charities (Payne, 2001) and the New Zealand census for 1996 indicates that 45.7% of adults over the age of 15 were engaged in voluntary work outside the home. However, the phenomenon does not appear to be restricted to western societies. According to Nakano (2000) the identity of the *volunteer* (*borantia*) has emerged in Japan in recent decades as an alternative and supplement to mainstream “Life Paths”, a term used to describe a traditional working life.

3.2.3 Theories of volunteering

Many of the theories explaining volunteering that point to individual attributes can be grouped into those that emphasise motives for understanding of the self on

the one hand, and those that emphasise rational action and cost benefit analysis on the other. The former, a more subjectivist approach assumes a complexity in the character of the person while treating the context as background while the latter, a more behaviourist approach, treats the human actor as driven by fairly simple mechanisms while treating the context in which those work as complex (Smith, 1994). Other theories seek to complement this focus on individual level factors by pointing to the role of social resources and organisational activity (Smith, 1994).

At the individual level, the first of the two perspectives on volunteering is associated with sociological explanation and is dominated by the search for motives behind volunteering. The second in contrast assumes that actors are rational and that the decision to volunteer is based largely on a weighing of costs and benefits in the context of varying amounts of individual and social resources (Wilson, 2000).

One of the objectives of this study is to explore the motives of the VSA development workers and because this is an interpretative approach no assumptions have been made regarding either approach's validity.

3.2.3.1 Subjectivist approach

Research in Australia (Zappala, 2000; Bureau of Statistics, 2001), Canada (Carter, 1975) and Scotland (Fairley, 1999) has tended to focus on specific types of voluntary work, training required and how the voluntary nature of the work fits with the service. More extensive research conducted on volunteering within the United States has led to the main theories of motivation evolving there (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Pearce, 1993; Clary, et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Omoto, Snyder & Martino, 2000; Silverberg et al., 2000).

A survey of the literature produced little research done in New Zealand regarding motivation to volunteer but a study by Payne (2001) which looked at the role of volunteers in the hospice movement in New Zealand has some relevance to this VSA study in that while the major aspects of Payne's research relate to the

hospice ethos and to training and service delivery involving volunteers it addresses motivation for volunteering. Results from this study indicated that 88% of those surveyed and interviewed were “strongly” motivated to “help others”.

A different type of New Zealand study published by the North Shore Community and Social Services Inc. (1998), derived from grass roots and hands-on experience, noted that motivation factors in volunteers related to: achievement, recognition, interesting duties, responsibility and opportunity for growth; but no mention was made of any altruistic reasons.

A significant concept in the subjectivist approach is **altruism**. Clary and Snyder's earlier work (1991) used a functional analysis approach to understand altruism. Their conclusions suggested that a variety of motives may underlie helping activities and that different motives may be important for different people, at differing ages and with varying previous experiences of volunteering. Pearce (1993) adds to the larger debate by describing the “altruism debate” and reviews various studies, some of which suggest that altruism, as the essence of volunteering, is a fallacy and that other studies which show evidence of “altruistic personalities” are not empirically sound.

Pearce (1993) also suggests that this debate derives from the use of the word “altruistic” rather than “pro-social” which he believes is more accurate. Altruism, he states, **implies self- sacrifice or actions that are contrary to the actor's best interests**. In contrast “pro-social” acts are those done by an unpaid and therefore un beholden volunteer which **produce and maintain well-being in others without the restrictions found in employment**. The central research question in this study of “Why do people volunteer to work overseas for two years?” sits within this debate. In other words, are they volunteering purely to help others or is there an element of self-interest involved. Using Pearce's definitions, the VSA volunteers could be seen to be altruistic and/or pro-social depending on their personal circumstances and the rigours of the assignment. Pearce (1993) also suggests there are still questions to be answered regarding the motivation and behaviour of volunteers in organisations, the debate is ongoing.

Some of the questions still being asked of those with a subjective approach to volunteering relate to personal attributes and demographic characteristics. Age has been found to be a significant factor affecting volunteering. Omoto et al., (2000) focused particularly on volunteerism and “the life course”. Omoto et al propose that people of different ages are faced with different life tasks and it is from these that specific motivations emerge. They focused on two purposes, which they found to be consistent with past research: interpersonal purposes, which were related to volunteers’ contact and relationship with others which had reciprocal benefits for the volunteer: and societal ones, which were related more to societal benefits. Their results supported their hypotheses and they noted that those with interpersonal purposes were more likely to be those of people in earlier adulthood, and those with societal reasons were older.

In contrast, when the organisational behaviour of volunteers is compared with that of employees, high socio-economic status, gregarious and confident personality are correlated with volunteering activity but age less strongly related (Pearce, 1993). Adding to this subjective research, Silverberg et al. (2000) used Clary and Snyder's functional approach to assess whether a relationship exists between volunteer function, job setting and job satisfaction and found that park and recreation volunteers’ motivations varied across job settings and by specific socio-demographic variables.

Still focussing on individual motivations for volunteering, Clary & Snyder (1999) in a later study using functional analysis created and refined the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), an instrument which assesses the six potential functions of volunteering: values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, protective. Again in their study, they found that volunteers have multiple motives. Their study was of university students doing community service, so their subjects had nothing like the huge commitment of two years in another country or major career and lifestyle change.

The literature helped to raise some questions for this study related in particular to altruism, the likelihood of multiple motives to volunteer and possible age and socio-demographic differences. These questions led to the research objectives

about attitudes to career and working life and about reasons to volunteer for VSA.

When the decision was made to use quantitative measurement in this study the choice of the NEO PR (introduced in 3.3.1 and more fully discussed in 4.3.1.2 and 5.4.1.1) was partly because it measures *agreeableness* as one of its dimensions. Costa and McCrae (1995) the developers of the instrument note “The agreeable person is fundamentally altruistic. He or she is sympathetic to others and eager to help them” (p. 15). A potential measurement of altruism led to Hypothesis 1a under **Objective 1**:

- 1a. The selected volunteers have the personality factor of *agreeableness* to a higher level than the general population.

Studies which have used **generalised** value questions have not proved useful in predicting motives to volunteer (Wilson, 2000; Omoto & Snyder, 1930). However since this study was investigating the careers of the volunteers the use of an instrument to measure volunteer **career** values seemed appropriate (Schein’s Career Anchor Inventory) and led to the development of **Hypothesis 1b** under **Objective 1**.

- 1b. The selected volunteers have a high incidence of the career anchor of *service/dedication to a cause*.

3.2.3.2 Behaviourist approach

Individual level theories of volunteering founded on behaviourist assumptions argue that the decision to volunteer is based on a rational weighing of its costs and benefits. Ability to work is determined by resources and the assumption is that individuals will not contribute goods and services to others unless they profit from the exchanges which could be status from doing “good works” (Smith, 1982). Proponents of rational choice also argue that individual and social resources such as education, level of income or wealth also assume significance as the context for the cost benefit analysis (Herzog et al., 1989).

A more recent study of volunteer performance (Farmer & Fedor, 2001) suggests an important relationship between the volunteer's contributions to social

interaction, role investments and volunteer motives. The role of the "VSA volunteer" may be a significant one, which relates to motivation and performance; the role providing significant kudos both in New Zealand and in countries overseas.

Also, more recently, there has been a focus on the effect of volunteering on career success suggesting that there are benefits to volunteers in financial and other career terms: Phillips and Phillips (2000) found that college graduates' volunteering led to subsequent career development: Poe (2000) discussed company professional development programmes which involved volunteering: and Wong's (1999) research showed that volunteer leadership training influenced career development.

The worldwide emerging non-profit sector also benefits from the input of numerous volunteers (Salamon & Anheier, 1996) although what specific future effect this will have on careers in this area is not yet clear.

3.3 Expatriation

3.3.1 Expatriate selection

The literature relating to expatriate selection is important for the quantitative aspect of this study. The decision in this study to use psychological instruments to assess the selected volunteers' personality and values arose both from the expatriate selection literature and also from a practice based interest of the VSA management.

Tung's (1981) landmark study on the selection and training of personnel for overseas assignments has been followed by many such studies (Mendenhall et al., 1993; Arthur & Bennett, 1995; Caligiuri, 1997; Deller, 1997; Aycan, 1997; Brewster & Harris, 1999a). Much of this more recent expatriate research considers and discusses the criteria which make a successful expatriate assignment, including selection, acculturation and job performance. However,

these authors are discussing employees of companies who clearly not only choose to work overseas but also expect to continue in the company on return. Downes and Thomas (1999, p.33) note, “Expatriate managers are a source of long term competitive advantage because of the tacit (or implied) knowledge gained from exposure to international markets.” The effect on career is considered within the company. So the relevance to volunteer development workers may be limited. However many of the researched personality and individual characteristics of expatriates, predicted to be significant in successful assignment adjustment and success (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997) may be similar to the characteristics which VSA looks for in its volunteer selection process and may also predict successful adjustment and volunteer assignment success.

Historically the first large scale systematic selection evaluations for expatriates go back ironically to the Peace Corps, voluntary development workers. Testing and interviews were conducted for its selection process until 1970, when this procedure was abandoned because of its poor record of predicting success. Basing his conclusions on the Peace Corps evaluations of suitability, Harris, (1973) concluded that personality based assessments of potential expatriates were not likely to be fruitful. However over the years the Peace Corps has moved to a process of “self selection” (Adler, 1991) and the outcome has not improved, with increased early returns and greatly reduced overseas access.

Selection for technical assistance personnel has not been given much attention except in Canada where the Canadian International Development Agency has been using and evaluating instruments mostly based on intercultural communication competencies (Kealy, 1990). Expatriates in the business world have been selected on the basis of personnel department recommendations and although many companies thought personality related skills were necessary for overseas success only 5 % actually assessed them in 1981(Tung, 1981).

This research was before the “renaissance” in personality based variable research of the 1980’and 90’s. Since then there have been many studies concerned with many different aspects of personality including: tolerance, interpersonal cultural sensitivity, open-mindedness, dogmatism. However problems with the design and

definitions of various dimensions of personality meant that they failed to produce any unifying theme or framework and most authors had concluded that measured personality traits are not good predictors (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). The result was a “hodge podge” of research (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). The development and use of the Five Factor Model of personality variables (the Big Five taxonomy) provided a potential organising framework (Costa & McCrae, 1995a). Meta-analyses of this model, described in detail in 4.3.1.2, (the section on personality traits relating to career theories), have demonstrated that a construct – oriented approach demonstrates meaningful relations between personality variables and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Ones et al., 1993). The overwhelming validity evidence from this literature suggests that earlier reviews of the personality- job performance relationships indicating very little, if any validity for personality variables were erroneous. There appears to be a far more optimistic view for the potential of personality variables in personnel selection and in particular for expatriate assignments (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997; Arthur & Bennett, 1995).

In the domestic context, selection for job success using the Five Factor Model has made great strides in the last decade (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). However, it has been less successful in expatriate selection due to the difficulty of operationalising what success and failure means in the expatriate context. So the variables have been the problem rather than the Five Factor Model.

Possible variables suggested have been: job performance, satisfaction, adaptation, adjustment, completion rate, premature returns, culture shock, overseas effectiveness, professional effectiveness, interpersonal effectiveness, and acculturation. In their attempt to link personality factors of the Five Factor Model with unanimous expert opinion on personality criterion aspects, Ones and Viswesvaran (1997) produced the following criteria and matching dimension of personality which may predict “success”, Table 1:

Table 1

Potentially useful personality dimension predictors of expatriate success

Criterion	Potentially useful Big Five dimension predictors
Acceptance of overseas assignment	Emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness
Adjustment	Emotional stability, openness to experience
Completion of overseas assignment	Conscientiousness, emotional stability

Adapted from Ones & Viswesvaran (1997).

They propose that use of the Five Factor model as an assessment instrument for expatriates will predict or otherwise acceptance of a position, adjustment and completion of the assignment. They have called for further empirical studies using the Five Factor model in the selection for expatriate assignment.

VSA has struggled with the same problem around criteria to measure for “success” of an assignment and “success” as a volunteer is seen by VSA as something which is difficult to define far less predict . However VSA does unofficially espouse the criteria above and this was a contributing factor to the choice of the Five Factor Model in this study and the development of **Hypotheses 1c and 1d** under **Objective 1**.

- 1c.** The selected volunteers have a higher level of the personality factor of *openness* than the general population
- 1d.** The selected volunteers have a lower level of the personality factor of *neuroticism* than the general population.

3.3.2 Expatriate comparison with VSA volunteers

When people are sent or choose to work in a foreign country in a paid capacity they have traditionally been described as expatriate workers or expatriate employees. Although the volunteers in this study are not sent or paid by their company they are working overseas for a period of time and are affiliated with

the VSA organisation and their project organisation, i.e. they are not totally free agents, so this research is relevant.

It may therefore be useful as a starting point to compare aspects and qualities of the expatriate assignment with the VSA assignment. Working overseas as a company employee may have some common aspects with that of a volunteer, but there are some major differences. Table 2 contrasts these.

Table 2

Contrasting Qualities of Expatriate and VSA Assignment

Compared areas	EA (Expatriate Assignment)	VSA Assignment
Initiation	Company	Individual/partner org.
Goals	Company projects	Partner org. projects
Funding	Company salary and expenses	Personal savings and VSA allowance
Career type	Organisational career	Boundaryless career
Cross-cultural experience	Significant	Significant
Research Literature	Large	Little

Adapted from Inkson et al (1997)

A crucial difference is that volunteers are paid an in-country living allowance but no salary whereas expatriate employees are paid their salary and often have an overseas allowance in addition. Another significant difference is that traditional expatriates go abroad without leaving their current employer i.e. they have an “organisational” or traditional career whereas VSA volunteers normally part company from their current employer and appear to have a career which is less “bounded”. An important similarity is the significant cross-cultural experience.

The goals of the two groups appear to differ. Major companies in the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand have sent their employees to work in other countries and cultures to promote trade and improve organisational performance in foreign subsidiaries. This trend has increased over the last thirty years and is predicted to continue with the impact of globalisation and the global marketplace (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1998). VSA sends volunteers to be involved in development work and it is a debatable issue whether there is any link with the impact of development work and trade expansion. A further difference is that an Expatriate Assignment involves an employee accepting an assignment, usually on a temporary basis, to a position in an overseas branch of the company and then returning to another position in the same company in the original country. In comparison, a volunteer has normally resigned from a position in order to take up a volunteer assignment.

Some writers have noted the importance of expatriate managers seeing a connection between their current assignments and their long-term career paths, and their investment of time, energy and commitment to the overseas assignment (Gregersen & Black, 1992). In addition, the concept of the expatriate assignment as a career “transition” has been debated (Feldman, 1991). Yet there is still recent writing with such headings as “Surviving Repatriation” (Porter & Tansky, 1999) and research which notes, “expatriate uncertainty about career prospects after the foreign assignment” (Birdseye & Hill, 1995 p. 807). These results refer mainly to male managers and may not be relevant to this study as VSA volunteers are from a cross section of the work force and they are approximately 50% male and 50% female.

Despite these differences, the fact that the assignment is overseas and both expatriate company assignees and volunteer development workers have significant cross cultural experiences makes some this group an important group for comparison.

3.3.3 Organisational focus

As noted in the above table the body of literature related to expatriate assignments is extensive. However this literature tends to be framed in “organisational HRM” terms rather than in career terms, and tends to ignore “volunteer” and “self-direction” aspects (Inkson et al., 1997). In this literature the expatriate career experience is assumed to be subordinated to goals of the multinational corporate sponsor. The present study is concerned with “career self-management” rather than the externally imposed HRM. Most of the literature on Expatriate Assignments has an organisational orientation and a particular focus on the management of expatriate managers and as such has little relevance to volunteer development workers who are not part of a large career organisation and are not sent overseas as managers of that organisation, however, the emerging not for profit sector as an employer and the growth in international development organisations which use both contractual paid and volunteer labour (Salaman & Anheier, 1996) suggest a gap in the literature regarding expatriate careers which this study begins to address.

3.3.4 Expatriate assignment compared with free agent

Inkson et al. (1997) compared the expatriate assignment experience with that of the New Zealand OE or Overseas Experience, a time when usually young New Zealanders travel overseas on a working holiday. Inkson et al.’s article examined the consequences for participants who had been involved in OE and specified four different ways in which OE experience differed from an expatriate assignment: the initiative to go overseas comes from the individual, the goals are diffuse rather than organisationally centred, the funding comes from the individual and the career type is more aligned to “boundaryless” careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) rather than the organisational career. This article makes an important contribution by addressing a different kind of expatriate experience: the self-managed one. Moreover, very much like Osland’s (1990; 1995) study, it positions the individual at the centre of attention. Yet it is important to note that those people who go on an OE are usually, though not always, young people who go mainly to meet non-work agendas such as increasing cultural awareness and

experience (Inkson & Myers, 2003). It is quite possible that expatriate assignees have similar agendas but these are not properly acknowledged in the expatriate literature where the focus is on organisational agendas. Further research is also required on other self directing expatriates such as volunteer development workers.

Suutari and Brewster (2000) building on Inkson et al.'s work (1997), studied "expatriate" Finnish engineers who were working abroad and found that 33% had initiated their own overseas work and were not the traditional company employee being sent overseas. Likewise the expatriate academics studied by Richardson (2002) had initiated their overseas employment as individual professionals without company HR infrastructure. This raises the question of which group the VSA volunteers most resemble. They are not working for a MNC (Multi National Company) or even MNE (Multi National Enterprise), nor any of the large NGOs (Non Government Organizations or non-for-profit organizations).

If the same categories of comparison with OE are added to Table 2, it would appear that the VSA experience may lie somewhere between the expatriate one and the OE See Table 3. They may be working for governments, large or small aid organizations but they are temporary and are doing it for no financial recompense. Thus they sit in a novel career space.

Table 3**Contrasting Qualities of Expatriate Assignment, VSA assignment and OE**

Compared areas	EA (Expatriate Assignment)	VSA	OE
Initiation	Company	Individual/partner org.	Individual
Goals	Company projects	Partner org. projects	Individual
Funding	Company	Personal savings/allowance	Personal savings Casual earnings
Career type	Organisational career	Boundaryless career	Boundaryless Career
Cross cultural experience	Significant	Significant	Significant
Research Literature	Large	Little	Little

Adapted from Inkson et al. (1997)

3.3.5 The metaphor of the hero's journey

Both Osland (1990; 1995) and Richardson (2002) used a metaphor of expatriation from quite a different sphere, that of “the career adventure” described as a lifetime quest that is guided by the idea of “follow your bliss”. This originated from the work of Joseph Campbell, the anthropologist, who studied themes of heroism in many cultures (1968, 1988) and who explained the common story of the hero's journey as an original experience that allows an opening and expansion of human potential. The story of the hero has the theme of a life-journey which is one of profound purpose and meaning and which has a common motif of “a cycle, a going and a returning” (1988 p.123).

Noble (1994) critiques the use of Campbell's “Hero with a thousand faces” as a metaphor for women. She points out that in the classical legends referred to by Campbell, women were never protagonists. She describes many women in

history and from her own research who take heroic journeys and who are protagonists. They face adversity which is even greater than that of male heroes simply because they are women in a predominantly male context.

Other studies related to heroism are by writers of philosophy in the existential movement who suggest that to cope with the existential issue of “not being” or death, societies use two mechanisms: cultural illusions and heroism (Rank, 1963; Becker, 1973). Throughout history “sages have suggested that to see reality one must die and be reborn” (Becker, 1973 p.5).

Wilson (1982) suggested that heroes personify the tangible ideals of a culture and that the hero’s adventure myth has as its basic element, the hero who literally or symbolically dies and is reborn with a new consciousness. Such an experience led to the shedding of the cultural illusions referred to by Rank (1963), and the facing of one’s own mortality or at least fragility, which then allows the traveller to take on the hero’s role, albeit unconsciously. The other trait of the hero referred to by Wilson is the “human capacity to be generous and self-sacrificing when a cause seemed worthy”. This links heroism to the prior theme of altruism

Osland (1990, 1995), who used the metaphor of the hero’s journey as a framework to understand the transformational aspect of expatriate businessmen, found no mention of the word “hero” in her transcripts but consistent expressions of what she described as “hero talk”. The expatriates in her study, like the volunteers in this study, had to work in a new culture. It appeared that paid overseas work experience with its cultural, physical and emotional challenge was an “adventure” which also caused the individual to re-assess their values and attitudes.

Osland (1990; 1995) made it clear that one of the major objectives of her work was to fully explore the subjective experience of the expatriates in her study and she did this by presenting excerpts from her interviews throughout her work. Her study set out to explore the extent to which the hero’s adventure can be used as a metaphor for overseas assignments. One of its strengths is that it points to a

broader range of themes than before in expatriate literature. Richardson on reading the study noted that she was struck by “how close they came to her own experiences and the questions she had about expatriation” (2002, p. 32) and Inkson et al. (1997) commented with reference to Osland’s research method, “it is not box ticking but rather ‘tales told by expatriates’personalised....and a better understanding of expatriate experience” (p.356-367).

In addition to the metaphorical analysis Osland (1990; 1995) suggests the notion of expatriate paradoxes and although this it is not the intent of this study to explore these it is worth noting that Osland’s participants voiced several circumstances where they experienced them during their assignment.

Richardson (2002) used the hero’s journey as a framework to understand the expatriate academics in her study. She found that many of them also chose to expatriate for “adventure” and many found the challenges and adventure they sought. She also noted that for the majority “transformation” was a dominant theme, which meant changes in self and identity.

Henderson, in her small qualitative study also used the aspect of the hero’s journey in study of happiness at work (2000). She used Campbell’s (1988) notion of the career adventure and investigated the notion of “bliss”. She noted that in spite of its theoretical and scientific imprecision his concept of “bliss” may have something important to say: that it is possible to take a unique and profoundly satisfying journey that is not the usual path that most people consider. Career as an adventure means “following your bliss” which may mean “a process of self exploration and consequential self expression leading to a deep sense of fulfilment of individual potential” (Henderson, 2000, p.108).

Campbell thought that life could have a deeper meaning and that if such a quest was taken then one’s full potential might be realised as well as one contributing to the world. Henderson’s small group took meandering paths in which strength of personality, work circumstances and patterns of career choice and development all influenced their happiness and sense of “bliss”.

Anecdotal evidence from past VSA volunteers and evidence from my debriefing sessions with volunteers over the past twelve years suggest that many volunteers undergo profound personal experiences, which affect their lives and careers. Some of the mid life volunteers in particular appear to be seeking something more than the reality of their life/career as it has been so far. Are those people who volunteer with VSA on a hero's journey? Is the assignment "planned happenstance" for their career/life? (Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999). The framework of the hero's journey will be used in this study as one possible framework to understand the volunteers' stories. The volunteer assignment as a hero's adventure may be understood as shown in Table 4

Table 4

The Hero's adventure

Stage	Campbell's element	VSA representation
Departure	The call to adventure, or refusal of the call	Opportunities to do volunteer work arise, are seen
	Supernatural aid of a protective figure-a magical friend	Assistance from VSA's local cultural mentors or other volunteers who had been in the host country
	The crossing of the first threshold, the belly of the whale	Experiencing the difficulty of uncertainty in the new country, settling in.
Initiation	The road of trials	Facing the challenges of the assignment
	The ultimate boon	The transformation, benefits from volunteering
Return	Refusal of the return and rescue from without	Reluctant to return to the home country but must comply with their contract
	Master of two worlds	Volunteers get used to living in home country but also draw on experiences of living in the host country

Adapted from Richardson (2002).

3.3.6 Theoretical and methodological approaches

The literature on expatriates has also been criticised for its lack of theoretical substance (Mendenhall et al., 1993; Mendenhall & Ouddou, 1985; Osland, 1990, 1995; Thomas, 1998). Even later reviews suggest that there is too much description and too little analysis (Brewster and Harris, 1999b) and that an organisationally focussed managerial orientation continues to dominate. The literature uses quantitative, positivist methodologies, usually based on large scale questionnaires (Birseye & Hill, 1997; Caligiuri, 1997; Arthur & Bennett, 1997; Porter & Tansky, 1999) and there have been calls for more longitudinal studies

with more sophisticated research designs involving interviews and small groups (Thomas, 1998).

Peltonen (1998) suggests that a more balanced approach is to combine the use of quantitative empirical studies with alternative qualitative interpretative methodologies. This study seeks to manage this balance by using both quantitative instruments and an interpretive interview technique to measure and understand volunteer expatriates and their experiences. While there have been recent studies which have adopted other methodologies (Inkson et al. 1997; Richardson, 2002) quantitative studies still dominate contemporary research approaches. Of all the studies and methodologies reviewed, those by Osland (1990:1995) and Richardson (2002) (whose study was strongly influenced by Osland) were particularly useful in bringing the insights of individual expatriates and an understanding of the whole expatriate experience.

3.3.7 Expatriate success and failure

Much of the expatriate literature has focussed on perceived lack or success or problems of the expatriate assignment. Howard's early study (1973) confirmed that expatriate employees believed the experience had a negative effect on their (organisational careers) and later studies showed between 20-50% of expatriates return prematurely because of many cross-cultural obstacles (Mendenhall, Dunbar & Oddou, 1987). More recent studies confirmed that this is still a problem (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1998). Companies say they want international experience for their top executives, but records show expatriate managers are not regarded so highly within their companies once they return and many companies fail to adequately address the repatriation of their employees. This leads to loss of status, loss of autonomy, loss of career direction, a feeling that the experience is undervalued by the company and in general, low morale (Scullion, 1992).

One early study by Church (1982) considered "sojourner adjustment". This was a literature review of research relating to the psychological adjustment of relatively short-term visitors or "sojourners" to new cultures. This full review considered research into problems encountered, background variables, situational variables

and possible personality predictors of success. Much of the research was based on early Peace Corps work. Aycan's much later work (1997) regarding expatriate adjustment distinguishes between three forms of adjustment: psychological, sociocultural and work adjustment and suggests a "sojourn cycle" similar in some ways to Nicholson and West's (1989) transition cycle. These models which suggest cyclic movement are useful for this longitudinal study which asks questions of the volunteers relating to personal adjustment and management of their expatriate while they are on their assignment in addition to post assignment.

VSA struggles to measure assignment success apart from completion of volunteers' term of assignment. There are no "company" performance indicators to measure against. From discussions with VSA personnel, including the then CEO, regarding assignment success, it appears that the main indicators of success are assignment completion, reports that the volunteers are well respected which could be understood as cross-cultural adjustment, and a desire by the recipient organisation to have further volunteers in different positions. A more recent statement by the new CEO (since 2004) emphasised the need to understand the concept of "social capital" and its importance in international volunteering. In her statement she explains that "social capital is the value created by social networks- the connection we make with other people in our immediate or national communities or, in the international volunteering context, with communities in developing countries- that makes co-operative action possible" (VSA, 2004, p. 2). She argues that social capital is built on the principles of trust, shared values and reciprocity which are also at the heart of the volunteer ethic. Further, she suggests that the contribution to social capital of the international volunteer cannot be expressed simply in dollars and cents or in conventional "development outcomes" but that volunteer development work has many other benefits such as friendship, trust and the satisfaction of giving. This framework of social capital begins to consider some personal benefits for the volunteer workers which could contribute to the altruism debate.

3.3.8 Personal change/transformation

There is considerable empirical evidence to suggest that expatriates experience personal change during expatriation (Black, 1992; Black et al., 1999; Bird, 1998). Osland (1990; 1995) describes the nature of the change reported by the participants in her study as the hero's "transformation". Using such a term seems to convey a breadth of change which is interactional and involving the whole person: "individuals came to question their basic assumptions about themselves, their culture, their interpersonal relationships" (Osland, 1990, p. 7). From a personal perspective it also conveys the sense of the experience that volunteers have described to me while I have been acting as a VSA volunteer debriefer through the past ten years.

Studies in the literature on overseas volunteers (Alverson, 1977; Church, 1982; Starr, 1994) although sparse have paid more attention to the implications of transformation from the individual perspective than the organisational. Nonetheless a few studies in the organisational literature have also moved towards focussing on the individual (Osland, 1990; Inkson et al., 1997; Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Richardson, 2002). A strength of these studies is that they convey more clearly the dynamism of transformation expatriation as experienced by the individual. Further understanding of that process of transformation seems both useful and pertinent for both organisational and self directed expatriate career theory. This study proposes to relate this understanding to the "new" career concept of the protean career discussed in chapter four (4.3.4.3). The individual who follows a protean career interprets experience and uses it in ways to transform themselves (Briscoe & Hall 2002). These gaps and potential connections led to one of the objectives of this study: to explore the perceived effects of a volunteer expatriate experience from an individual perspective, by exploring and analysing their experiences.

3.4 Volunteering and Expatriation

In this section I summarise the key features of the literature which appear relevant to a study involving selected VSA volunteer development workers and the questions they raise which might potentially be answered from the data to be collected.

The literature on volunteering raises issues of *motivation*. What are the motives to volunteer for an extended period of overseas development work, and how far are the competing themes of individual rewards, interpersonal rewards, and pro-social or altruistic motivation represented? Also, does the subjectivist approach or the behavioural approach provide a better account (although there may be assumptions by VSA and the researcher which influence this)? Also does the age of the volunteers have relevance in relation to motivating factors?

The literature on expatriate selection drew attention to the possibility that specific personality factors might be related to volunteering for VSA work and/or to selection for such work. Recent advances in testing using the structure of the five Factor Model and the NEO-PR questionnaire created an opportunity to assess VSA volunteers' personality using the new measures.

As noted in chapter two, the literature available on the effects of overseas volunteer development work provided information from a number of countries about the direction (positive or negative) of career satisfaction and success and the nature of career outcomes following the voluntary overseas experience.

The relevance to VSA and this study of expatriation studies conducted in organisational contexts is limited by the fact that most studies refer to paid company employees. Nevertheless, comparison of the qualities and working contexts of these employees and OE-type migrants with VSA volunteers' assignments provides a useful frame for consideration of the volunteers. The

metaphor of the hero's journey used by Osland (1990; 1995) to understand expatriate managers provides a powerful framework for understanding VSA volunteers, and the various elements in the hero's journey allow a model of transition and adaptation against which the VSA volunteers' assignment experience can be compared. In seeking to theorise how a group of volunteer development workers experience expatriation, this study contributes to existing literature.

The methodologies developed from the study of expatriates indicate that most are largely "practical and operational" (Scullion & Brewster, 2001, p., 359) and are conventional large scale surveys asking for retrospective information at one point in time. There are also more recent calls for interpretive and longitudinal qualitative studies which might supplement and complement these more traditional studies. This consideration guided the selection and fine-tuning of the methodology used in the present study.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the relevant volunteering and expatriate literature and has identified gaps with a specific focus on the areas that this study addresses. The chapter identified the context of the first four hypotheses and research objectives one and two. It also identified suitable instruments and frameworks to compare and measure the volunteers' experiences. The next chapter reviews the literature related to careers both from an organisational and individual perspective and examines some useful career theory from both perspectives. It also considers the "new" careers literature and in particular the possibility of using the protean career concept as a way of understanding the VSA volunteers' careers and their VSA career episode.

Chapter Four Literature: Theories of Career

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study is: to examine the profile of the VSA volunteer workers and the perceived impact of the assignment experience on their careers/lives and investigate the volunteers' career experience within the 'new' career framework, particularly of the "protean" career (Hall, 1976, 1996, 2002). This chapter will review the relevant literature related to career theory both traditional and more recent.

Through the 20th century, psychologists, sociologists, organisation theorists, human resource specialists, career counsellors and others have developed ever more sophisticated theories of career and career development. This has been seen as a means to better understand, both the characteristics of people and their working environment, as well as the stages and process of careers (Patton & McMahon, 1999), and to improve practice by career advisors and organisational managers alike. This chapter discusses changing definitions and theories of career and considers which of these have the potential for useful contributions for this study. In particular, it considers and reviews theories from both organisational and individual psychology as well as theories of the "new careers" and specifically the protean career, influenced by economic and social conditions of the 21st century.

4.2 Definition of Career

At the start of the 21st century "career" is still variously understood (Collin & Young, 2000). Several of the traditional characteristics of the definition of career such as speed, linear direction and advancement have become less common in a world where many careers can be seen as horizontal, radical, downward or discontinuous (Hall, 2001). To this end it has been suggested (e.g. Collin & Young, 2000; Eaton & Bailyn, 2000; Littleton, Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Ornstein & Isabella, 1993) that contemporary career theory must argue for

broader understandings and definitions which encompass wider dimensions of career.

Traditional definitions also restricted *career* to a professional work life. For many women and working class men this makes it a limited and irrelevant concept subject to a middle class bias in perception (Richardson 1993, 1996). Until recently, traditional interpretations and definitions of career were male orientated and ignored the patterns of women's careers (Gutek & Larwood, 1987; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994). Women's notions of career were different (Gallos, 1989) and more complex (Fitzgerald & Weitzman, 1992). Other criticisms of career theories have been related to their failure to take into account the importance of family and community and the interface between work and family and paid and unpaid work and wider definitions are called for (Eaton & Bailyn, 2000).

Arthur, Hall and Lawrence proposed a concise definition, which they argued, gave career a neutral descriptive term, which could be applied to all working lives:

“The evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time” (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989 p. 8).

Some definitions of career proposed during the last seventy years have attempted to include wider aspects of “work” and have tended to use the term “position” or “role” to broaden the definition:

Super offers a definition from the individual psychological perspective:

“The sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout his (sic) pre-occupational, occupational work and post-occupational life...together with complementary vocational, familial and civil roles” (Super, 1984 p.143).

Seligman's more recent definition is similar but includes broader contexts for “work”:

“A sequence of roles or positions, including work, leisure, volunteer, and educational pursuits” (Seligman, 1994 p. 25).

The term “career” and emerging theories of career development in the latter part of the 20th century suggested an increasing emphasis on the individual and the work context coexisting and jointly influencing each other, as described by Wolfe and Kolb and their philosophy is used in this study:

“Career development involves one’s whole life, not just occupation...it concerns him or her in the ever-changing contexts of his or her life...Career development and personal development converge” (1980 pp. 1-2).

Such statements argue for broader understandings of career. Mallon and Cohen (2000 p.4) suggest that they signal “more embracing notions of career, based on the accumulation of skill and knowledge and the integration of professional and personal life”. They also answer calls for a revised, more encompassing understanding of career (Bailyn, 1993; Collin & Young, 2000; Storey, 2000).

There has also been a pervasive divide in career theory between those approaches which focus on objective, macro, organisational careers and those which explore the subjective, micro or internal careers (Herr, 1992, Derr & Laurent, 1989; Hughes, 1937) and there are calls for empirical studies that explicitly recognize the interlinking of subjective and objective perspectives (Walton & Mallon, 2002; Cohen & Mallon, 1999; Collin, 1998; Collin & Watts 1996; Barley, 1989; Arthur et al, 1989; Collin & Young 1986).

Collin and Watts (1996) go further and suggest that to retain continuity and coherence in the face of the many changes in society and workplace, an interpretation of career which can encompass both description and interpretation is required from both the perspective of observer and actor. This, they contend will “resist any suggestion that career become, in a literal sense, privatized” (p.393).

This study is in part a response to these calls for the interlinking of disciplines and approaches.

4.3 Relevant Career theories

The assumption is made that it is legitimate to view VSA as an **episode** in an individual's career (or life), and therefore to fully understand a person's VSA experience one must understand the person's career (or life) as a **context** for that experience.

As noted in 4.2 above, traditional career theories assume that there is some pattern and/or sequential process to career or life course. For example, this study assesses: whether individuals' specific **motivations** from their core **personalities** and the accumulation of previous career or life experiences underpin both their careers in general and their decision to seek a VSA experience (Lent & Brown, 1996), and whether these motivations and experiences facilitate and guide behaviour through that experience (Brown & Brooks, 1996a). Alternatively VSA may be explained by understanding career as a sequence of natural **developmental stages**, to which the VSA experience may be related (Vondracek et al., 1986) or as a series of **transitions** between different types of work experience, of which VSA may be one (Nicholson & West, 1988). Or VSA may be understood by considering various **career types**, such as professional careers, learning careers, protean careers, which offer contrasting principles of career development and thus assist the understanding of specific career-related decisions such as the decision to embark on VSA (Kanter, 1989; Hall, 1976). The **work narrative** may also be a useful vehicle through which to understand career in this instance (Cochran, 1998). The belief that the work narrative not only serves as a report, but also has a critical and evaluative function may offer useful understanding of the VSA assignment in the **context** of the volunteers' careers/lives (Baumeister & Neumann, 1994).

It is evident that the relevant theoretical approaches are many and diverse. It is not possible to use all of them to frame the VSA phenomenon. In the following sections I focus on a few which from my personal knowledge of VSA were likely to have special relevance.

The career issues involved in these different models or ideas have been considered in depth by scholars in various traditions within the broad area of career development, theory and research. In the following sections I will examine some of the major theoretical traditions and consider their possible contribution to an understanding of the VSA phenomenon in general and specific VSA episodes in particular.

4.3.1 Career theories of the 20th century

The study of career, career development and practice is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Before this, people “worked” or had “professions” or “vocations”. Working involves interaction with other individuals and with organisations within society and work therefore is legitimately the subject of study in several disciplines (Collin, 1998).

These disciplines fall into three main traditions: those, which are focused on the individual and his or her career, those, which are focused on the organisation as a context for the individual’s career and those, in the domain of the occupational sociologist which focus on the influence of social structural variables such as ethnicity, gender, class and education on individual career outcomes (Johnson & Mortimer, 2002).

The study of career from the perspective of the individual career actor has been part of the development of psychology as a discipline and the sub-discipline of counselling psychology. This has influenced research and has resulted in attempts to understand how and why human beings make career choices (Parsons, 1909; Holland, 1973; Super, 1953, 57, 80, 92; Krumboltz, 1979; Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1986). These predominantly North American scholars are

concerned with career choice, development, education and counselling; the British contribution to this area has had a stronger sociological focus (Watts, 1981b; Gothard et al., 2001).

Other scholars predominantly from schools of business have contributed to the understanding and practice of career management and career development in organisations. The latter have been important contexts within which careers take place and where they can also be considered as resources to be used by organisations for economic ends (Hall, 1976; Schein, 1978; Van Maanen, 1977).

Each of these traditional approaches to career has its own definition, viewpoint, methodology, language, discourse, and journals (Herr, 1990), which make the study of “career” richly ambiguous and challenging to study (Collin, 1998). By choosing to include career theories from both individual and organisational psychology in this study I have attempted to grapple with that challenge and shall include theoretical viewpoints from both individual and organisational disciplines, while at the same time seeking to focus on those approaches which appear to have the greatest potential explanatory power in relation to VSA as a career experience.

4.3.1.1 Motivation

Much of the research on vocational behaviour by counselling psychologists reflects their interest in individual decision-making (Hackett, Lent & Greenhaus, 1991), and particularly relevant to the study is the motivation to change. Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy (1987) has been popular for many years in spite of criticism for its lack of empirical research base and gender bias, (Yankelovich, 1981; Neher, 1991) and suggests that self actualisation is the ultimate need which motivates. Vroom’s Expectancy theory has been used in understanding workplace motivation (Van Erde & Thierry, 1996) and assumes that people are rational decision makers and that they choose from alternatives the one that has the greatest personal pay off, for them, at the time. However some of the thinking

that evolved during the 20th century regarding vocational choice was that it was a developmental process rather than a point-in-time event (Super, 1980). Such approaches fit in general terms within the behaviourist model of understanding motivation to volunteer discussed in chapter three, (3.2.3.2).

Other approaches from organisational theory have suggested that motivation to change jobs is a result of the product of varying influences; forces for change may be caused by people's unfulfilled needs, occupational opportunities or organisational processes (Nicholson & West, 1988). More recent research regarding motivational changes confirms this idea by pointing to reasons such as the family unit and problems within it as motivations to change (Morrison & Deacon, 1993). Linking back to chapter three, the research by Richardson (2002) to study the motivational factors influencing expatriate academics also found multiple influences for motivation to expatriate.

4.3.1.2 Personality traits

Both counselling scholars in career research and counselling psychologists have been involved for many years in the question of whether personality plays a role in occupational choice and decision-making. This positivist approach has the underlying assumptions that personality can be measured and tested against "norms" of populations and aspects of personality can be compared (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). It has been seen to be useful during the 20th century when the need was to define and measure all things. Personality assessment is still used extensively in vocational placement and in clinical diagnosis (Zunker, 1998; Seligman, 1994).

Studies which have measured personality traits suggest that when the dimensions of personality are correlated with interests (McCrae & Jones, 1992) and with occupational membership then personality and occupational choice are related (Davis & Lofquist, 1984). Further, there is significant correlation between personality, vocational choice and adjustment (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Mount &

Barrick, 1998; Judge, Higgins, Thoreson & Barrick, 1999). Moreover it appears that personality also influences how individuals perceive their environments and careers over time (Feldman, 2002). These studies have resulted in instruments and assessment tools such as personality inventories and these have been used in further research and career practice (Hammond, 2001), career success (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001), selection and training (Black, 2000) and career commitment (Langley, 1998). Any debate or critique of personality and career has been underpinned by the assumption that personality can be measured.

The emphasis of the research on personality by organisational psychologists, in contrast to counselling psychologists, has been on topics which ultimately affect the functioning of organisations (Hackett, Lent & Greenhaus, 1991). Managers have used personality tests for the purposes of recruitment (Rynes, Bretz & Gerhart, 1991) and to match the individual to the job (Osborn, 1990) including expatriate assignments, (Kealey, 1994; Deller, 1997; MacLachlan & Carr, 1999). The study by Ones and Viswesvaran, (1997) relating to the personality determinants in the prediction of success of expatriates is of particular interest to this study was considered in more depth in the expatriate literature section in chapter three.

Repeated studies have demonstrated that the basic structure of the human personality can be represented by five broad factors or groups of related traits, (Costa & McCrae, 1985, 1992). As described in the Five Factor Model of personality these factors are neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The belief that these traits are partially genetic (Digman, 1989) and partially environmental gives rise to the further belief that some aspects of them may be changed through self awareness and self-discipline (Du Brin, 2004) although studies have shown that personality traits are very stable in adulthood (Costa & McCrae, 1992). There is evidence that some psychological conditions such as a major depressive episode can affect scores on personality instruments but the area is underresearched and questions have been posed as to whether any environmental experience such as change in residence, occupation,

spouse or a psychotherapeutic intervention would bring lasting changes in basic dispositions or only help the individual live with his or her traits or adapt (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Additionally change might be an intrinsic characteristic of some individuals, predictable from other aspects of their psychological functioning; for example those who are open to experience. McCrae himself, (1993) addressed the prospect of personality change using the NEO PI-R, the inventory designed to operationalise the Five Factor Model and in that study he makes a distinction between *basic tendencies*, “the abstract underlying potentials of the individual, including personality traits” and *characteristic adaptations*, “the concrete habits attitudes, roles, relationships and goals resulting from the interaction of basic tendencies with the shaping forces of the social environment”. He suggests that the basic tendencies are stable over time but that characteristic adaptations are less so. This aspect of the literature and the gaps regarding longitudinal studies involving potential changes of *characteristic adaptations* during different life experiences was significant in the development of **Hypotheses 2a** and **2b** under **Objective 2**.

- 2a.** The VSA experience does not affect the personality traits of selected volunteers.
- 2b.** The VSA experience does not affect the dominant career anchors of selected volunteers.

There are some criticisms of the NEO PI-R which suggest that there are personality variables outside the “Big Five” such as “religiousness” (Saucier & Goldberg, 1998) and some other clusters of personality (Paunonen & Jackson, 2000) but it stands well respected in the field (Mount & Barrick, 1998). The measurement of personality is an external measure of the internal self and critique comes from other disciplines which question personality defined as a measurable construct. (Kegan, 1982; Randall, 1995; White, 1999). It might also be argued that it is asking a lot to expect gross differences in macro-level individual personality to be substantially reflected in micro-decisions about career, which have multiple, contextual causation. In this study I have chosen to

use both an external measurement of personality and also pay attention to other ways of understanding the perception and some of its dimensions by using an interactive methodology.

Further reasons for the decision to use the Five Factor Model and the NEO-PR instrument were: the researcher's subjective experience that selected VSA personnel typically exhibit identifiable personality characteristics potentially measurable by the NEO PR (see chapter three).and the relevant literature discussed regarding recruitment of expatriates used the NEO PR. The decision to measure these characteristics led to the development of specific hypotheses identified in chapter three.

4.3.1.3 Career values

The trait-factor theories of the 20th century described above have been the most durable of all theories of career guidance (Zunker, 1998) and they attended to measuring and describing individual characteristics or differences which could be matched to occupational skills and requirements. Traits are central to occupational choice literature, whereas the organisational literature has focused more on developmental models where individual difference is not considered apart from potential employability or outcome success (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989). One exception to this has been Schein's work on career values or the employee's "career anchors" which he developed by means of a longitudinal study of MBA graduates, as a way of explaining patterns of decision making and development during their careers.

In the career anchor model developed by Schein a career anchor is a constellation of self-perceived attitudes, values, needs and talents that develops over time, and which when developed, shapes and guides career choice and directions (1978). Schein states "it represents your real self, without knowledge of your anchor, outside incentives might tempt you into situations or jobs that are subsequently

not satisfactory because you feel that ‘this is not me’” (1990, p.1). A career anchor might be thought of as a central component that individuals are unwilling to relinquish, even when forced to make a difficult career choice, a career value. The career anchor can be seen as significant because it influences career choices, affects decisions to move from one job to another, shapes what individuals are looking for in life, determines their views of the future, influences the selection of future work settings, and affects their reactions to work experiences (Schein, 1988). Schein considered that career anchors develop and become “firmed up” by early adulthood. In this respect they may be construed as something more specific than the personality dimensions of the NEO PR described above- something that is specifically and pragmatically related to career phenomena.

Schein originally identified five career anchors during his early research in the 1960’s: *managerial competence*, *technical competence*, *security/stability*, *entrepreneurial creativity* and *autonomy*. De Long (1982a, 1982b) validated Schein’s model with empirical studies but also identified three additional anchors: *identity*, *sense of service* and *variety* followed by further studies by Schein clarifying that the *identity* anchor could be viewed as an extension of the *security/stability* anchor. Later studies (Applin, 1982; Igarria & Baroudi, 1993, Igarria, 1991), identified a type of career anchor defined by the belief that it should be possible to integrate work, family and self concerns into a lifestyle-the *lifestyle* anchor. Similarly studies (Applin, 1982, Igarria & Baroudi, 1993, Igarria, Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1991; Schein, 1985, 1987a, 1993) have reported that the variety anchor is favoured by individuals who define all work situations as self tests that are won or lost against either an absolute standard or and actual competitor. This led to the changing of the name of the variety anchor to *pure challenge*.

The lifestyle anchor integration supports the recent terms in HRM that recognises the way people increasingly value the importance of balancing work and family responsibilities (Adler & Ghadar, 1990; Smith, 1992; Zedeck, 1992; Welch, 1994a, 1994b). The *pure challenge* anchor could be seen as characteristic of the

general success-orientated executives (Rogers, 1987) although research into career anchors among non business/management personnel is scant and this is still open to debate.

Other theorists have elaborated Schein's values framework further by linking psychological needs and interests to occupational choice and decision-making and personality (Driver, 1982; Derr, 1986; Nordvik, 1996; Byrd, 1998) and these have contributed to further validating the model of career anchors.

Schein himself (1996) identifies possible changes in the content and structure of anchors as the context or the world of the 21st century changes and affects work, values and careers. In his article, looking at implications for career development for the 21st century, Schein notes the impact of restructuring, downsizing and change in the organisational world or the "external career". He suggests the increased importance for individuals to be aware of their "internal career" and the values and strong self concept that make up their "career anchor".

This call and the lack of empirical data relating to non managerial protagonists led to consideration of the use of the career anchor model in this study. The notion of values which related to altruism having a high incidence for development workers was intuited from my work as a selector for VSA and also prompted by the volunteering literature. This led to the posing of **Hypothesis 1b**, as outlined in chapter three, (3.2.3.1). The decision to pose hypotheses related to the lifestyle and challenge anchors is explained in later in this chapter (4.3.4.4).

The decision to use Schein's Career Anchor Inventory involved considerable deliberation. Its merits were, as noted above, that it was from the organisational field. It also focuses on in depth values as opposed to superficial interests, it is easy to administer in a short time frame and the financial cost of other values instruments prohibited their use. The significant caveats in the use of the COI are that most of the early research studies were preoccupied with business people, the

normative data is slender and it is less widely used today by the counselling movement (compared to Holland's Self Directed Search). Further critique of the instrument related to validity is detailed in chapter five, 5.4.1.2.

4. 3.1.4 Career transitions

It is possible to understand the VSA assignment as a career episode between two transitions: paid worker to VSA volunteer and VSA volunteer to paid or other volunteer work. Understanding this process was instrumental in the decision to focus on the three phases of data collection in the study. While attitudes to commitment, both organisational (Allen & Meyer, 1990a; Brooks & Seers, 1991) and career (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990), and plateauing (Barwick, 1986; Kovach, 1989) have been researched due to dramatic changes in major company organisational structures in the latter part of the 20th century, there has been relatively little empirical and theoretical study about work transitions. There has been research into both non voluntary and voluntary separation from organisations (Campion, 1991; Jackson, 1991) but less on transitions.

The subject of transition can also be approached from attachment theory (Bowlby 1969). Job transitions involve separation, attachment and bonding, then further separation and so on. When considered in this way, a career transition can be understood as a normal life process and depending on the individual's own early attachment, bonding and separation from their parent figures the stages of the transition may be more or less smooth and easily handled.

The most frequently cited career literature relating to transitions is that of Nicholson and West, (1988, 1989, and 1990). Nicholson originally proposed a process model which suggests a transition cycle which is comprised of four stages (1984) which he subsequently updated (1990) to reflect the increasing uncertainty in the employment scene. This approach appears to have some underpinnings in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) although this is not

acknowledged. The cycle is recursive in that stage one is also stage five which although interdependent are distinct enough to be seen as separate analytical entities. Nicholson (1990) suggests that there are tasks at each stage, and problems and strategies for dealing with them:

Stage 1. Preparation.

Tasks: developing helpful expectations, motives and feelings

Problems: fearfulness, reluctance, unreadiness

Strategies: realistic preview, advance contacts, self-appraisal

Stage 2. Encounter

Tasks: confidence in coping, enjoyment

Problems: shock, regret, rejection

Strategies: social supports, safety, freedom to explore

Stage 3. Adjustment.

Tasks: personal change, role development/and relationship building

Problems: misfitting, grieving

Strategies: real work to do, early success, useful failure through feedback and mutual control

Stage 4. Stabilisation.

Tasks: sustained trust, commitment and effectiveness-making

Problems: failure, fatalism

Strategies: goal setting and appraisal for role evolution

(Adapted from Nicholson, 1990).

Such a model assumes that there are distinct stages in the process of transition, and Nicholson and West (1989) expound their rationale for the details of each phase or stage using many different theorists' work to support such a model. The model also assumes that the individual has the ability to successfully attach, bond and separate. The volunteers in this study have chosen to transition into the perceived career episode of the VSA assignment so in the context of this study the model may have some relevance but the nature of the VSA assignment as a very distinct, planned and time limited project may lessen its usefulness. However this model and the hero's journey model (Campbell, 1968) which was discussed in the context of the expatriate literature in chapter three, appear to be the most useful career frameworks to allow discussion of a single episode within a longitudinal study such as this.

The notion of preparation, encounter, adjustment and stabilisation were borne in mind as a means of framing volunteer transitions in the empirical study.

4.3.1.5 Developmental life span

Seligman (1994) notes that there are many models of adult development: variables of age, stage, transitions, life events, individual background, attitudes, values and emotions have all been viewed as significant. She would argue however that those patterns of adult development seem to be linked more to external events than to age. It also seems that although aging changes physical and physiological reactions to the work environment, which may affect performance negatively, it also motivates individuals to acquire different work skills and environments over time (Feldman, 2002).

Super's theory was significant in taking a developmental approach to career but was based on male careers (1980). His later model of cycling and recycling developmental tasks through the life span was more applicable to women's careers and showed that the idea of stages and transitions may be flexible and not

tied to chronological age or stage (1992). The later model also attended to gender differences in development in the middle adult years. Research in the United States suggests that 80% of people in the middle adulthood age of 35-45 have some kind of psychological crisis, which poses existential (life relevant) questions, which may affect their life/career (O'Toole, 1981). Do volunteers see VSA as a way to resolve issues? It is also noted that if these questions have been sufficiently answered the next phases of career/life development are more comfortable and rewarding. People may develop creativity, new relationships with family and friends and set their own standards to live up to; they may have new energy and be willing to take risks (Seligman, 1994). Living out long held dreams like volunteering for VSA may be one way of choosing to take on the next phase of their life/career.

A significant analysis and critique of adult development theories and career development theories (Cytrynbaum & Crites, 1993) suggested that a more useful approach is the idea of developmental contextualism (Vondracek et al., 1986). It is argued that this approach considers the relationship of the individual to the environment and suggests that the developing individual changes the environment and is changed by it.

Further development of this theory (Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1993) involved the use of "living systems" theory (Ford & Lerner, 1992). Such theory seems to have antecedents in Hughes and the Chicago School of Sociology (Hughes, 1937) which suggested institutions jointly "constitute" and "are constituted" by the actions of individuals living their daily lives. Barley in his review of the legacy of the Chicago School noted that they saw careers as "properties of collectives" and that persons are defined less by their uniqueness than by their membership of a group in a specific setting (1989).

Woodd (1999) contributes to this debate by considering the relationship of career to other life activities, and theorists such as Bronfenbrenner (1979) and more recently Plomin (1994) challenge the bias of psychological study of the person

without due consideration of the environment in which each individual acts. Plomin further suggests that people develop according to their ecological environment and that their personality, skills and abilities are related to their interpretation of the situation.

In conclusion, developmental career theory may have some useful aspects on which to assess the VSA career episode given the critique to consider the context in which the assessment is being made. In terms of the present study, it alerts us to the need to consider VSA phenomena and career reactions to VSA as manifestations of stages of an individual's career (e.g. growth, establishment, maintenance) (Super, 1992) and of their sequences of life tasks including those related to family.

4.3.2 Convergence/integration of theories

Over the last fifteen years there has been discussion and attempts to seek convergence of theories and disciplines purporting to explain careers. The changing world of work, the impact of globalisation, technology and attitudes to careers have influenced career theory: some of the traditional career theories are not helpful enough to understand people working in a fast changing world. "Work" may also not be what was traditionally described as work in the 20th century. These external factors may provide the impetus to promote further convergence or "approchement" (sic) (Collin, 1998)

That this study has referred to both of the main traditions of career research, individual and organisational, and has found these as separate areas of study parallels the "fragmented" nature of the study of career (Collin, 1998, p. 414). Scholars from both main areas tend to keep themselves separate and do little to learn of each other's world-view or research. As noted in chapter one, I came to this research study from the field of career counselling where I was required to teach both from the individual and the organisational viewpoint so this split

within the subject area was not new and having supervision for this study from both disciplines kept the split in view.

There have been movements toward convergence within the discipline of individual psychology (Osipow, 1990; Borgen, 1991; Savickas & Lent, 1994) however, this has been difficult. Hackett, Lent and Greenhaus (1991 p.26) discuss “cognitive perspectives” in which there is “active participation of individuals in constructing their environments”. They suggest that this development is being seen in the fields of both individual career psychology and organisational career development. Collin (1998) suggests that scholars in the two main areas of career study need to “work synergistically in learning and adapting to both new sciences and the new contexts and constructs of career” (p. 420). There has also been a call for integration of both individual personality influences and the “wider whole life perspective” (Feldman, 2002). It is my contention that this study will address this by the use of instruments from both disciplines of individual and organisational psychology to assess personality and values, together with a work life narrative approach. It will also attempt to address the call for the need to consider carefully the place of the objective and the subjective notions of career in the same study (Collin, 1998).

4.3.3 New environmental conditions of the 21st century

Within the last decade writers from different disciplines and different countries have been writing about the impact of the shift from the so-called New Industrial State (Galbraith, 1971) to the “New Economy” (Beck, 1995). Intertwined with this shift to a world of “the knowledge-based economy” is the impact of technology, instant telecommunications and a reaction against formal structure and positivism. In addition, the impact of women in the paid work force and their ways of managing career has also caused career theorists from all disciplines to re-assess theory (Baruch, Barnett & River, 1983; Astin, 1984; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Hansen, 1997).

The evidence of the “New Economy” is seen in the profound changes in the way work is structured and organised (Arnold & Jackson, 1997) and the succession of the “information society” and “knowledge economy” over that of the “industrial society”. Technological change and global competition have created significant changes in labour markets and this has revolutionised work organisations (Cappelli, 1999). These phenomena have resulted in downsizing and restructuring, new organisational forms, flattened hierarchies and the blurring of occupational boundaries. Organisations, which traditionally may have supported long-term careers, are gradually being replaced by more fluid and flexible frameworks (Stroh & Reilly, 1994; Baker & Aldrich, 1996). In turn, this has led to the increase in contracting out of services and the rise in the number of “flexible workforce” or “contingent workers” (Mallon & Duberley, 2000) and such jobs as “interim managers” (Inkson, Heising & Rousseau, 2001). These workers’ lives are less predictable; more fragmented and in many respects more complex. They may face speedy obsolescence of skills and therefore the constant need to up-skill, job insecurity, and the pressures of short-term performance in project work. One other possible consequence is that more men will experience the kind of fragmented career that many women have experienced (Arnold & Jackson, 1997).

Some writers suggest the rewards and stresses of employment therefore are shifting; unpredictable events, transitions and even failures may have to be faced more often (Arnold & Jackson, 1997). On the other hand, a freedom to create, develop and manage and a sense of empowerment and control are positive aspects (Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Cohen & Mallon, 1999) at least for educated and skilled workers. Nevertheless the majority of the literature is not underpinned by empirical data from the perspective of the individual who now has a career path outside the organisation (Mallon, 1998). Gratton et al. (2002) using survey data from 1994, 1997 and 2000 report only “limited evidence” of movement to individual career paths. Further empirical studies are required to confirm the perceived changes to the workplace and to the hypothesised effects on workers.

The “New economy” debate also involves the developing phenomenon of “Globalisation”. The Institute of Development Studies (2004) which is involved in research and policy into effects of globalisation argues that it is still a contested agenda. To some, globalisation is a specific and often technical term, highlighting the spread of inter-country integration in particular area-in trade, finance or in the migration of people. To others the term is more ideological, imbued with normative content, either a “good” or “bad” process, one which can be used to justify particular policies, for example, privatization. Much of the careers literature of the late 20th and early 21st century espouses the “good” process viewpoint but the latter comments in the previous paragraphs point to the “bad”.

Globalisation has ebbed and flowed. The latter half of the 19th century saw significant internationalisation in the flows of people, finance and goods, but was followed by decades of diminishing openness. For this study I have chosen to be more accepting of globalisation as a process which “lowers barriers to the cross country flow of factors (people, capital and technology) products, ideas and values” ([www. ids.ac.uk](http://www.ids.ac.uk)). I have also chosen to pay attention to the need for workers in this globalised economy to “continually recast their life/work – narrative” and to explore some of those narratives in this study (Hutton & Giddens, 2000, p, 176).

4.3.4 The “new” careers

The changes to the world of work in the latter part of the 20th century suggested above have also produced new definitions of career and new frameworks for the analysis of career development, which allow for different metaphors and explanations to the 20th century “work within one organization for a lifetime” career story. I shall review some of the most pertinent to this study.

Kanter’s (1989) challenge to the conceptual base of the relationship of careers to organisations suggested three career forms across societies: bureaucratic, professional and entrepreneurial. This framework was important in allowing more integration of macro and micro views of careers and involved careers

thinking at societal level as well as the organisational level. The implication of the changing trends in work is that bureaucratic careers are no longer the dominant form of career: they are in rapid decline and more careers of the 21st century will be professional and entrepreneurial (Collin & Watts 1996). Kanter's thinking was a precursor to the theories of the "new" career which have been influenced by society and economics in the 21st century.

Various writers have suggested that the most significant aspect of the "new" career is the recognition of the importance of the "subjective career" (Hall 2002; Arnold & Jackson, 1997; Mirvis & Hall, 1994) based on the sense that individuals make of their career and how that understanding affects their choice of job. Weick and Berlinger (1989) suggest when the objective career is less able to be seen, the subjective career becomes "externalised" and then is used almost as a way to measure growth. Arnold and Jackson (1997) go back to considering organisational advantage when they suggest that the "new" career approach will not only aid individuals to clarify their own values but will enable employers to "harness and develop" their employees' potential.

The "new" careers are said to be developing beyond the boundaries of a single organisational or occupational setting (Collin & Young, 2000) and are based on individual improvisation, invention and flexibility rather than "traditional" scripts (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Littleton et al, 2000). When there are changes in society of such perceived impact as those described, new models are proposed and are tested. This study uses one of the new models and some of the older models of career theory as ways to assess the VSA volunteer experience.

4.3.4.1 The enactment of careers

Weick (1996) has written that people "enact" their careers and in so doing "enact" on the environment of their career. The enactment perspective enables a focus on career phenomena as processes rather than structures. Weick (1996) suggests that individuals can be agents of their own development but he does not believe this is done in isolation but co-operatively, to learn. By using Bakan's (1966) concepts of agency and communion, where agency manifests itself in

“self protection, self assertion and self expansion” and communion “in the sense of being at one with other organisms”, Weick further argues that for enactment to be successful or enriched in a world of boundaryless careers, there needs to be communion. He describes communion as “readiness and adaptability” and agency as “initiative and adaptation”. Weick also notes Marshall’s (1989) suggestion that the crucial components of communion are flexibility, openness to opportunities and timing, as the person and fitting environment meet. He also agrees with Marshall when she comments that individuals must be “prepared for transformation, to lose and gain definitions of self.” Volunteers going off to spend up to two years in a new and harsh environment seem to be seeking something different and appear to welcome the challenge of possible change for themselves and this model of career appears to be a useful framework to consider the process and effect of the assignment on the volunteers’ sense of self.

4.3.4.2 The “boundaryless”career

In reaction to the industrial and organisational changes a need was seen to present a new concept in career theory. Thus toward the end of the 20th century the idea of the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) was proposed:

“The boundaryless career does not characterise any single career form, but, rather, a range of possible forms that defies traditional employment assumptions” (p. 3).

“Sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings” (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994).

Arthur and Rousseau’s notion of boundaryless career is not bounded vertically within an organisation nor does it necessarily have an orderly sequence. Peiperl and Baruch (1997) note the emerging career centres outside the organisation where the career actor identifies with both professional and familial communities rather than organisational ones. Others write of the need to find psychological success in one’s life’s work, which includes family and community activities (Mirvis & Hall, 1994). Miner and Robinson, (1994) summarised the boundaryless career as involving membership, department or trade identity and job duties that are ambiguous.

These above definitions refer primarily to the career as perceived from a third party *objective* perspective. Yet more recently Sullivan and Arthur (2003) outlined the boundaryless career as a multi-faceted phenomenon that encompasses and transcends various boundaries and levels of analysis, physical *and* psychological, objective *and* subjective. The boundaryless career appears to be a theory in progress, which is appropriate for changing times.

Much has been written of the positive aspects of the unbounded career, for example the freedom and opportunity to develop with periodic cycles of upskilling, the cultivating of networks and the encouragement of enterprise (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The theory of boundaryless careers has been timely in that it has challenged certain traditional views of career as linear and through a one-organisational path. Notions of personal freedom, greater involvement with family and defining ones' own successes and failures seen as the subjective view of career (Littleton et al, 2000) present "new careers" as all positive.

However there are critics who suggest caution about the positive nature of the concept and its practice. Unthinking advocacy of boundaryless careers for all is not helpful. In particular, Hirsch & Stanley (1996) are sceptical about the potential opportunity and freedom for long term employees and Mirvis & Hall (1994) note the potential psychological impact on the individual of change of jobs, companies and even occupations over a life time. They add to this the psychological stress of dual career couples both having such boundary-crossing together with child and elder care. They believe this will cause role overload and practical problems which could cause extreme stress. Humphries & Gatenby (1999) suggest that the term is at best a way of normalising instability in the workforce. Even for males, identity has often been attached to an organisation and there will be a future need to express and build their identity across a series of employers (Baker & Aldrich, 1996). Further critical comment made by Dyer and Humphries (2002, p. 9) suggests that the contemporary career discourse "may be viewed as a 'moral' project with the aim of refabricating individuality" and they argue that such a project facilitates "compliance in the context of global neo-liberalism".

The concept has also been critiqued in relation to its theoretical and empirical foundations. Pringle and Mallon (2003) suggest that the concept has moved too far toward the individual's own agency and that it assumes career patterns of white males who change from the bounded organisation to the boundaryless world of positive freedom and choice. They suggest it does not embrace the diverse experiences of career experienced by women and other cultural groups whose identity may be defined by connectedness rather than autonomy.

Continuing this debate, Sullivan and Arthur (2003) suggest that although there may appear to be two dimensions which could still limit "boundarylessness" (gender and culture) they propose the boundaryless career concept could still be relevant to all careers if the term boundaryless is applied to psychological boundaries as well as physical and organisational ones. In a similar vein Inkson, (2003) suggests users of the boundarylessness metaphor overemphasise some types of boundaries (e.g. organisational) and underemphasise others (e.g. occupational) and that perhaps the most useful aspect of boundaryless career thinking is that it offers more visions of career.

Initially I was drawn to the literature on "boundaryless" careers because of the initial interpretation of mobility as the participants in this study are moving off shore. However the debate that has ensued during this longitudinal study has allowed me to note challenges to this and integrate the wider perspective which include boundaries of employment and organisation, but also includes geographical, physical and psychological boundaries. This is a position which sits more comfortably with the realism of my career practice and which also seems useful for the careers context of the VSA development workers in this study.

4.3.4.3 Career competencies and "new" careers

This study follows the objective of working within both organisational and individual orientations and to this end Defillipi & Arthur's (1996) career

competency model offers a useful framework. Their model contends that competencies in the company/firm have their counterparts in individual career competencies and can be used to understand individual actors' careers. It has assumed that the "new" career is a reality and I have adapted it for this study aware of that assumption. It is based on three competencies or three "ways of knowing": **knowing why**, **knowing how** and **knowing whom**. The following application had relevance in relation to the volunteers in the study before, during and after the assignment.

Knowing why. Competencies in this area are to do with issues of personal identity, values, meaning and purpose in life/career. These may be understood as issues of "personal reality" as opposed to "common reality" (Miller-Tiedeman, 1988) or "internal career" as opposed to "external career" (Schein, 1996) and the "subjective" as opposed to the "objective" career (Collin, 1996). Casual observations and anecdotal accounts of VSA experience led me to a hypothesis that recruits often have "knowing why" motivation: of service to fellow human beings; of the challenge of immersion in a different culture; of a new experience for their own career skills; and of a desire to be or do something different. This motivation may change as the assignment develops.

Knowing how. Competencies around this relate to skills, understanding and knowledge relevant to a career or particular project or task. Pointing to the demise of job security, Defillippi and Arthur (1996) contend that people can no longer afford to ignore the need to maintain and, where necessary, add to their knowing-how competencies. Volunteers for VSA are required not only to have the required knowledge and skills for the task but also to have the skills to transfer them to their counterpart in the developing country. When volunteers are successful in transferring their skills, their self-confidence is boosted and their occupational identity is enhanced (Knowing why). It also brings about new connections and reputation (Knowing whom).

Knowing whom. “Knowing whom” competencies relate to abilities to make attachments, make contact and build relationships with others in all aspects of career. This competency results in obligations, feedback, reputation and sources of information. Feedback can refine or re-affirm the “knowing why” of career and can also lead to new “knowing how” opportunities. Volunteers may have “knowing whom” connections, people they have used or sought out to learn about VSA, and who have provided them with the very detailed and personal references required for selection to an assignment. As volunteers mix with staff from other aid organisations, expatriate company workers and local personnel, their networks are enhanced. Their style and standard of work becomes known and the “knowing whom” aspect of their assignment becomes clearer and potentially useful for the next career move.

During the VSA experience, these “knowings” may undergo dynamic changes. The volunteers' skills and expertise (either tacit and explicit knowledge or “knowing how”) will be drawn upon as they begin to work in a new environment and culture. Their skills will also accumulate as they learn to manage and succeed in some of their goals.

As the assignment draws to an end some of these, “knowing whom” contacts are useful in further identifying others who might be helpful in the choice of career direction after the assignment is completed. Issues of “knowing why” may become important again as the volunteer considers their next career position. The individual's post VSA career may be affected by changes in values, which will influence motivation for a future career choice. It may also be affected by new skills, expertise and knowledge, both tacit and explicit of self, culture and work-related. It may also be determined by the relationships made and the reputation acquired.

Knowing-why, knowing-how and knowing-whom form “career capital” (Arthur et al., 1999). Self-management of “new” career forms requires constant attention to “career capital”. Moreover, Defillippi and Arthur (1996) contend that it should

be symmetrical, where equivalent attention is paid to the three knowings. Pointing to the importance of developing of “career capital” usefully signals the necessarily proactive role of the individual. Yet it also offers a way to conceptualise individual evaluations of VSA volunteers’ careers.

4.3.4.4 The “protean” career

In his book concerned mainly with careers in organisations, Hall by way of a postscript identified changes in career patterns and produced the idea of a “protean” career (Hall, 1976) after the Greek god Proteus who could change his shape at will:

“The protean career is a process which the person, not the organization, is managing. It consists of all the person’s varied experiences in education, training, work in several organisations, changes in occupational field, etc. The protean career is not what happens to the person in one organisation” (p. 201).

In 1996, Hall fully expanded his concept and characterised a protean career as having greater mobility, a more whole life perspective and a developmental progression. In more recent renditions of the protean career concept, in his book, *Careers in and out of Organizations*, (2002) Hall described the protean career as “being managed by the person not an organization” and further, he saw “the driving force as being the person’s own needs, values and desire for psychological success as opposed to being some external definition of success” (p. 6). Hall also explicates his assumptions regarding the working definition of career: an understanding of the career process rather than career ladder, career success or failure is best assessed by the person being considered, the career is composed of both behaviours and attitudes and of the objective and the subjective and that the career is a sequence of work-related experiences. He also discusses the changing nature of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 19905) and contends that if the “old” contract was with the organisation then the “new” contract was with the self and one’s work.

Hall has developed his protean career construct more fully in terms of the subjective career and argues that a protean career requires an individual to develop a balanced sense of their personal and work identity (which Schein (1985; 1996) might argue is the development of an individual's career anchor). Hall and his colleagues (Hall & Moss, 1998; Hall, Briscoe & Kram, 1997; Mirvis & Hall, 1994) have primarily explored the subjective perspective of the individual protagonist who faces assorted external career realities. The protean career is characterised as the *subjective interpretation and response* to those boundaryless conditions which are presented to us. Being "protean" is about behaving in more adaptive and self directed ways in addition to defining one's identity as being protean (Hall & Briscoe, 2003). An individual who did not hold protean attitudes would be more likely to "borrow" external standards, as opposed to internally developed ones, and be more likely to seek external direction and assistance in behavioural career management as opposed to being more proactive and independent (Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth, 2003). The underlying assumption is that it is positive and or useful to approach their career in a protean manner in the 21st century.

The challenges and critiques to the concept have been to the "new" careers in general and have been confused with the concept of the "boundaryless", discussed in the previous section. This confusion and the further changes discussed in 4.3.3 in the world of work and in the fields of career theory have prompted Hall and his colleagues to develop and refine his idea (1996, 2001, 2003) and to distinguish it from the term "boundaryless career" (2002, 2003, 2004). The two models have shared substantial overlap in academics' theoretical and empirical efforts: initially the idea of the protean career was seen as a similar way of describing the "new" career as the "boundaryless" career: to this extent many writers have assumed that the two terms are synonymous with one another. Gratton et al. (2002) found that certain employees were not any more mobile in the time frame researched so presumed they were therefore not boundaryless or protean in their careers. Yet Briscoe and DeMuth (2003) found that managers in many companies exhibited various characteristics of the protean career while at the same time not exhibiting the mobility that is usually assumed to characterise the boundaryless career. In their later work Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth (2004)

propose that mobility and learning are not necessarily components of protean career but may be correlates.

Briscoe and Hall (2003) have called for greater conceptual precision in describing boundaryless and protean careers otherwise they fear the metaphors will be inadequate and lose their efficacy and relevance for researchers. They argue that as metaphors they need to be effectively used to understand the reality of the people and organisations under study. Researchers' inability to fully explain their empirical findings with the protean and boundaryless metaphors is already evident and this is supporting a predictable critique of the new career theories (Craig & Kimberley, 2002; Gratton et al., 2002). This critique challenges not only in terms of theory and lack of empirical studies but also in terms of whether the concepts are understood or not by the career clients themselves (Briscoe & Hall, 2003). To further the process of analysis of empirical data using the protean career theory, it is important to explore the development of protean career theory in some detail.

4.3.4.4.1 Protean orientation

In their development of the concept, Hall and his colleague later state the primary designation of proteanism is "the ability to shape oneself independently" and the crux is "autonomy of the individual in defining the goals, activities, direction and assessment of one's own career" (Briscoe & Hall, 2002 p.11). They define the protean career as a career in which the person is 1) *values driven* in the sense that personal not external values provide the guidance and measure of success for the individual's career; and 2) *self-directed* in personal career management, having the ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands (2004).

Mindful of the need for a more succinct conceptual model they have produced a matrix related to these extremes: weaker or stronger in terms of being values driven and/or self directed in career self management. They suggest it is the union of such identity and self direction, the subjective or internal career attitude of the individual career actor which results in one being considered to demonstrate a protean career "orientation" (2002). They argue that personality,

identity, values and attitudes will influence the degree of protean orientation (Briscoe & Hall, 2004). Further, they suggest that career growth occurs through successive learning cycles across the career in which identity and adaptation skills, in response to external circumstances or “experiential triggers”, combine to maintain or change a person’s protean orientation. Such “triggers” could come from societal and organisational change and conditions, the work role and the individual’s non work environment (2004). They suggest that to have a protean orientation may require inborn traits which may well be influenced by the environment. They offer six elements to define a protean career orientation:

- Reliance on personal, subjective definition of career success.
- Emphasis on fulfilling personal values through work.
- Willingness to seek out change and to take action.
- Self reliance in making career plans and decisions.
- Career defined independent of organisational boundaries.
- Career expanded beyond vocational self-perception to encompass the person’s total “life space”.

Briscoe and Hall (2002) have also offered a critical examination of how the individual and external factors might shape the protean orientation and for this they focussed on personality, identity, values and goals, and the role of experience.

They examined personality and research based on the NEO PR or Five Factor Model of personality discussed earlier in this chapter (Judge, Higgins & Barrick, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1997) and this provided a base for discussion of the five dimensions of neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness in relation to their definition of a protean orientation. They considered that *conscientiousness* and *agreeableness* would be helpful traits which would make successful performance and avoidance of conflict more likely in any type of career including one defined by a protean orientation but not as differentiating of a protean orientation. They also argued that *extroversion* would not be a positive trait for a protean orientation on the basis that the individual engaging in a protean career is engaging with the world to suit their goals rather than “throwing themselves” at the world. They supported this opinion by citing

longitudinal research done across six decades (Judge, Higgins, Thoreson & Barrick, 1999) which indicated that while *extraversion* related to extrinsic success, measured by objective markers such as salary and promotions it was not positively related to career satisfaction. Briscoe and Hall (2002) used this research relating to the measure of *extraversion* a proxy for individually defined psychological success.

On the other hand they argued that *emotional stability* seemed especially critical to a protean orientation and cited research by (Kobassa, 1982) which suggests that those with personal hardiness are more pro-active in managing their lives and have less negative consequences of work stress. They also suggested that such individuals would be more likely to have an internal locus of control and a high generalised sense of self-efficacy (Briscoe and Hall, 2002). Finally in terms of personality they regarded *openness to experience* an important trait for a protean orientation, arguing that it had shown a positive correlation with “training proficiency” or the ability to succeed and prosper from training and development interventions (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997). These suggestions confirmed the development of **Hypotheses 1c** and **1d** (chapter three).

In their proposals for identifying individuals who have a protean orientation Briscoe and Hall (2002) argue that the personality of the individual is significant. Their argument was based on the assumption that although personality is significantly enduring and stable it may be modified based on biological changes, role and life transitions and the individual’s living and working environment. They state that the individual with a protean career orientation can reflect and adapt their personality. Given the proposed differentiation between personality *basic tendencies* and *characteristic adaptations* (McCrae, 1993) described in **4.3.1.2** it seems more likely that it would be *characteristic adaptations* which might change rather than *basic tendencies*. This stance led to the posing of hypotheses 2a and 2b related to personality traits and the development of objectives two and three which were to explore the narrative descriptions of assignment experience and change. Such in depth exploration might capture adaptation and change to basic tendencies thus allowing some measure of a protean orientation.

Briscoe and Hall (2002) also see personality as driving values and goals and as noted earlier, the expression and fulfilment of values and the self direction of goals are a key to the protean career orientation.

While certain personality attributes and values are stable and may be indicative of a protean career orientation, the role of experience and the response to those experiences are a key to maintaining, developing or reducing a protean career orientation (Briscoe & Hall, 2002). Those with a protean career orientation will interpret experience as it relates to personality and adaptability and use it to transform themselves whereas those with less of a protean career orientation will adapt for continued task performance but not necessarily for transformation (Briscoe & Hall, 2002). The critical issue is learning by reflection (Seibert, 1999) and the important caveat is to note the difference between adaptation as a one time experience and adaptability as a higher --order self reflective way of being (Morrison & Hall, 2002; Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Thus it is argued that the protean career orientation can be seen attitudinally, cognitively and behaviourally (Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth, 2004). The protean career orientation does not imply particular behaviour such as job mobility rather it is a mind set about career which reflects freedom, self-direction and making choices based on personal values. Such a description led to the development of **Hypotheses 1e** and **1f** under **Objective 1**:

- 1e.** The selected volunteers have a higher incidence of the career anchor of *lifestyle* than other career anchors.
- 1f.** The selected volunteers have a higher incidence of the career anchor of *pure challenge* than other career anchors.

As Hall and Chandler (2004) have discussed, the extreme form of this protean career orientation would occur when the person's attitude toward their career

reflects a sense of calling in their work or an awareness of a sense of purpose that give deep meaning to their career. This suggestion prompted confirmation of the posing of **Hypotheses 1a** and **1b**, related to altruism (which were detailed in chapter three (3.3.2.1)).

Given such comments, the protean career concept and in particular the development of the protean career orientation appears to be a useful over-arching framework to study the career behaviour and attitudes of the volunteers in this study. However, the measure of protean career orientation developed by Hall and Briscoe was not available at the start of the study. Nevertheless the quantitative tools used to measure to personality traits (NEO PI-R), self concept/values (COI) and the qualitative techniques of semi structured interviewing and thematic analysis were encouraged (J. Briscoe, personal communication, 6th July, 2002) as potential measures to explore a protean orientation and insight into the volunteers' narratives of their pre and post assignment careers and experiences. A relevant note for this study is that Hall, on reflecting which attribute he would add to his protean careerist for the 21st century, suggested individuals who have a deep yearning to make meaning of the work they do and to contribute to the community in which they work (2002).

Finally, of all the approaches to careers studied, the protean career was particularly fruitful for providing an overall construct in which the positivist, "new" protean career and "old" career personality trait theory could be used in conjunction with both a measurement and narrative approach to draw together understandings of a group of people who are not doing anything "new" by historical careers standards but may be better understood by a "new" career concept.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the key theories of career which have emerged during the 20th century. Theories from HR and organisational disciplines have been discussed together with theories originating from the field of individual psychology and counselling. There has also been an attempt to show the movement towards convergence between disciplines and to “consider career outcomes from a whole life perspective” (Feldman, 2002). The chapter has also introduced “new” career theories and frameworks which have taken into account some of the contextual changes of the 21st century and which allow other metaphors to be used to explain career such as enacting, boundaryless and protean.

The essence of the literature is that it is wide, from various disciplines, spans a century of investigation and is still not enough to explain fully what is understood by career. Nevertheless there are many models and aspects of theory which are relevant and useful for this study from both the traditional and “new” positivist theories and from more interpretive ones. It has been a challenge to bring together some of these theories in a useful way. I have done this by reviewing the relevant literature relating to the “old” or traditional career theories of personality, career values, a developmental approach, and theories of motivation and transition with “new” career concepts such as enactment of careers, boundaryless and protean careers. I have also pointed to theoretical and substantive gaps with a specific focus on the areas that this study addresses. The career literature has also raised issues which appear useful and pertinent to this study and which provide questions which might be answered from the study data.

Having reviewed the main and subsidiary bodies of literature related to this study, the next chapter will return again to look at the objectives and related research questions and hypotheses and then address the process of the research and the collection of data

Chapter Five Objectives and methodology

5.1 Introduction

Rosen noted, “The selection of a research topic and a corresponding method...are indicative of that which the researcher believes is important to see in the world and to know” (1991 p.21).

Previous chapters have focussed on what it is important to “see” and “know” in this study. This chapter addresses the “how” and will describe the research process and methodologies employed.

More specifically, it sets the research objectives and hypotheses in **5.2** and describes and justifies the methodological choices in **5.3**. Section **5.4** gives details of the quantitative instruments used for data collection. Section **5.5** describes the qualitative methods including the interviews and mid assignment diaried response. Sections **5.6** and **5.7** outline the recruitment of the participants and the data collection time frame respectively. The process of data analysis for the qualitative approach is described in some detail in **5.8** including the coding process and the use of computer programmes. The last section, **5.9**, is devoted to comments relating to the reliability and validity of the methods.

5.2 The research objectives were as follows:

General:

To examine: the profile of the VSA volunteers, their motivation to go, their experience of VSA and the impact of the assignment experience on their lives and careers.

Specific:

Objective 1. To contribute new empirical data about the backgrounds, motivations, personalities, values of overseas volunteer development workers and their attitudes to their careers and working lives.

Related hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a. The selected volunteers have a higher level of the personality factor of *agreeableness* than the general population.

Hypothesis 1b. The selected volunteers have a higher incidence of the career anchor of *service/dedication to a cause* than other career anchors.

Hypothesis 1c. The selected volunteers have a higher level of the personality factor of *openness* than the general population.

Hypothesis 1d. The selected volunteers have a lower level of the personality factor of *neuroticism* than the general population.

Hypothesis 1e. The selected volunteers have a high incidence of the career anchor of *lifestyle* than other career anchors.

Hypothesis 1f. The selected volunteers have a high incidence of the career anchor of *pure challenge* than other career anchors.

Objective 2. To explore the nature of individuals' experiences of volunteering overseas as a previously unresearched theme: in particular, salient experiences, positive and negative features, self-perceived adjustment and effects perceived retrospectively.

Related hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a. The VSA experience does not affect the personality traits of the selected volunteers.

Hypothesis 2b. The VSA experience does not affect the dominant career anchor of the selected volunteers.

Objective 3. To contribute to career theory by adding data from and interpretation of the careers of, a specific group whose career transitions could now be viewed in different ways given the dominance of the "new" career

discourse; and to specifically investigate the degree of fit of VSA volunteer development workers to the protean career ideal.

5.3 Methodological Pluralism

As noted in chapter four, Career is “a very elastic construct” (Collin & Watts, 1996) but it is also a practical construct which people can report on and describe (Walton & Mallon, 2002). The concept of career has led to both considerable positivist research using quantitative methodology and to a lesser extent to interpretivist or constructivist approaches using qualitative methodologies. There have also been calls for both further research in career theory across disciplines, (Brown & Lent, 1992; Herr, 1987; Collin, 1998) and for the abandonment of the restrictive distinctions and boundaries between qualitative and quantitative methods (Dex, 1991).

I considered using both in this study because of such encouragement together with a personal inclination to believe in the value of both. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) note that the researcher’s personality, intellectual approach and ability in the field are also important and should be explicit in the study.

The search to find a description for the type of design revealed “a mixed-methodology design both quantitative and qualitative” (Cresswell, 1994, p.177). More specifically it could be described as a “complementary design” (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989); the term “complementary” being helpful in clarifying the use of both forms of methodology where both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to measure or describe overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon. Triangulation where different methods assess exactly the same phenomenon with express purpose of convergence of results was not the intent (Cresswell, 1994). Individual personality and career value scores were not matched to individual career stories or assignment experiences. I made this decision because I thought that with such a comparison in mind I might influence and limit my coding process of the stories. I was also mindful that the

stories were identified by the occupation and destination of the volunteers and in the small population of VSA volunteers I needed to take care to protect the identity of participants in relation to sensitive personal issues such as personality.

Describing the design of a research study as a “road map or overall plan for managing the phenomenon of interest in systemic enquiry” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.76) has been useful in helping to give some broader framework which would encompass both methodologies.

Determining which methodology to use in the study has been a difficult process, which mirrors the apparent debate in research communities. The qualitative aspect of this study is not “pure” as defined by Burns (1997) but there are many aspects which are qualitative in the design. The semi-structured interviews are descriptive and exploratory; and they stress the subjects’ frame of reference.

The qualitative methodology elaborates and enhances the quantitative and the quantitative methodology gives objective rigour to aspects of the study. This study has involved both types of methodology and this is a reflection both of the outcome information desired and of the usefulness in career theory and research of empirically based instruments which have some measure of objectivity in the measurement of personality and career values of volunteers (Young & Borgen 1990). It also addresses the call to allow the subjective experience of a person’s life/career to be given space, to allow the participants to make sense of their own career/life story and give some sense or understanding to the measurements (Kydd, 2002).

The qualitative researcher believes that objective reality can never be captured. A useful description of qualitative research which makes sense for this study is that of the “*bricolage*”; the result of the “*bricoleur*” who facilitates an emergent construction of methods and practices which are pieced together, close knit and which “provide solutions to an emergent problem” or in this case, series of

questions (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991, p.161). The quantitative researcher on the other hand believes that observations must be measurable and repeatable and when they can be repeated consistently they become objective reality (Burns, 1997). In this study the measured attributes of personality are used in this objective way to deduce further possible hypotheses to be tested.

The decision to use both methodologies in this study was connected to three key themes: its theoretical framework, its research objectives and the researcher's values. The career literature has identified calls for integration of methodologies, the research objectives were well served by both methodologies and my preference as a career practitioner is use of both.

Thus this methodological pluralism (Tuckwell, 2001), generates different kinds of data, which reflect the complexity of career and career development. Using both approaches can enhance the understanding of the enquiry (Green et al., 1989).

5.4. Quantitative approach

It was anticipated that a single year's cohort of VSA volunteers (average 80) would provide a substantial quantitative sample and it was intended to gather qualitative data from only a small proportion of those. However in the event due to factors beyond the control of either VSA or the researcher the number of major assignments (1 or 2 years in length) was considerably less than anticipated. A decision was then made to expand the qualitative aspect to include as many volunteers of the 2001 cohort who wished to be involved. The quantitative aspect became less dominant with a sample of 47 and more equal in importance to the qualitative aspect.

The study could also be described as a case study of a VSA cohort, as the sample included all but three of the total numbers of volunteers selected for one and two year assignments in 2001.

As noted in chapter three and four, the literature in the fields of volunteering and the relevance of personality traits in career choice, motivation and values led to a decision to use psychometric testing.

5.4.1 The Research Instruments

Two instruments were chosen to address the research objective related to the personalities and career values of the volunteer group; the NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & Mcrae, 1992) and the Careers Orientation Inventory (Schein, 1990).

5.4.1.1 The NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO PI-R)

The NEO P-R is a five-factor model of personality based on ratings using ordinary trait vocabulary (Digman, 1990; Norman, 1963) and these five traits or dimensions have proved to be replicable over different theoretical frameworks, using different instruments, with ratings from different sources, a variety of samples, and with a high degree of generality (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1992).

As noted in chapters three and four the NEO Personality Inventory has had considerable use in the fields of career interests, vocational choice and adjustment (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Mount & Barrick, 1998; Judge, Higgins, Thoreson & Barrick, 1999). Its use in the fields of career counselling (Hammond, 1992) and career success (Siebert & Kramer, 2001), in expatriate selection (Deller, 1997), and prediction of success (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997) suggested

it would be appropriate. The cross-cultural generalisability of the tool was a further attractive attribute (Costa & McCrae, 1997). As discussed in chapter three, the NEO PI-R was chosen for this study in the field of careers because it allows a comprehensive assessment of personality. It consists of 240 items that define 30 eight-item facet sub scales over the five dimensions of: Neuroticism, (N), Extraversion, (E), Openness, (O), Agreeableness, (A) and Conscientiousness, (C). (Table 5).

Table 5

Domains and Facets Measured by the Revised NEO personality Inventory

<p>Domains</p> <p>N: Neuroticism</p> <p>E: Extraversion</p> <p>O: Openness</p> <p>A: Agreeableness</p> <p>C: Conscientiousness</p>	<p>Openness facets</p> <p>O1: Fantasy</p> <p>O2: Aesthetics</p> <p>O3: Feelings</p> <p>O4: Actions</p> <p>O5: Ideas</p> <p>O6: Values</p>
<p>Neuroticism facets</p> <p>N1: Anxiety</p> <p>N2: Angry Hostility</p> <p>N3: Depression</p> <p>N4: Self-consciousness</p> <p>N5: Impulsiveness</p> <p>N6: Vulnerability</p>	<p>Agreeableness facets</p> <p>A1: Trust</p> <p>A2: Straightforwardness</p> <p>A3: Altruism</p> <p>A4: Compliance</p> <p>A5: Modesty</p> <p>A6: Tender-mindedness</p>
<p>Extraversion facets</p> <p>E1: Warmth</p> <p>E2: Gregariousness</p> <p>E3: Assertiveness</p> <p>E4: Activity</p> <p>E5: Excitement-seeking</p> <p>E6: Positive Emotions</p>	<p>Conscientiousness facets</p> <p>C1: Competence</p> <p>C2: Order</p> <p>C3: Dutifulness</p> <p>C4: Achievement-striving</p> <p>C5: Self-discipline</p> <p>C6: Deliberation</p>

Note: from *Neo PI-R: Professional Manual, revised NEO personality Inventory (NEO PI-R, and NEO five factor inventory (NEO-FFI) (p2)*, by P.T.Costa & R.R.McCrae, 1985, Florida: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

Responses are made on a five point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The authors of the inventory note that there are three main advantages in assessing a variety of facets. First, there is a wide range of facets measured; second, there is some internal replication of findings; and third, meaningful individual differences can be seen within domains (Costa & McCrae, 1992). These are particularly useful in highlighting an individual's strengths and weaknesses (Costa & McCrae, 1989). A critique of the NEO PI-R by Bradshaw (1997) found that although there may be conditions for subjects managing their impression which could lead to slightly biased profiles, in fact this bias had minimal effect on overall profiles.

The reliability of the NEO PI-R dimensions has been investigated in terms of internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Costa et al., 1991) found coefficient alphas ranging from .56 to .81 and the overall coefficient alphas ranged from .86 to .95. A six year longitudinal study for neuroticism, extraversion and openness scales showed stability coefficients ranging from .68 to .83 (Costa & McCrae, 1988). For the conscientiousness and agreeableness scales, three-year test-retest coefficients ranged from .51 to .82 (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

In terms of validity, a number of studies have been conducted. In three independent sub samples, McCrae and Costa (1988) found evidence of consensual validation for all five dimensions. They also considered convergent and discriminant validity and found that for all five dimensions the median validity coefficient was .44. Several studies have also provided evidence of the construct validity of the NEO PI-R (Costa and McCrae, 1980, 1984).

5.4.1.2 Career Orientation Inventory (COI)

As noted in chapter four, Schein's (1990) Career Orientation Inventory, first introduced in the 1960's and 70's, shows how the theory behind an assessment tool can change and develop. It was originally designed as a training instrument

and validity and reliability data were not published. This is critiqued (1998) by Robertson and he further notes that of the 14 studies cited in the trainer's manual, six were with the Sloan School alumni, seven were with middle and upper-level managers, one was with physicians in managerial positions and that only 20 women were reported in research material in the 1990 edition. Bunch (1998) also critiques the instrument because of lack of norms or any fixed cut-offs for the scores. However he also suggests that the anchors are well defined, the instrument questions are well crafted and thought provoking and that the instrument provides a useful addition for assessing career direction. It has been consistently used as an assessment tool in research (Crepeau et al., 1992; Burke, 1993; Barth, 1993; Byrd, 1998; Custodio, 2000) and I am aware, anecdotally, of its regular successful use as an assessment tool by many career practitioners in New Zealand.

Schein's Career Orientations Inventory (1990) is an instrument which individuals can identify their "career anchor; a combination of perceived areas of competence, motives, and values that you would not give up". Schein (1996) further defines it as, "self-concept, consisting of (a) self-perceived talents and abilities, (b) basic values, and most important (c) the evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to the career"(p.80). Schein's (1990) theory regarding career anchors is an attempt to explain a person's internal career, as opposed to the external career, which is related to position or financial remuneration. He states that as a person's career evolves, he or she develops a self-concept that includes answers to questions about:

- Competencies, both strengths and weaknesses.
- Motives, needs, drives and goals in life.
- Values, the criteria by how satisfactory and suitable a career /job is.

He believed that a person's career anchor develops after some work experience and maturity and most people are unaware of their anchor until forced to make important choices. To facilitate this awareness he developed the COI as an instrument to help people identify their career anchors. The inventory asks individuals to score on a scale from 1 to 6 from *least true* to *most true* items that

are essentially endorsements of the various career anchors (Nordvik, 1991). A person's highest score identifies his or her primary anchor and lower scores identify lesser anchors, some people having one clearly defined anchor and others with more than one. The anchors and their descriptions are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Career Anchor Categories and their Descriptions

Technical/functional competence	TF	Seeks opportunities to apply competent skills and to continue to develop these skills
General managerial competence	GM	Seeks to be in positions where they could integrate the efforts of others and be responsible and accountable to an organization.
Autonomy/independence	AU	Seeks opportunity to define own work in own way; seeks flexibility.
Security/stability	SE	Seeks security in a job or organization either financial or employment security
Entrepreneurial creativity	EC	Seeks opportunities to create or build organisation or enterprise built on own abilities.
Service/dedication to a cause	SV	Seeks opportunities to pursue work which will make the world a better place.
Pure challenge	CH	Seeks to work on solutions to seemingly impossible situations, tough opponents, difficult obstacles.
Lifestyle	LS	Seeks to balance and integrate personal, family and career needs; flexibility to achieve this.

Note: adapted from *Career Anchors: discovering your real values*, p.2. by Edgar H. Schein, 1990, San Francisco Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer

Previous contact with earlier VSA volunteers by the researcher, as a selector, had led to the belief that the values of volunteers were significant. The fact that this was an organisation-based instrument addressing individual career development and the “internal career” and that it including some assessment of values prompted a decision to use it in this study. This would add a further quantitative measure to the larger NEO PI-R personality test and would allow some comparison of results.

The Career Orientations Inventory is not intended to be used alone but in conjunction with an interview. The qualitative part of this study is comprised of an interview following the completion of the COI and the volunteers frequently referred to the stimulation about their values that the COI had gave them in relation to the questions in the interview.

5.4.1.3. Questionnaires

Two short questionnaires were also used (Appendices 4 and 7). The first, used at phase one, before departure involved questions related to age band, gender and whether a partner was accompanying the volunteer. The second questionnaire was used at the third phase of the study, on the return of the volunteers from their assignment. It included scaled questions relating to both satisfaction and influence of the assignment personally and professionally, and questions about anticipated employment. The questions were developed from interview schedules which are used by VSA and were prompted by issues within the literature related to motivation, expatriate experience and evaluation.

5.5 Qualitative Approach

Initially, aspects of the study particularly related to objectives two and three, appeared to be usefully approached in part by a qualitative design. In making this decision I was aware that definitions or descriptions of qualitative research design have been and are in a state of flux and change and there is challenge for the qualitative researcher at all stages in the research process. Difficulties are found in design, sampling, generalisation, ethics and the behaviour of the researcher.

5.5.1 Choice of life/career history technique

The technique of using a life history (Jones, 1983; Sarbin, 1986; Randall, 1995; Musson, 1998) or the adaptation of work history (Dex, 1991), or narrative (Young & Collin, 1986; Young & Collin, 1988; Baumeister & Neuman, 1994; Cochran, 1998) which allows the concepts of life, employment and work to be told and studied in context has been used to document and analyse career stories (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999), (Mallon & Cohen, 2000). It seemed that this would be a useful method to collect information about the career/life of the volunteers before their VSA experience, during the assignment and post assignment. Such data also allow possible analysis of the character attributes attitudes and values of the story-teller which in this case could add to the quantitative data. The technique also gives room to explore motivation for the assignment.

In terms of career, this approach goes beyond the rather rigidly confined influences of personality, developmental stages and organisational careers and examines decisions about career development and movement in a wider context. It has been developing in psychology since the impact of constructivist thinking began with Kelly (1955) and is also derived from the contextualist worldview in that the “reality” of the world is seen as constructed through the individual’s own thinking and processing rather than in any completion of stage or arrival at the next stage of development (Steenbarger, 1991).

As early as 1984, Freeman posited that the historical narrative is not what is remembered but “what is constructed” and Sarbin (1986), writing about self-narrative and adventure, noted that the memory of past adventures is “not a faithful transcript of the past, since the memory-record serves a constructive purpose.” Mahoney and Lyddon’s review also noted many more proponents involved in the study and practice of this approach. They describe it as “founded on the idea that humans actively create and construe their personal realities” (1988 p.200).

More recently, Randall (1995) referred to “biographical imperative”. He suggests that our personal life, or our relationship with ourselves, is inconceivable without a constant re-evaluation. This becomes our life story. Giddens (2000 p.249) goes further and suggests that an autobiography is a “corrective intervention into the past, not merely a chronicle of elapsed events.” He further suggests that this “reconstruction of the past goes along with anticipation of the likely life trajectory of the future” (p.250). Hutton and Giddens (2000) have suggested that the impact of the changing work-place causes difficulty for some people to sustain a life-narrative from their work.

Career counsellors have more recently been challenged to move from the positivist, trait factor, counsellor-as-expert approach (Cochran, 1990; Baumeister, 1994; Savickas, 1995; McMahon & Patton, 2000; Peavy, 2001) to a narrative approach. Chen in his article, “Enhancing vocational psychology practice through narrative enquiry” (2002) makes a clear and thorough examination of the rationale and process of this perspective. He describes its facets as: subjective living, participatory experiencing and contextual meaning-making. He does this with reference to works by Young, Valich and Collin (1996). This is one of the first times in this literature review that references from scholars of both individual psychology and organisational psychology are made in the same article. Narrative life histories in context may be the bridge, which is being built between them.

The decision to use a narrative life history approach for part of this study was taken not only because this was an approach that I use as a career practitioner but also because of this seeming convergence of career theories. I also successfully use positivist personality traits approaches in my work. The approaches can be combined in practice. This study seeks to combine them in a research project.

They can be combined if the position is taken that personality traits may be genetic or determined very early in life and then it is up to the individual how they adapt or work with these traits or attributes in the context of their lives. The

narrative that volunteers construct around their career experience before and during their VSA assignment may be a helpful lens through which to view their work/life histories and their personalities. Furthermore the idea of “witnessing an ongoing experience” by various narratives within a longitudinal study, at “the intersection between immediate experience and recollection” may be the most viable way of gleaning developmental knowledge (Freeman, 1984). Thus using such a qualitative design where the volunteers would be interviewed over a period of time would give a quality of real time to the study.

Further, locating volunteers’ own interpretation of their motivation and experience would give depth to the study, provide a “thicker description” of the phenomena and allow any inconsistencies to be explored and challenged (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Flick (1998) however, is mindful of the caveat that a biographical narrative is not a representation of factual process but is a construction or a cognitive achievement for the interview. The researcher does not have direct access to the experience but rather to representations of that experience which may be told as truths by the narrators even though they may not be giving the truth as an empirical fact (Reissman, 1993).

Nevertheless, the very process of reflexivity, which occurs as the volunteer describes their working life up to the point of departure and then describes their experience while on the assignment is what life history methodology seeks to capture (Musson, 1998). The lapse of time can be a useful factor in understanding the present (Dex, 1991).

5.5.2 The role of the researcher

In qualitative design there is the potential for developing hypotheses but there is also a potential to test hypotheses and although this was not the only intent, it was impossible for researcher who had been involved with the selection of volunteers for six years not to have some frameworks for understanding VSA phenomena

which might seem useful. The life history methodology acknowledges this and does not presume the impartiality of the researcher. It recognises that the researcher may bring implicit and explicit theories and values to the situation. These need to be “surfaced” and made explicit and addressed during the research process (Musson, 1998). The explicating of assumptions and theoretical frameworks is a central aspect of the validity of the method (Symon & Cassell, 1998). Experiential data from my work in previous years in selection and debriefing of volunteers not only provided the original impetus for the study but also framed the kinds of questions I asked of the literature and ultimately the kinds of research objectives that were set.

Since my youth as hitch-hiking Scot in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America I have been interested in people who travel and live in other countries. My undergraduate degree in geography led to further understanding in urban development in developing countries and the influence of their colonial past. At masters level my thesis researched urban/ rural migration so it is not a surprise, although it is also co-incidental that this study is about people who are expatriating to live and work in overseas countries.

I believe that such a depth of interest in travel and adventure influenced the study in the assumption that those who might be selected were like the people whom I have met over the decades as travellers and adventurers. It may also have influenced the longitudinal nature of the methodology as a journey to be completed. My personal enjoyment in hearing travellers’ tales undoubtedly influenced the choice of the use of the narrative life/work history in the study and yet the need to pay attention to scientific method has been well drilled since school and no doubt led to the use of a mixed methodology.

5.5.3 The research relationship

As a practicing counsellor/researcher I work to a code of ethics, which sits well with more recent attitudes to interviewing for research purposes (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Not only are the fundamental rights of **informed consent, privacy, and protection from harm** implicit but the relationship between the researcher and the “other” in the interview is important and the “other” is not a distant aseptic object but a real person whom the interviewer recognises and treats as such.

It was my intention in this study to build a respectful trusting relationship with the subjects, which would last about three years. I was well aware that the depth of answers to questions inviting a life story could place the subject in a vulnerable psychological space yet I was also aware that my role was that of researcher not counsellor and the need to suggest sensitive referral if necessary (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999).

5.6 Recruitment of participants

This study considers the lives and careers of the selected 2001 cohort of New Zealand VSA volunteers, (i.e. those recruited during the calendar year 2001) whose assignments were a minimum of one year.

The destinations for volunteers and the setting up of assignments were influenced by political situations in some of the countries e.g. Zimbabwe and the Solomon islands. The traditional length of assignment has been two years and this is still the norm. However due to both the difficulty of finding suitable volunteers who can commit to two years and the isolation or potential danger of some of the situations some assignments are now for less (e.g. 3 months). However a decision was made to include, in this study, only two and one year assignments because it was believed that a period of a year might be necessary to have a reasonable impact on career or life choices.

The Massey University Human Ethics committee approved a research proposal, which detailed the rationale and objectives of the study. (Appendix 10).

Approval for methodology and access to the volunteers was obtained from the CEO and the Recruitment Officer of Volunteer Service Abroad and the latter introduced the research study to volunteers immediately after their selection. I then wrote to them including information about the study and noting that I would also contact them by telephone. (Appendices 1 and 2).

This proved a useful and informative method. Although I had sent two pages of information about the study its title referred to “career” and if I had not phoned with the planned follow-up conversation, a considerable number of volunteers would not have become involved because they did not think they had a “career” or that it would not be interesting enough. This allowed me to expand on the definition of career that I was using. It also allowed me to talk a little more about my involvement with VSA. The decision to be involved still required the volunteer to complete and return the consent form. (Appendix 3)

The volunteers were invited to take part in two parts of the study; Part A which involved the NEO, COI and short questionnaire both pre and post assignment and Part B which involved semi structured interviews both pre and post assignment and a mid assignment questionnaire or diaried response.

As noted in Table 7, only two volunteers chose not to be involved in either part, one chose not to do the testing (quantitative part) and six chose not to be involved in the interviews (qualitative part).

Table 7

Number of Volunteers in Study

No. of volunteers in study	
Total no. selected by VSA	50
Total no. agreed to be in study	48
No. agreed to quantitative part	47
No. agreed to qualitative part	42

5.7 Data collection and time frame

The study was longitudinal and involved three phases of data collection:

Phase one was after selection and before departure. The volunteers were sent the NEO PI-R, COI and brief questionnaire (Appendix 4) to complete at home. All except one agreed to take part and returned them (n = 47).

An appointment was then made with volunteers around the one of the two VSA briefing workshops, to meet for about an hour for the first semi-structured interview (Appendix 5). The interview was audio-taped and later transcribed and at this meeting a reminder was given to the volunteer that they would be contacted mid assignment and again at debriefing.

Phase two was mid assignment when a short questionnaire, with six open-ended questions and two scale questions (Appendix 6) was sent by email or airmail (where there was no email connection). For various reasons thirteen did not respond or return the questionnaire. Six had returned early before the mid assignment date, five did not respond, one withdrew before departure and one was dismissed by his employer. The total number for this phase was 29 (n=29).

Phase three was at the VSA debriefing visit, which must be within one month of completion of the assignment. The NEO PI-R, COI, second short questionnaire (Appendix 7) and interview (Appendix 8) were completed at this time. Where possible the return volunteers were interviewed at the debriefing day in Wellington and where this was not possible were interviewed by telephone. For a various reasons some volunteers did not participate in either part of this stage. These reasons included: very early returns, withdrawn before departure, dismissed, two volunteers who chose not to participate and, two volunteers whose assignment delays (due to visa or political reasons) meant that they returned outside the study time framework. The total number of participants for this phase was: total quantitative material 38 (n = 38), post assignment questionnaire only 40 (n=40), qualitative material 36 (n =36).

The reason for the difference in sample numbers for the post assignment questionnaire was that two very early return volunteers wanted to be involved but the time frame was not relevant for the NEO- PR or COI but still useful for the questionnaire.

Table 8 shows the reasons for the early return of volunteers in the sample. The terms and codes used are those used by VSA for early return from assignments.

Table 8

Early returns

VSA Code and meaning	Number
RORG: Organisation collapsed	1
REMP: Dismissed by employer	1
RCON: Conflict employer	3
RHHF: Health family	1
RPAR: Partner related	1

Table 9 shows the total number of volunteers involved in phase two (qualitative only) and phase three (both qualitative and quantitative)

Table 9

Number of Volunteers in Phase Two and Three

No. of volunteers sent mid assignment questionnaires, phase 2	34
No. of mid assignment questionnaires returned, phase 2	29
No. of volunteers in phase three , quantitative only	38
No. of volunteers in phase three, questionnaire only (very early returnees)	2
No. of volunteers in phase three , qualitative only	1
No. of volunteers in phase three, quantitative and qualitative	36

5.7.1 Interviews

Pre-departure

A semi-structured interview style with an interview guide (Appendix 5) was used to address the research questions related to the volunteers' career stories, motivation and aspirations at the pre-departure stage. This allowed the content to be focussed on the crucial issues of the study giving greater flexibility yet allowing the coding responses to be manageable (Burns, 1997).

In many cases volunteers reported that having completed the NEO and COI they were more aware of some of the issues that the study was about. Many made reference to questions in the written questionnaires. They said sometimes it had "made them think" and "clarified" some of their ambivalence.

During the interview, volunteers were asked to talk about their working life, both paid and unpaid, since they left school. Questions were asked about how they knew about VSA, influences in applying for this assignment, their life and career goals, their definition of what success would be for this assignment and what they

thought they might do after they completed the assignment. Most of the interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Mid assignment

The mid assignment diaried response involved a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions about life while on the assignment, how they were coping and what their thoughts were about life/employment on return. It also included a scaled question about success of the assignment so far (Appendix 6).

Five volunteers failed to complete the mid assignment questionnaire: because their assignments were curtailed, because they felt “too stressed”, or “not in the right mind-set” or plain “too lazy”. However, an alternative, albeit limited data source was available in the form of their letters to VSA published in *Mosquito* the VSA newsletter. These data confirmed the pattern of results from the 29 volunteers described in chapter eight.

Post assignment

On return from the assignment another slightly shorter semi-structured interview (Appendix 8) addressed the research questions related to the personal and professional experience of the assignment, its impact on their lives and what they planned to do in their life/career immediately and in the future (looking one year ahead). Most of these interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Where volunteers had chosen to extend their assignment without returning to New Zealand (4), they agreed to answer the interview prompt questions by way of another diaried email response.

5.8 Process of data analysis

The purpose of data analysis was interpretation and understanding of the perspectives of others rather than prediction and causal explanation, however

frameworks which came from the literature gave a useful start to the text analysis and initial themes from the interview transcriptions were noted before the use of the computer programme.

5.8.1 Transcription

The pre-departure interviews were transcribed fully by me before any formal analysis was started. Although a full transcription was an onerous task it allowed fuller immersion in the data and meant that I could reflect more thoroughly on the data. Transcripts also meant that I did not rely on my memory or notes (Silverman, 2001) and it also proved to be invaluable in “knowing” all 42 volunteers thoroughly making it easy to rebuild rapport with them on their return.

Initially the analysis was done by reading hard copies of transcripts and noting themes in the margins. The large amount of data which was generated from 42 transcripts from phase one and potentially 42 from phase two meant that to analyse the data without IT assistance would have been very difficult, if not impossible, in terms of time available. I was encouraged to consider using a computer software system and after some considerable research and help chose to use a CAQDAS system.

5.8.2 Computer assisted qualitative data analysis systems (CAQDAS)

The use of computer analysis in qualitative data analysis is a fairly recent phenomenon. Since the 1960's CAQDAS have been used for basic content analysis but more recently in the 1980's and 1990's qualitative researchers have used more sophisticated programmes, which build on manual methods such as text coding, categorising, cutting and pasting. Today there are programmes which can store data of various types, which are the results of these methods, can retrieve the data, copy or re-arrange it. Other programmes can store even greater detail about the data, the researcher's memos and can search huge amounts of data for specific words or and phrases or their synonyms. They can also seek

links and exclusions within the texts and can help the researcher to discover emerging comparisons and potential theories. Such programmes provide audit trails through the analytic process.

The more sophisticated programmes by which the researcher can use the “code and retrieve” method of analysis of themes can also assist theory construction (Miles & Weitzman, 1994). Nevertheless it is still the challenge for the researcher to use the programmes in such a way that they record, link, explore, test and build cumulatively on the insights derived from the data (Richards & Richards, 1994). The later programmes allow even greater scope to move among data with and without coding and to use modelling facilities (Richards, 2000). These also help to answer criticisms of CAQDAS, which challenge the requirement to reduce text to codes and the potential loss of contact with the raw data (Siedel & Keller, 1995). Nevertheless it is important to be circumspect about the role that computers can play in the process of analysis and data integration. They cannot perform the creative and intellectual task of devising categories and deciding which categories are relevant or of generating appropriate propositions with which to interrogate the data (Dey, 1995).

5.8.3 Selection of NVivo for the study

As noted in 5.8.1, it seemed sensible for me to use a CAQDAS with the large amount of texts and data that I wished to analyse but it took some time to decide on which programme. Miles and Weitzman’s (1994) guide to choice of software, although technically out of date, provided sound advice. It suggested I answer the following questions:

What kind of computer user was I?

I am not a wide user of programmes and wanted a programme that would be straightforward to use which would also allow me to build my skills with the programme.

What kind of database and project was it?

This study involved a large amount of text from two sets of interviews and from a diary/questionnaire. This meant several hundred pages of text and also demographic information. I needed to have a flexible system where I could build links.

What kind of analysis was required? And how much flexibility?

The analysis was to be exploratory so good features of fast search and retrieval were important but I also had acknowledged the use of “template analysis” (King, 1998) which meant I had an initial template of themes evolved through initial reading of the data. Flexibility for these to be developed and changed and to be given multiple codings was also important.

I also talked to many other users of CAQDAS programmes and used various introductory packages and finally chose QSR NUD.IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising) or NVivo, (QSR International, 2000).

NVivo is regarded as offering a new stage in software development (Richards, 2000) because it combines the coding of rich data with familiar ways of editing and revising the text. After a preliminary tutorial, which was quite useful, I was fortunate to be given seminar notes by an academic colleague, which allowed me to make good progress and to understand some of the options in the use of the programme. I learned to use the coding techniques, moved back and forth between texts with ease and later moved on to using sets and models. I was also able to add demographic data to the texts which allowed for further analysis.

5.8.3.1 Coding

In a qualitative study, data analysis and anticipatory data reduction takes place from the point of choice of conceptual framework, of research questions and of the choice or availability of the sample and of instrumentation involved. When the terrain is “familiar” to the researcher, as in this study, a “tighter design” works well and allows for an approach in which explanations are looked for to

confirm or explain a stance by the use of multiple, comparable cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As I had been involved as a selector and researcher with VSA and had developed some well delineated concepts, my intent was therefore less exploratory and led to an approach where the pre-departure interview questions, derived from the literature were kept unaltered rather than changed in response to any reflection during the process of data collection. However memos made after each interview and during the transcribing, identified themes. Neumann identifies this process as “open coding” which he describes as “bringing themes to the surface from deep inside the data (1991, p. 422).

This analysis was reflective and impressionistic but it led to the construction of initial lists of categories or themes. These were also developed within the theoretical frameworks outlined in chapter four and were adapted and changed as the themes emerged with further focussed reading and coding process. Thus the process involved template analysis (King, 1998), which lies between content analysis where there is a predetermined list of codes and grounded theory where there are no predetermined codes.

In the literature the process of creating and assigning codes is well documented (Silverman, 2001; Burns, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Potter & Wetherall, 1998) and the process is not dissimilar when using a software programme. I was unsure whether it would be any less laborious and tedious (Lee & Fielding, 1995) using NVivo and started with some apprehension. Various software programmes including NVivo, have “search tools” which search for a particular word or phrase throughout the document and will code this into a particular node. This was not appropriate for this study as the subtlety and the expression of the issues being asked was too great. In addition my reading the transcripts in full in order to code meant a third and even fuller immersion in the data which allowed more rigorous attention to the responses.

5.8.3.2 Coding and nodes

My coding experience in coding information from the first or departure phase greatly influenced the coding of the middle and return phases. These latter phases were accomplished with less ambivalence and more confidence and each coding stage for them is not described fully. However a detailed account follows of the process for the first phase of data explaining each coding step.

All the transcripts were imported into the NVivo programme where the initial themes were translated into “nodes” (which are the codes of traditional coding.) For clarity I shall continue to use the term theme.

The transcripts were then analysed line by line and coded according to those which had emerged from the original memos, the “start list” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) or broad band into which relevant segments can be placed.

The original themes, which had been selected on the basis of the literature and the researcher’s VSA experience, are shown in Table 10. Coding templates were developed from these.

FB (following bliss) was a broad theme, which was used in the retrospective career/life story section. The initial reading of the transcripts prompted a return to a reading of Campbell’s (1988) work and Henderson’s (2000) related to career happiness and “bliss” where she describes her subjects as “following a positive meandering path”. They were proactive in their life/careers in choosing what they wanted, self reliant, and interested in new experiences. The journey did not always appear “blissful” to others but was told in a way which suggested a positive meaning to their career.

Table 10

Original “broad band” Coding Themes

Code	Explanation
FB	Following bliss
FBII	Career story, intra-individual
HJD	Hero’s journey departure
HJR	Hero’s journey return
Career Competencies	
KNWY	Knowing why
KNWH	Knowing how
KNOW	Knowing whom

An example of *FB* coding is a volunteer who describes some of his previous working life:

I left to go to Sudan, surveying for oil, for 14 months really, a bit of an adventure, and then the civil war erupted out there and we were the first targets. We were working for the Arabs so I left there and spent another year pottering in E and bought a flat. Then I got another job based in UK doing surveying and then I got a bit bored with that so I thought I have got to do something else, and I decided to get into computing because that is what everyone else was getting into and then I got a manpower services commission and 12 week course free; got a job with for 2 years as a programmer and from there got a job with the Bank as a programmer.

Some of these attributes: proactive, expansion from pure vocational self-perception to “life-space”, self-reliance in career decision-making also appeared to relate to Hall’s (1976) protean approach to careers. They were also similar to Weick’s (1996) idea of people who “enact” their careers where the enacting is about individual agency as well as adaptability.

FBII was character traits of the volunteers. Values of altruism, service, being interested in work being more than a “job”; being open-minded, adaptable, willing to upskill and relearn and resilient; a sense of the Marshall’s communion

(1989) where both the individual fits with their working environment. A volunteer who had been a top insurance underwriter and tertiary educational manager described her recent experiences questioning her work values over the previous two years illustrates this how this code might be chosen:

I've been trying to find a way of combining what I do at the moment and what I enjoy with my interests and things like that...I'm doing study and I'm doing volunteer work ...so I have had a number of things on the go.. and over the last 18 months I have been working on how I pull it all together and really get moving in a new direction which includes development type work.

HJD was a theme about departure/motivation; that of the hero being called (Campbell, 1968, 1988) as the volunteer teacher with a wide variety of other work experiences who said:

And it has been tucked away there, yes and at teachers college when we were looking at where to what if we don't get jobs, I'd said then I'd go overseas and teach. Then the actual VSA didn't come into mind until at the beginning of the year realising that em I had a lovely job, worked in a really nice school, lovely kids in a very predictable community and conventional and the challenge had gone out if it for me and so I began to think about what was it I was about to. And then the ad ...I saw it and said "that's right" it was sort of like yes re-establishing a connection.

HJR was related to the anticipated return of the hero and what that might mean in terms of life/career such as a young lawyer:

If I could get some work through an international organization and they sent me elsewhere that would be great but I can't count on that so the backup plan ...we will go to the UK just because it is the easiest place in Europe to do legal work...for the government and then we will be back to NZ and probably Wellington, Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Commission or Law commission. There are a few places like that like I'd like to work.

The following three themes were related to the model of three *knowings* or *career competencies* at the time of choosing to go on a VSA assignment (Defillipi & Arthur, 1996).

KNWY or knowing why, related to personal identity or purpose was a guide to motivation for the assignment:

I am doing this for me because I need to re-affirm...I need to push myself a little bit of over the edge and see what happens.

Or:

S'pose one of the early influences was when I was 12.um just finished standard 4 ...and in the Christmas holidays the whole family went to Tonga because my father is a plumber and he and some friends of his were doing some work over there and so rather than leave us all behind with a baby sitter they took all of us ..so we stayed in a house there for about 6 weeks I think it and ... that was seeing a completely different culture and I thought wow that's quite neat!

KNWH or knowing how was related to the self knowledge and skills the volunteer had to do the assignment:

And I am flexible and have a good ability to work with people and...I pick up new things quite quickly and I am adjustable and have a sense of humour.

KNWO or knowing whom was related to who was influential in the decision to go.

Even when I was at school I had this teacher who had done VSA and I then had some kind of altruistic desire to do something ...and you look back at it now and think how naïve and simple ...but I think there was something in there.

Where new ideas or meanings emerged new codes were assigned. Where it was appropriate, “parallel” coding (King, 1998) where the same text may be placed in more than one code, was used. Neumann describes the second pass through the transcripts as “axial coding” (1991).

The first transcript coded using NVivo was the first volunteer interviewed and since that interview the number of themes had grown. During the second transcript I used the added themes from the first and added more. I continued with the third transcript and Opie's (1999) questions were useful during this time:

What is interesting about this? How does this help me to think further about the issue being discussed here? Are these issues attended to in the literature and in what ways? Do my data seem to support or qualify my broad sense of the literature?

During this early process, the ease that the NVivo programme allowed to go back and forth between transcripts proved its worth and allowed a genuine thorough immersion in the text and re-reading of the transcripts. Themes could be "split" or "spliced" (Dey, 1993) according to any shift in focus of the analysis and compared between transcripts, thus allowing an "iterative approach" (Seidel & Kelle, 1995).

At a point, after six transcriptions, I was concerned at the number of themes. A re-reading of Miles and Huberman (1994 p. 46) was helpful:

"The challenge is to be explicitly mindful of the purposes of your study and of the conceptual lenses you are training on it, whilst allowing yourself to be open to and re-educated by things you didn't know about or expect to find...you will have to resist overload –but not at the price of sketchiness. This is easier said than done."

This took me back to the research questions and I began to code all the transcripts concentrating on one part at a time: the character of the volunteer and their career/life history or the part of the transcript, which involved retrospective storytelling, the motivation of the volunteer which may be retrospective or current, the anticipated career/life direction on return. The themes then seemed more straightforward. The facility to have "trees" of themes was useful where related themes could be connected. Neumann describes this final step in the

coding process as “selective coding”. Table 11 shows the final coding template involved in this step.

NVivo also has the facility to create sets of themes , which can be linked to attributes of the sample. This allowed comparative analyses related to the contexts of gender and age. This is presented in table form in the relevant chapters. Thus the NVivo programme allows both qualitative and quantitative material to be gleaned in the same programme

5.9 Reliability and validity

As Silverman (2001) notes the challenge is for research to be “both intellectually challenging and rigorous and critical” (p.144). This means it is vital to subject data to every possible test. Reliability and validity address this need and the means of doing this depends on the methodology used.

5.9.1 Reliability

In the quantitative sections of this study, reliability and validity have been referred to in some detail in 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.1.2. In the qualitative approach further comment is required

Reliability in research is concerned with giving the same result consistently under the same conditions (Burns, 1997) but in the qualitative context it has been suggested it is more about means of ensuring that the researcher has been true to the data generated.

King (1998) proposes that reliability can be better assured if researchers explicitly recognise and acknowledge assumptions, and preconceptions as I have done, and be surprised by the data, as I was (I had expected altruism to be the strongest motivator for volunteering).

Other means to attend to reliability were to have interview schedules which were very simple and required minimal pre-testing and to find ways of inter-coder comparison and a process to test for “inter-coder agreement” (Silverman, 2001).

Table 11

Final coding template, phase one

Theme	Definition/Explanation
Career story/character	
FB-PS	Positive sense of self
FB-Char	Strength of character, by resilience in career or personal setbacks
FB-SD	Self development through re-training, reflection on career/ personal
FB-ENPRO	Enactment/protean-like, open and willing to change
FB-RELO	Relationship with others in work is important
FBWE-F	Freedom of work environment is important
FBWE-CH	Challenge at work is enjoyed
Hero's journey	
HJD-AL	Altruistic reason to go
HJD-ADV	Adventure is an element to go
HJD-M	Search or desire for meaning or purpose in going
HJD-Chall	Challenge of some kind is important in going
HJR-NEW	A wish for something new on return
HJR-OPT	Open to options on return
HJR-REL	Relaxed about what they will do return
HJR-UNSET	Unsettled about what they will do on return
Career competencies	
Knowing why	
KNWY-CHA	Challenge of some kind is important
KNWT-ALT	Alternative life or culture is desired
KNWT-ADV	Adventure is seen as important
KNWY-TIM	Timing is right and fits for a variety of reasons
KNWY-ALW	Always wanted to, the dream
KNWY-ALT	Altruism, a belief in the importance of doing something for others
KNWY-M	A search for meaning in life and career
Knowing whom	
KNWO-HIST	Someone in the past
KNWO-FRI	Recent friend
KNOW-ORG	VSA

At the final point of coding of each phase I randomly sampled transcripts in each theme in NVivo into six groups for colleagues who were willing to recode and test my coding. I designed instructions explaining the purpose of the coding, listed the random transcripts (between five and six for each code) and asked the coder to assign a theme/description. I then asked them to move to the next page. At the top of the next page, I then stated what I had given as theme and asked it to be rated on a scale of 1 to 7 from disagree totally to agree totally. This was sent by email to six academic colleagues in New Zealand and other countries.

Using this technique, I had two methods of comparison: one a theme suggested by the colleague which I could compare with mine and secondly a rating of appropriateness.

The means of the appropriateness scores were calculated and results showed one theme had a mean of 4 another 5.5, the remainder 6 or 7. I addressed the theme which had a mean of 4 by redoing that theme and having further intercoding comment from two colleagues. Therefore by and large the people who coded were in agreement. Such agreement and consistency was encouraging as a measure of reliability.

I also took note of the coders' suggestions for themes and any comments written about them and adjusted coding where it seemed usefully appropriate and consistent.

Taping and transcribing the interviews myself also reduced many of the problems associated with reliability and the mid assignment responses were written by the volunteers themselves.

5.9.2 Validity

King (1998) notes that a qualitative study "is valid only if it truly examines what it claims to have examined." (p. 31). How is such "truthfulness" able to be validated given that it has been earlier stated that the qualitative technique of life/career history is reflexive and does not constitute a biographical truth?

Qualitative work in the realm of perception and meaning is difficult to validate. King again suggests collaborative research, which was not possible in this study.

Others (Symon & Cassell, 1998) have suggested “scrutiny of organisational members” or “member checks” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) where researchers take their findings back to the respondents for checking. Silverman (2001) discounted this as a direct validation and certainly such a process was impossible to carry out in this study. However some validation of the respondents’ first interview was done in an ad hoc manner when the second interview took place. During the second interview, on the volunteers’ return, I frequently referred to comments and opinions mentioned by the volunteers in their first interview and these were usually affirmed, often with some surprise that I had taken note of such detail.

Opinions were also sought from academic colleagues on my interpretations at all three phases. Likewise a wide range of verbatim transcripts has been included in the study for all three phases. This is intended to allow the reader to evaluate the study for themselves (Maxwell, 1996; Silverman, 2001). Finally by using a quantitative approach to address some of the research objectives some comparisons could be made which gave further validation.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has described details of the mixed methodology approach involved in this longitudinal study, which has three distinct phases. It discussed some of the challenges and advantages involved in using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the same study and considered each approach in some detail. The next two chapters will focus on the analysis of the first set of results based on phase one or pre-departure data. Chapter six will look at the characteristics and life histories of the participants and chapter seven their motivation for volunteering to do a VSA assignment.

Chapter Six Results I: Personal characteristics and career histories

6.1 Introduction

This chapter and the next focus on the volunteers' personalities, career values and lives and careers before volunteering. It marks the beginning of the analysis of data, both quantitative and qualitative that was collected in the pre-departure phase.

It addresses the following objectives and hypotheses:

Objective 1. To contribute new empirical data about the backgrounds, motivations, personalities, values of overseas volunteer development workers and their attitudes to their careers and working lives.

Related hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a. The selected volunteers have a higher level of the personality factor of *agreeableness* than the general population.

Hypothesis 1b. The selected volunteers have a higher incidence of the career anchor of *service/dedication to a cause* than other career anchors.

Hypothesis 1c. The selected volunteers have a higher level of the personality factor of *openness* than the general population.

Hypothesis 1d. The selected volunteers have a lower level of the personality factor of *neuroticism* than the general population.

Hypothesis 1e. . The selected volunteers have a high incidence of the career anchor of *lifestyle* than other career anchors.

Hypothesis 1f. . The selected volunteers have a high incidence of the career anchor of *pure challenge* than other career anchors.

Objective 3. To contribute to career theory by adding data from and interpretation of the careers of, a specific group whose career transitions could

now be viewed in different ways given the dominance of the “new” career discourse; and to specifically investigate the degree of fit of VSA volunteer development workers to the protean career ideal.

Demographic data are presented in 6.2 and quantitative data related to the first objective and the hypotheses are presented in 6.3 and 6.4. These data are presented in the form of tables, statistical information with some discussion relating to the objective and hypotheses.

Section 6.5 examines qualitative data also related to the first and third objectives. These data are presented in tables, diagrammatically and through excerpts from volunteer transcripts.

The decision to present the qualitative data first was an arbitrary one. As noted in chapter five the purpose of using two main methodologies was for each to enhance or challenge the other. Neither is put in a position of supremacy.

6.2 Demographic data

The results obtained from the phase one questionnaires, instrument scores, and VSA assignment data were entered into a data file. Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package.

6.2.1 Gender and partner status

The demographic information pertaining to gender and partner status is presented in Table 12. Twenty-seven volunteers in the sample were female (56%). This is approximately the same proportion of male/ female participants that VSA has had for the past few years (VSA Annual Report 2001, 2002, 2003). 79% of those with partners had the partner accompanying them, either as the original assignee or as a partner who was also expecting to have some kind of voluntary work. 21% of those with partners left them in New Zealand.

Table 12**Gender and Partner Status of Volunteers (N=48)**

Gender	Frequency	%
Female	27	56
Male	21	44
Partner status		
Has partner	33	79
Has no partner	15	31
Accompanied by partner		
Partner accompanies	26	54
Partner stays in NZ	7	15

6.2.2 Age

As shown in Table 13, the ages of the sample are spread through the five age bands. 48% of the volunteers were 50 years of age or over. The mean age of volunteers from VSA statistics has been rising for the past few years and for the year 2000-2001 was 48.7 years

Table 13**Age of Volunteers (N=48)**

Age band	Frequency	%
20-29 years	4	8
30-39	9	19
40-49	12	25
50-59	19	40
60-69	4	8

6.2.3 Occupations of volunteers

Table 14 presents the occupations of the volunteers in the study. The job descriptions for each assignment provided by VSA were used to position the assignments in the New Zealand Department of Statistics occupational categories.

Most of the volunteers had education beyond secondary school whether at a tertiary education institute or some type of trade training but most had updated their education and skills on the job or by retraining.

However it is important to note that most of the assignments required the volunteer to educate and train counterparts or groups of local people in the skills of the occupation rather than requiring the volunteers to do the job themselves.

Table 14

Occupations of Volunteers (N=48)

Occupation (Standard Occupational Classification)	Frequency	%
Legislators, administrators and managers	12	25
Lawyer	2	
Businessperson	6	
H.R manager	3	
Finance manager	1	
Professionals	19	40
Pre-school teacher	2	
Primary teacher	4	
Secondary teacher	6	
Resource management advisor	1	
Accountant	1	
Computer consultant	1	
Structural engineer	1	
Doctor	1	
Economic policy advisor	2	
Technicians and associate professionals	12	25
Office administrator	4	
Desktop publisher	2	
Education administrator	1	
IH caregiver	1	
Journalist	1	
Physiotherapist	1	
Midwife	1	
Librarian	1	
Agricultural and fishery workers	2	4
Farmer	1	
Forestry manager	1	
Trades workers	3	6
Carpenter	1	
Plumber	1	
Metal worker	1	

6.2.4

Country and length of assignment time

Table 15 presents the regions, countries, numbers of the sample selected and length of assignment in these countries in 2001.

Table 15

Destination and Length of Time of Assignment (N=48)

Region	Frequency	%
Pacific	24	50
Asia	18	37.5
Africa	6	12.5
Countries		
Viet Nam	8	17
Solomon Islands	7	15
Vanuatu	6	12
Bouganville	5	10
Cambodia	5	10
Papa New Guinea	5	10
South Africa	5	10
Laos	3	6
Bhutan	2	4
Zimbabwe	1	2
Tokelau	1	2
Assignment length		
2 years	40	83
1 year	8	17

6.3. Descriptive and comparative statistics

The completed NEO PI-R (Form S) (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and Career Orientations Inventory (Schein, 1990) were scored and checked for any missing responses. There were three missing responses on the COI forms and the researcher followed up by telephone to obtain the missing data.

6.3.1 Personality and volunteers; The NEO PI-R

6.3.1.1 Means and standard deviation

The means, standard deviation for the NEO PI-R domains and sub-facets were computed and are presented in Table 16. This was done to evaluate whether the mean score obtained by the VSA volunteers on each personality domain and sub-facet were different from the reported means for the domains and sub-facets for the adult population in general (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The literature review revealed two New Zealand studies using the NEO PI-R, which are also compared in Table 15. These studies reported scores of New Zealand police recruits (Black, 2000) and New Zealand musicians (the domains only were available) (Langley, 1998).

There are some significant results for the study given that there has been no previous testing of VSA volunteers and those in the study have been selected by references and interview only. The mean score for the volunteers for the domain of *openness*, 125.1 (SD=20.2), (in all five facets) was greater than the US norm 110.6 (SD=17.3, $p < .01$) and the NZ police recruits 111.9 (SD=15.7, $p < .01$). These sample results suggest that the volunteers are more open to new experiences, have wide interests and are more imaginative than the average persons of the US norm and the New Zealand police recruits samples (Costa & McCrae, 1985). These results also suggest that the volunteers may have more differentiated emotional states, more willingness to try different activities or go to new places, are more open-minded and willing to consider new and perhaps unconventional ideas and lastly are more ready to re-examine social, political and religious values. These are attributes hoped for in VSA selection. Such results also suggest that volunteers are likely to experience vocational indecision and to change careers mid life or who have the likelihood of an open-minded approach to career development (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The latter interpretation of this finding has significance when compared to the attributes of a protean career orientation.

Table 16**NEO PI-R Comparisons of Means**

Mean and Standard Deviations Note N=47 because one volunteer chose not to do part A of the study

NEO PI-R Scale	NZ Volunteers N=47		VSA NEO PI-R US Norms N=1000		NZ Police N=290		NZ Musicians N=75	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Neuroticism N	76.2	21.8	79.1	21.2	74.8	18.4	84.1	17.7
Anxiety N1	13.7	4.8	14.3	5.3	14.0	4.2		
Angry hostility N2	11.1	4.8	12.4	4.6	10.6	3.9		
Depression N3	12.2	5.2	12.3	5.4	11.6	4.5		
Self-consciousness N4	14.1	4.9	14.3	4.4	14.5	4.1		
Impulsiveness N5	15.9	4.5	15.8	4.4	15.4	4.3		
Vulnerability N6	9.1	3.8	10.0	3.9	8.7	3.4		
Extraversion E	111.7	18.7	109.4	18.4	123.3	15.7	108.7	14.0
Warmth E1	23.2	3.8	22.9	4.0	23.8	3.4		
Gregariousness E2	16.8	4.3	16.5	4.8	19.4	4.2		
Assertiveness E3	16.9	5.3	15.8	4.7	17.4	4.4		
Activity E4	18.2	4.6	17.6	4.4	19.1	3.7		
Excitement seeking E5	15.9	4.2	16.4	4.9	20.6	4.1		
Positive emotions E6	21.6	4.8	20.2	4.5	22.7	4.1		
Openness O	125.1	20.2	110.6	17.3	111.9	15.7	122.1	19.1
Fantasy O1	18.9	4.9	16.6	4.9	16.9	4.3		
Aesthetics O2	19.8	5.4	17.6	5.3	15.8	5.7		
Feelings O3	22.4	4.1	20.3	4.0	21.7	3.7		
Actions O4	19.8	3.6	16.4	3.7	17.5	3.9		
Ideas O5	20.6	3.6	19.0	5.0	18.3	4.8		
Values O6	23.7	6.1	20.7	4.1	22.2	3.4		
Agreeableness A	129.9	13.9	124.3	15.8	124.0	14.6	120.7	13.6
Trust A1	22.0	3.4	21.3	4.2	20.1	3.9		
Straightforwardness A2	21.9	4.5	21.2	4.4	20.7	4.5		
Altruism A3	24.1	3.0	23.6	3.5	24.5	3.1		
Compliance A4	20.0	4.1	18.9	4.0	18.6	3.9		
Modesty A5	19.9	4.6	18.9	4.2	19.5	4.0		
Tender-mindedness A6	21.9	3.0	20.5	3.5	20.6	3.2		
Conscientiousness C	123.6	18.2	123.1	17.6	122.9	13.6	122.9	13.6
Competence C1	22.4	3.1	22.2	3.5	22.5	3.5		
Order C2	18.3	4.6	19.3	4.2	18.8	4.3		
Dutifulness C3	23.7	3.9	23.2	3.9	23.4	3.8		
Achievementstriving C4	19.6	3.5	19.5	4.0	20.7	4.1		
Self-discipline C5	21.4	4.5	21.8	4.3	21.6	4.3		
Deliberation C6	17.9	4.4	17.5	4.1	18.5	4.2		

The VSA mean for the domain of *agreeableness* 129.9 (SD=13.9) was also greater than the US norm group, 124.3 (SD=15.8, $p < .01$) and the NZ police recruits, 124.0 (SD=14.6, $p > .01$) and the NZ musician 120.7 (SD=13.6, $p > .01$) samples. These results suggest that volunteers are more compassionate, good-natured and eager to avoid conflict than reflected in the comparison sample groups (Costa & McCrae, 1985). The volunteer sample score for *altruism*, a facet in the domain of *agreeableness*, of 24.1 (SD=3.0), was greater than the US norm sample mean score 23.6 (SD=3.5, $p > .05$) and the volunteer sample score for *tendermindedness* 21.9 (SD= 3.0) was greater than the US norm sample, 20.6 (SD= 3.2, $p > .01$). These might be expected of a sample of volunteers involved in humanitarian/development work and tends to support the suggestion of an altruistic personality.

The VSA **mean** score for the domain of *neuroticism* 76.2 (SD= 21.8) was not significantly different from the US norm group (79.1).

6.3.1.2 Comparison of volunteers with the US norm sample

Costa and McCrae (1992) suggest the use of their profile forms in conjunction with their results. These forms help to summarise results in terms of **five levels**: very low, low, average, high and very high (as opposed to **mean scores**).

Although the percentages vary somewhat with the shape of the distributions, of all the individuals distributed the NEO PI-R, approximately 38% score in the average range ($T= 45-55$), 24% score both in the high range ($T= 56-65$) and in the low range ($T= 35-44$), and 7% both score in the very high range ($T= 66$ and higher) and in the very low range ($T= 34$ and lower). Costa and McCrae (1991 p. 13) suggest this allows for “more fine-grained distinction than simple dichotomies”.

The volunteers' scores were transposed on to the NEO PI-R profile forms which ascertained how they compared with US norms on each domain and facet. The profiles allowed the scores to be plotted on the range from very high to very low.

For the purpose of this small-scale study the ranges were combined into three categories: very high/high, average and low/very low. The results for the domains are shown in Table 17.

The results support Hypothesis 1c, 1a and 1d that the selected volunteers have the personality factors of *openness* and *agreeableness* to a higher level than the general population and the personality factor of *neuroticism* to a lower level.

As shown in Table 17, 79% of volunteers fell in the average or below range for the domains of *neuroticism* and *conscientiousness*, 81% fell in the average and above range for *agreeableness* and *extraversion*, (although the split between very high and high is different) and 87% fell in the average and above range for the domain of *openness*. These results also tend to agree with three of the four predictors of acceptance of overseas assignment suggested by Ones and Viswesvaran (1997): emotional stability, extraversion and openness to experience. The fact that VSA does not consider more than average conscientiousness (the fourth predictor) as a useful attribute (because of too high goal expectations) may account for the lower volunteer scores in this domain.

6.3.2 Career values and volunteers. The Career Orientations Inventory (COI)

The COI results reflect the dominant career anchor categories for the selected volunteers and give insight into the values or the main criteria by which they judge what they are doing in their working lives (Schein, 1985). Table 18 shows the frequency of the dominant career anchors of the volunteers and a comparison of these with various groups of managers. The managers are a collated group of: Sloan School Alumni Panel, middle and senior managers in US companies, strategy and management consultants, “High Potential” women managers and physician managers, (Schein, 1985).

Table 17**Comparison of Volunteers' NEO PI-R Scores with Adult Norm Sample****(Costa & McCrae, 1992)**

NEO PI-R Scale	Very High/high		Average		Low/ Very Low	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Neuroticism N	10	21	21	45	16	34
Anxiety N1	10	21	22	47	15	32
Angry hostility N2	10	21	19	41	18	38
Depression N3	10	21	24	51	13	28
Self-consciousness N4	12	25	21	45	14	30
Impulsiveness N5	19	40	15	32	13	28
Vulnerability N6	8	17	21	45	18	38
Extraversion E	16	34	22	47	9	19
Warmth E1	17	36	20	43	10	21
Gregariousness E2	16	34	16	34	15	32
Assertiveness E3	20	43	17	36	10	21
Activity E4	16	34	20	43	11	23
Excitement seeking E5	11	23	22	47	14	30
Positive emotions E6	18	38	21	45	8	17
Openness O	30	64	11	23	6	13
Fantasy O1	23	49	13	28	11	23
Aesthetics O2	20	44	15	32	11	24
Feelings O3	28	60	11	23	8	17
Actions O4	30	64	13	28	4	8
Ideas O5	24	52	12	26	10	22
Values O6	29	62	15	32	3	6
Agreeableness A	21	45	17	36	9	19
Trust A1	16	34	24	51	7	15
StraightforwardnessA2	20	43	16	34	11	23
Altruism A3	13	28	25	53	9	19
Compliance A4	19	40	19	40	9	19
Modesty A5	22	47	14	30	11	23
Tender-mindednessA6	23	49	14	30	10	21
Conscientiousness C	10	21	21	45	16	34
Competence C1	16	34	18	38	13	28
Order C2	11	23	18	38	19	40
Dutifulness C3	14	30	23	49	10	21
AchievementstrivingC4	12	26	22	47	13	28
Self-discipline C5	11	23	20	43	16	34
Deliberation C6	17	36	18	38	12	26

Note N=47 because one volunteer chose not to do part A of the study.

Table 18**Comparisons of Percentages of Frequency of Occurrence of Dominant Career Anchors (N=47)**

Group	Career Orientations Categories (percentages)							
	Technical/ Functional comp	General manag/ comp	Autonomy Ind.	Security /stab	Entre- preneurial creativity	Service/ Dedication to a cause	Pure chall	Life- style
Managers N=348	30.2	27	11.1	9.1	7.7	5.5	2.9	1.9
VSA Cohort	4.3	0	12.8	0	4.3	44.7	12.8	19.2

Note: Adapted from *Careers Anchors Trainer's Manual*, (p9) by Edgar H .Schein, 1985, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer.

Note N=47 because one volunteer chose not to do part A of the study.

Despite the fact that the US sample was studied prior to 1985 and this limits its use as a comparative sample, some interesting similarities and differences were observed. It is also important to note that Schein observed an increase in the *lifestyle* anchor, in general, since the 1970's and 1980's (Schein, 1996). There was similarity in responses to the anchor, *autonomy* while there was more variance in frequencies of all other anchors. Particularly of note and to be expected in a group of volunteers is the high frequency of *service/dedication to a cause*. Also of note are the high frequency of the anchors of pure *challenge* and *lifestyle* and perhaps more predictably the zero and low frequencies of *general managerial*, *security/stability* and *technical/functional* anchors.

The rank order correlation between the two sets of scores is $-.62$ indicating a high negative correlation suggesting managers and volunteers are opposites in terms of anchors or career values.

These results suggest that the volunteers value service/dedication to a cause, lifestyle and challenge more in their careers and technical/functional competence, general managerial competence and entrepreneurial creativity less than the US managerial samples. These results also support hypotheses 1b, 1e and 1f that the

volunteers would have a higher incidence of the career anchors of *service/dedication to a cause, lifestyle* and *pure challenge* than other career anchors.

6.4 Inferential statistics

6.4.1 Gender differences

Independent-samples t tests were conducted to evaluate whether there were significant gender differences in the volunteers' scores on the NEO PI-R dimensions and COI anchors. No significant gender differences were found for either the NEO PI-R domains and facets or the Career Orientation Inventories.

6.4.2 Age differences

Analyses of variance were conducted to evaluate the relationships between the demographic variable of age, personality and career anchors. No significant age differences were found in relation to personality factors or career anchors.

6.4.3 Relationships between personality and values

Hypotheses relating to relationships between the personality and value scores were not posited, however potential relationships were thought to add to the full picture of the research results.

Correlation coefficients were computed between the eight career anchors of the Career Orientation Inventory and the five dimensions and 30 sub-facets of the NEO PI-R to investigate any significant relationships among the variables. These were conducted using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

The correlation co-efficients are presented in Table 20 (significant to .001 and .05). Full tables can be found in Appendix 9.

Table 20 Significant Relationships between NEO PI-R and COI Results (N=47)

NEO Domains and Facets	COI Anchors							
	T/F	G/M	A/I	S/S	E/C	Serv	Chall	L/S
Neuroticism N								
Anxiety N1								
Angry hostility N2								
Depression N3								
Self-consciousness N4								
Impulsiveness N5								
Vulnerability N6								
Extraversion E								
Warmth E1								
Gregariousness E2								
Assertiveness E3								
Activity E4								
Excitement seeking E5								
Positive emotions E6								
Openness O								
Fantasy O1								
Aesthetics O2								
Feelings O3								
Actions O4								
Ideas O5								
Values O6								
Agreeableness A								
Trust A1								
Straightforwardness A2								
Altruism A3								
Compliance A4								
Modesty A5								
Tender-mindedness A6								
Conscientiousness C								
Competence C1								
Order C2								
Dutifulness C3								
Achievement/striving C4								
Self-discipline C5								
Deliberation C6								

**p<.01 (2 tailed) *p<.05 (2 tailed)

Apart from some of the intuitive and more expected correlations such as the positive relationship between the domain of *conscientiousness* and the particular facets of *self-discipline* and *achievement –striving*, and the anchor of *general/managerial*; the significant correlations for this study are those related to the anchor of *pure challenge*. There is a strong negative relationship between this anchor and the facet of *vulnerability*. This would also have been intuited since people who feel vulnerable do not usually seek out challenges. Also expected were the strong positive relationships between the anchor of *pure challenge* and the domain of *extraversion* (in particular the facets of *excitement –seeking* and *positive emotions*).

The strong negative relationship between the anchor of *security/stability* and the domain of *openness* (in particular with the facets of *fantasy, feelings* and *actions*) is worth noting in relationship to the broader picture of the need for openness to new experiences and the attributes of the protean career. The thought that there would be some correlation between the anchor of *service to a cause* and some of the facets related to altruism is less clearly validated. Costa and McCrae (1992) describe someone with high scores in the domain of *agreeableness* as being the essential “altruist” and there is a significant correlation with the anchor of *service to a cause* and *agreeableness* but not specifically in the facets of *altruism* and *tender-minded-ness*, which might have been expected. The facet in the domain of *agreeableness*, which does show a significant correlation, is *straightforwardness*. Defined as frankness, sincerity and ingenuousness this is perhaps a more necessary and pragmatic aspect of service for volunteers going to work in demanding conditions.

The weakness of the lack of validity studies and the lack of norm scores of the COI preclude any significant correlation findings but the dominance of particular career anchors and particular personality factors give some objective data to complement the qualitative.

6.5 Qualitative data

The quantitative data presented above validate the hypotheses posed in relation to personality and career anchors from a positivist viewpoint. This was the quantitative material relevant to the first objective which was to contribute new empirical data about the backgrounds, motivations, personalities and values of overseas development workers. The next section considers the qualitative data relating to the same objective. In addition, it addresses material relevant to objective three.

The stories told by the volunteers of their contained historical facts and were also full of expressions which described attitudes and feelings towards career and work. Coding of these allowed qualitative descriptions of attributes of character and career values to be analysed and coded into themes. Comparison of these qualitative descriptions with the quantitative data related to personality and career values will also be undertaken in the following section of this chapter. The NVivo programme was able to provide both diagrammatic and quantitative details of the coding.

6.5.1 Career stories

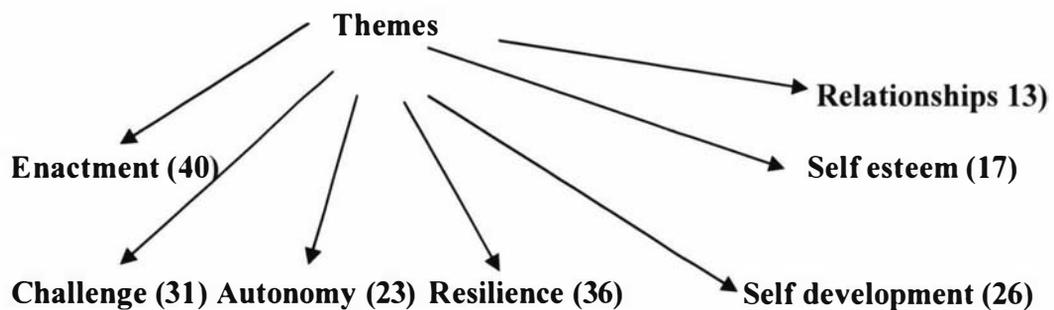
The volunteers were asked about their working lives since they left school and their responses were analysed for themes. All but one volunteer had had various employers and many had changed career direction. Some had been made redundant, some had had businesses collapse due to economic or environmental conditions and others had changed career direction after relationships had ended. The one volunteer, who had been employed with the same company for 35 years and had worked overseas for the company in a developing country, had then retired and bought and was running an orchard when he decided to volunteer. The volunteers appeared to have careers without organisational boundaries and they appeared to have many of the attributes of a protean career orientation in

that they were self reliant, proactive, chose their careers according to their own values and wishes in life, were open to new experiences and were self confident in wanting to have challenges in their careers. As they told their career/life story they often reflected and connected the past with their anticipated assignment and the researcher became a witness of this re-evaluation (Randall, 1995) and reconstruction of the past as discussed in chapter five, section 4.3.1.6 (Giddens, 2000).

The themes which emerged from the volunteers' narratives, shown in Figure 2, also reflect some of the quantitative results and these aspects will be discussed as the themes are more fully analysed in the following sections.

Figure 2

Career Story Themes



When the coding is presented in relation to the number of transcripts in which the theme appears and then the number of times in general, a sense of the importance of the theme for the volunteers is identified, as shown in Table 21.

The following sections analyse the themes in order of apparent importance to the volunteers as shown in Table 21. As each theme is discussed it appears in bold type.

Table 21

Numbers in Final Coding Template, Career Stories

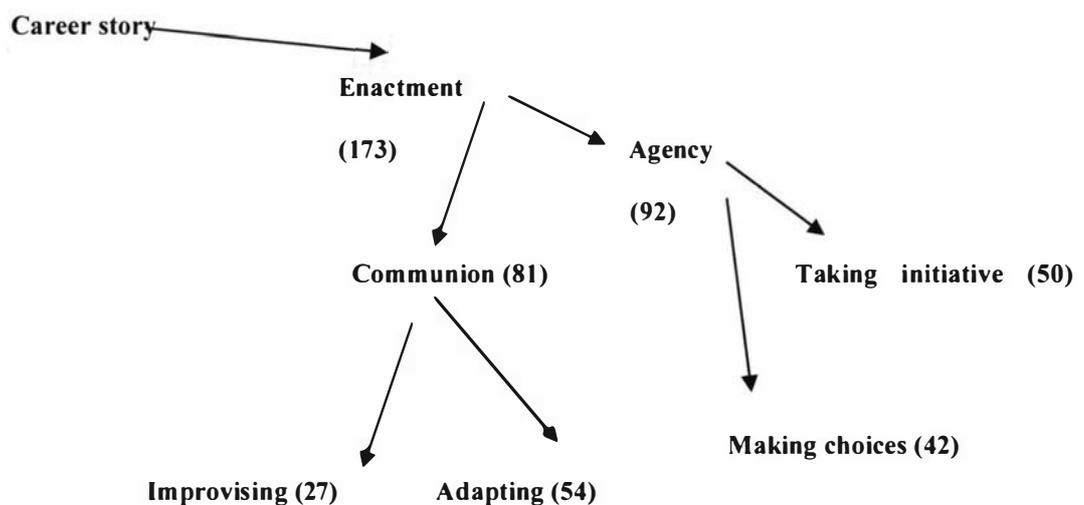
Theme/ story/character	Career	No. and percentage of transcripts	No.of passages
Enactment of career	40	95%	173
Resilience	36	86%	86
Challenge	31	74%	109
Self development	26	62%	71
Autonomy	23	55%	52
Self esteem	17	41%	29
Relationships	13	31%	17

6.5.2 Enactment

The theme for enactment also has sub themes see Figure 3

Figure 3

Enactment



The theme of **enactment** (Weick, 1996) appears to be significant since forty of the forty-two transcripts (one hundred and seventy-three passages) had statements, which were coded into this theme. Enactment defined for this study

was people choosing how they live their careers or lives and their actions in pursuit of these choices (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999). For this coding to occur, the volunteers' stories contained incidents or attitudes which fitted the definition. As shown in Figure 3 this coded group was further and further split making the definition more specific. The description of enactment involves not only **agent-like control** but also **communion-like openness to co-operative learning**. Weick (1996) suggests that communion is about readiness and adaptability, and agency about initiative and adaptation. He notes that Marshall (1989) suggests that "enhancing communion with agency" can integrate both sets of values. Marshall's framework for understanding career behaviour combines ideas of both doing and being in careers and the volunteers' choice of agent-like openness to accept the challenges enhanced with their willingness to improvise and adapt seems to exemplify this. The high scores in the NEO PI-R domain of *openness*, the domain which suggests an individual who curious about their inner and outer worlds, who is willing to entertain novel ideas and unconventional values and who experiences both positive and negative emotions, relate well to this qualitative finding of openness to life and learning..

6.5.2.1 Agency, taking initiative

This theme was coded fifty times. It resonates with the protean element of "a willingness to seek out change and take action" and "engage the world to suit one's goals and needs" (Briscoe & Hall 2002). Again the NEO PI-R domain of *openness*, which was highly scored by the volunteers and in particular the facet of *openness to actions*, seems to invite comparison. Judge et al (1999) in their longitudinal study found *openness* was negatively correlated to conventional jobs and although some of the actual occupations of the volunteers were conventional to start most of them had chosen more unusual directions in which to follow them.

In the volunteer career stories this theme is exemplified by the banker, turned desk-top publisher who stated:

I have to look for something else, find other horizons. I wish to come to the end of my work life with the thought that I haven't got any "if onlys" sitting up in my head. I want to have had a fair bash at everything and I don't want to get to the end and think, "Oh... if only I'd..."

Or the farmer's wife who wanted to do more than be on the farm:

As a result of that I became interested in the water quality of the harbour etc. So I stood for the council and got in.

And the young accountant who was very clear when he said:

I have only really felt comfortable if I knew there is something new coming up ...and something different.

Briscoe and Hall (2002) also suggested that people with a protean orientation would be higher than average on the NEO PI-R domain of *openness* and this correlates well with this sample of volunteers scores which, as already noted, are high in this domain.

6.5.2.2 Agency, making choices

A second sub theme of agency is, **making choices**, which could also be thought of as "self reliance in making career plans and decisions", another descriptive element of a protean orientation (Briscoe and Hall, 2002). This theme was coded in forty-two passages and found in a variety of the volunteers' career stories such as the highly paid and sought after insurance underwriter who decided she wanted to do something different:

I have always been one of those people who have known what they want to be doing ...so I was determined when I got back to NZ, not to get back into insurance ...it was now or never.

Or the lawyer giving up a highly paid practice:

I have no regrets and feel I am in control of my choices all along the line rather than other people making the choices for me.

And the multi-talented psychologist who has had a career in moss collecting, gold-mining and now teacher training:

I want to get more travel in my life, go to more places, and learn more things. I am not going down the children line. People keep telling me I'll change my mind but I think I've been saying that for long enough.

Or the engineer who worked his way up through the railways:

They were choice moves. It put you on to a different area of work. Yes it was at a higher level of work. Then at the end of the day I was sort of managing the railway forklift fleet.

Many of the choices made were related to options which might be seen to fit the career anchor of *lifestyle* which in the COI was the second most common career value scored by the volunteers. People who have this as their main anchor are described as Schein as having a desire for flexibility to integrate various aspects or sides of their life with their career and who have their identity primarily rooted outside of their career (1996).

6.5.2.3 Communion improvising

When the theme of **communion** is analysed, the first sub-theme is improvising which has an element of flexibility and willingness to change to suit the moment synonymous with the protean career orientation. Twenty-seven passages were coded to this theme. Examples of volunteers who seemed to improvise are:

The banker who had studied languages at university

And they wanted someone who had languages, so I swapped and I did that for a year.

And the plumber who went sailing

Then cos there so many derelict houses in Lincolnshire I'd buy a derelict house and the plumbing would finance doing it up to pay all our debts then I got delivery jobs sailing I delivered a boat from Panama to Houston you got paid a dollar a mile.

6.5.2.4 Communion adaptability

Adaptability is described as openness to new experiences including learning. Hall in his discussion about protean career identity and attitudes (2002) suggests that adaptability is a metacompetency which allows many other competencies to be developed through learning, mentoring and further challenge in work experience. Fifty-four passages were coded to this theme.

The sub theme of **adaptability** in the study is also identified with continuing with learning, and many volunteers had been mature students such as:

The yachtswoman who had sailed round the world, mothered and had been a disability aid worker who said:

When we arrived in New Zealand, I said I wanted to study so after all those years I finally decided, I wanted to go and study.

And the professional rugby player, after his retirement, who studied forestry:

Always be gaining skills and getting better at what I do and being good at a range of things.

Or the artist who found it difficult to make a living out of making kites:

Then just out of the blue saw an evening class on book design. That just made everything fall into place. My design and typography interests but also with the actual physical job, a technical job using my skills.

And the now retired technical teacher:

I took a trade and I thought seeing I am me I am going to do the best I can at it and I worked myself up to be foreman. I learned how to drive a crane, to drive a truck, to weld to lay concrete blocks they taught you all those if you wanted to. A lot said no. Yes I took the chance and... yeh I feel I could get any job as a carpenter, not necessarily as a teacher. I am also an orchardist and I do engineering.

6.5.3 Resilience

The second most identified theme in the career stories, **resilience** of character was related to either career or personal set-backs. This theme appeared in thirty six transcripts and in eighty-six passages. The scores for the volunteer sample in the NEO domain of *neuroticism* tended to be average or below and in particular the sub-facets of *vulnerability* and *anxiety* and such results support the next identified theme, resilience. Individuals who score high in neuroticism evaluate their careers negatively and are likely to lack affect stability in their attitude to their careers (Siebert & Kraimer, 2001).

Examples of volunteers' resilience were the banker who explained:

I did have a patch of unemployment for 6 months which was quite depressing but I was living with a good bunch of people but I had friends.

The plumber/round the world yachtsman:

And I got a job building a trimaran that was like a dream come true. So when we ran out of money we just looked harder.

Farmer who sold his farm in tough times:

Yeh. Anything: taxi driving, bus driving.. That sort of thing, yeh just to get an opening.

The railway engineer on being made redundant:

Yes I just walked out, thank you, where's my cheque? I'm gone very quickly. I just said to myself, "I'm going to have a job I'm not going to be sitting around I'm going to have a job".

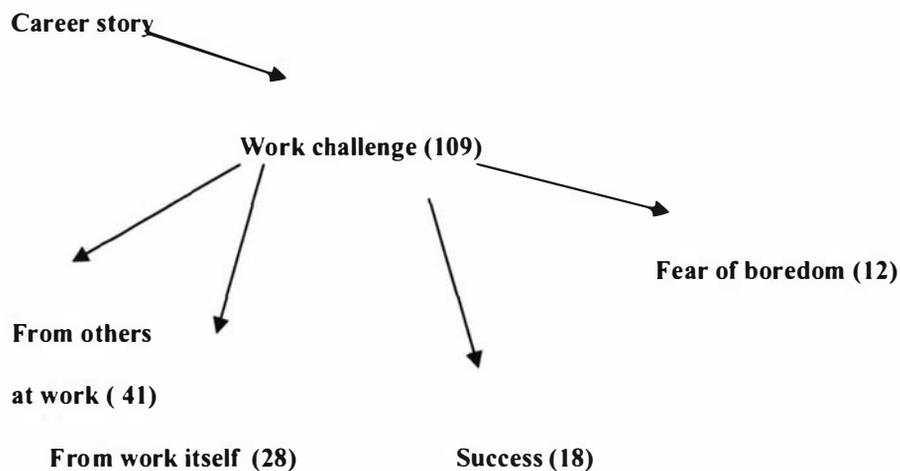
The consultant engineer:

And then I had a relationship fall over and the world crashed again for that part of it anyway and I started working for myself just doing odds and sods and bits and pieces ...I found that quite pleasing and I found the time aspect of it...I was in control of myself, and I guess that's what's led to me where I am now. So I'm still doing that, I can please myself.

6.5.4 Work challenge

Figure 4

Career Story, work challenge



Another other significant theme in the career stories, **work challenge** in their work environment was found in thirty-one of the volunteers' stories and in one hundred and nine passages. Figure 4 shows the theme of work challenge. The challenges could come from others at work (41):

I have tried retirement twice before but it is not successful with me. I need the challenge. I need stimulation from other people (60 year old art teacher).

I did some teacher-aiding so then they gave me this group of very slow learners and said teach them! And no-one had any time to do much with them and so that was a lot of work and it was such hard work and good learning (a mid life change disability worker).

So I got a job as a home support carer with two clients, one was for an agency and one was a blind hearing impaired Vietnamese refugee lady who had no English, yeh... it was a challenge (orchardist now ESOL teacher)

Some volunteers saw the challenge came from the work itself (28):

When I got married the section had just been bulldozed so it was all that stuff like fences driveways and extensions. Did the design work myself. So I really sort of found what I really enjoyed doing apart from looking for part time jobs that would support the family. I found something that I wanted to do that was more fulfilling for me, (engineer).

And then after I did that I got attracted to this job at the volunteer centre, the ad said, "Do you want to make the world a better place?" I wanted to make a difference, and they were selling a new programme that was corporate. Corporate volunteering, (journalist).

About tropical medicine, there is a technical aspect I like, I enjoy, and I like the sort of concept of beating the bugs so to speak and understanding the bugs and viruses and bacteria and the malaria and that kind of thing, (doctor).

For some the challenge was about being the first or successful (18):

They were short of people to stand for the local government and I was 24 and I thought "Why not?" And the third term I became county chair. I was the first woman county chair in New Zealand (local government politician/mathematics teacher).

We were very successful. All citrus and we won the cup for the most citrus per hectare for 3 years in a row. We built up a contracting business as well, (orchardist /technical trainer).

And for others the risk of boredom set a new challenge (12):

I was there for four years and I came back and I it just wasn't the same coming back from a European post and I had a fantastic experience and a fantastic lifestyle, and my job back in Wellington wasn't very challenging anymore, (private secretary).

I have never worked a routine job since way back. And it was time for a change. You can get stale in a job, (physiotherapist).

And I said it was time I did something different. So I left and set up my own little consultancy and we decided to build the house on the farm, to learn something about the front end of farming, and it was a 450 acres farm and we learnt a lot, (economic advisor).

The theme of challenge in the career stories has synergy with both the career anchor of *pure challenge*, which was the third most common anchor of the volunteers. Such a perceived need for challenge is also seen as one of the components of "personal hardiness", a term used by Kobassa (1982) suggested by Briscoe and Hall as consistent with a protean career orientation (2002).

6.5.5 Self development

Not only did many of the volunteers continue with formal learning, many had times during their careers/lives when they took stock and reflected. This could even be seen as “communion” or “being” (referred to in 6.4.2.3.) This period of reflection to take stock frequently led them to **develop** further in their careers. This theme appeared seventy one times in twenty-six transcripts. Examples of comments, which illustrate this theme, are:

So, I decided that I needed to go away and live a little and learn a lot and maybe go back to it when I had explored life a bit more and learned about it (psychologist/teacher).

Yeh, I guess at some stage “getting off the bus” was really good. I don't actually need to prove myself ..it was good to take time out to really think about things (executive administrator).

I realised it was the best thing that could happen. It was the wrong place for me. I wasn't a corporate person. It made me sit back and think well I don't actually want the job. What am I doing? You know destroying my health so I thought this is not me but I had no idea just “what” was me at that stage (insurance underwriter).

These volunteers could also be described as having a protean orientation that “seeks to use career experience to learn and transform their identities” (Briscoe & Hall, 2002).

6.5.6 Autonomy

The volunteers frequently described their preferred or happiest work environment as one where they had freedom either physical or psychological; they were not “constrained by boundaries” These volunteers seem to be exhibiting, the fourth

most identified career anchor or value, *autonomy* defined by Schein (1995) as held by people who “have an over-riding need to do things in their own way, at their own pace and against their own standards.” This theme appeared in twenty-three transcripts in fifty-two passages. Comments which illustrate the theme of autonomy are:

So anyhow I moved on and travelled around the South Island and I loved it. I got to the West Coast and. I did seasonal type work there just whatever the environment offered (psychologist/teacher).

And I like a bit of freedom as I don't like being told what to do. I am looking for something that gives me more free time, more time doing my art, and more into learning media? (head teacher).

Two years working in a small collectible store, just the boss and me. That was really good, just me and the boss (tax consultant).

I became an evaluation manager so I was responsible for social research. So I did that for three years and then it was all the politicking got to me and it just took so much time and energy. Then I started my own business doing social research and evaluation (consultant researcher).

That was such a wonderful job because I was mobile! An itinerant teacher! (ESOL teacher).

6.5.7 Self Esteem

Volunteers tended to have a positive sense of self underpinning their ability to have an internal locus of control and strong self-efficacy, key factors in the protean career orientation which relies on a personal subjective definition of career success. Comment such as these (seventeen transcripts and twenty-nine passages) suggest quiet self-confidence and high self esteem:

And I was very good at that, an ace tester, (chemist).

I established three workshops in South Auckland. I believed in it, (worker with disabled people).

Being in the government I was seconded to the PM and was working for the PM. Yes, and I enjoyed it, (economic adviser).

Then I went into some activist work I was one of the original members of NFAC, raising the profile of the destruction of the native forests, (lawyer).

6.5.8 Relationships

This theme about the importance of good relationships with others at work did not appear as frequently, slightly over 25%, (thirteen transcripts and seventeen passages), but this seems to fit with the NEO profile, which suggested the volunteers were above average in *agreeableness* but average in *extraversion*. Judge et al's (1999) study suggested that high *agreeableness* scores in the NEO predicted gravitation to social jobs and they also suggest the likelihood of the need for high *agreeableness* for jobs which require co-operation and teamwork. As already noted, high *agreeableness* scores also suggest altruism and *service to a cause* was the highest scoring career anchor in the COI. Volunteer statements, which illustrate this theme:

The banker who:

Enjoyed being there and worked in a team.

The book binder/publisher:

I was doing interesting work on interesting projects with stimulating people and we have become good friends and that has been the successful aspects of this job.

The academic manager:

It was a job where people genuinely want to work with you and want to help you.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the research objective related to the personality profiles and career anchors of the volunteers. It has identified aspects of personality characteristics, which appear significant such as greater *openness* and *agreeableness* and less *neuroticism* together with career values such as *service/dedication to a cause*, *lifestyle*, *pure challenge* and *autonomy*. These quantifiable aspects of personality were also explored in the volunteer career stories giving “thicker descriptions” of these personality attributes and career values. The stories also added nuances and made more complicated such themes as enactment and challenge.

The nature of this qualitative data is the interpretation by individuals of their previous career. Both by the facts of their careers and the nature of their descriptions of them, the volunteers indicate in most of their comments a highly protean orientation.

Specifically, the volunteers’ stories suggest people who are confident, who choose to do what they want to do in their career/lives, who are resilient and aware of the need for self-development. They like to be challenged, have a certain amount of autonomy and also value relationships and they appear to exhibit qualities which show enactment and self direction.

The findings in this chapter add empirical quantitative and qualitative data relating to the personality characteristics and attributes of selected overseas volunteer development workers. Both sets of data suggest common personality traits and values imbuing openness, adaptability and a sense of understanding career which “encompasses their total life space” all of which appear to measure positively against those of a protean career orientation (Briscoe & Hall, 2002).

I decided against linking and presenting both quantitative and qualitative data for each volunteer. This could have been a useful comparison however, VSA and the volunteers in the study agreed to be involved with the occupation and destination to be the only means of identification. Disclosure of specific individual personality details and transcript excerpts, in the small community of VSA, without express permission of the volunteers, would have been unethical.

The next chapter will focus on the underlying motivations to volunteer and to expatriate and will build on the personality and career value profiles and the career stories.

Chapter Seven Results II: Motivation to do VSA

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter the detailed analyses of the volunteers' motivation to take up the offer of a VSA assignment are presented from the transcripts of the pre departure interviews. This chapter continues to address objective one:

Objective 1. To contribute new empirical data about the backgrounds, motivations, personalities, values of overseas volunteer development workers and their attitudes to their careers and working lives

The themes of motivation which analyses of the transcripts provided are presented in diagrammatic form, and numerical data, relating to the number of transcripts and number of times a reason was given, presented in tables. Age and gender comparisons are also shown in accompanying tables.

The chapter also continues to address objective 3:

Objective 3. To contribute to career theory by adding data from and interpretation of the careers of, a specific group whose career transitions could now be viewed in different ways given the dominance of the "new" career discourse; and to specifically investigate the degree of fit of VSA volunteer development workers to the protean career ideal.

7.2 The context of motivation and decision

The time and psychological process between choosing to apply, being accepted and choosing to go have not been considered in this study. The study starts at the point where the volunteers accept the offer to go on the assignment. However, asking the volunteers to describe their working life to the point of deciding to volunteer provided a rich context in terms of motivations for their decision to go.

When questioned in the pre departure interview about their motivation and decision to volunteer, most of the participants chose to describe their reasons in “narrative” rather than “paradigmatic” thought (Baumeister & Newman, 1994). Few offered reasons in abstract terms. This is consistent with other research into career transition/change (Richardson, 2002; Mallon & Cohen, 2001; Peltonen, 1998). It seemed important for them to put their decision into context by describing historical factors as well as more immediate ones, which led to their application to volunteer. The understanding of the use of narrative to clarify and consolidate thinking and identity is well documented in both organisational and individual career research and therapeutic milieu (Sarbin, 1986; Bruner, 1990; Savickas, 1993; Weick, 1995).

Indeed, as many of the volunteers stated they had enjoyed the interviews and felt “better” or “more clear” about the whole process of going. In this respect the process was very like the narrative approach I use as a career counsellor. I was again mindful of the potential blurred boundary between research and counselling and took care to stay in the role of researcher.

7.3 Multiple reasons to volunteer

Motivation for working overseas in a MNC (multinational company) or company context has until recently been linked to financial, management and organisational needs and not self directed motivation although individual interest in a new experience and internationalism has been noted (Osland, 1995; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Motivations of self initiated expatriate workers, although not company driven, still appear to be linked to financial and career development albeit a non-organisational career (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). However the motivations of self-initiated expatriate academics appear to have much more in common with the volunteers in this study (Richardson, 2002).

In chapter three mention was made of research into motivation for volunteering and the need to be open to multiple reasons (Clary & Snyder, 1999). As their motives were uncovered any expectation that the volunteer development workers

in this study might have one over-riding motive such as a wish to be altruistic was clearly discounted.

As Figure 5 shows, the volunteers gave multiple reasons for volunteering to do a VSA assignment. Their responses showed similarity with the “multiple, complex and interdependent drivers” which Richardson noted regarding academics who chose to work overseas (2002). Some volunteers gave more than one reason, and some had subsidiary reasons, which will be explored as each of the motivations or themes is discussed. The patterns of themes can also be related to De Fillipi and Arthur’s model of career competencies, which focuses on issues of personal identity, values, meaning and purpose in life/career (1996). Some of these have already been identified in the career stories of the volunteers up to departure (chapter six).

When the key themes from the volunteers’ stories are compared with the themes of motivation to volunteer in this chapter, there are considerable overlaps or similarities such as the theme of **enactment**, which can be linked to that of the motivation themes of **right time** and **always wanted**. In the former, the volunteer is choosing the moment and taking initiative in applying for something seen by the world of careers and work as quite different and out of the ordinary and in the latter the volunteer is choosing to realise a dream.

The themes of **challenge** and **adventure** are repeated in the motivational themes with the expanded addition of a possible **alternative life** or **different culture**. The theme of search for **meaning** requires an ability and willingness to self reflect and this theme is consistent with the life/career history theme of **self development**. These themes of motivation resonate considerably with motivation themes of Richardson’s (2002) expatriate academics.

Figure 5

Reasons to Volunteer, “knowing why”

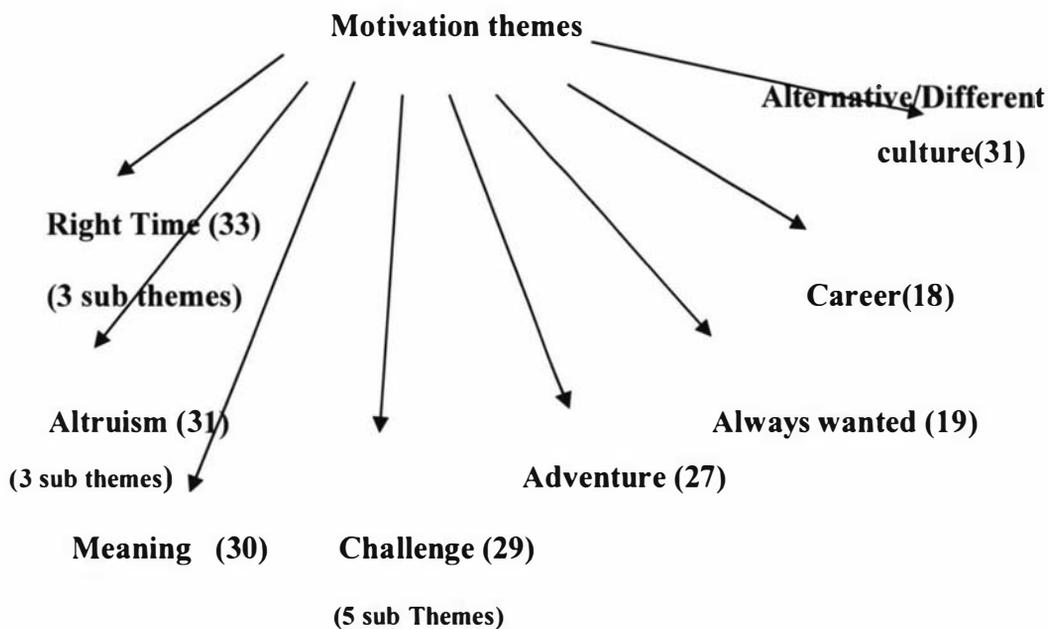


Table 21 also shows the reasons coded and quantified, which evolved in the analysis of transcripts (using the NVivo programme). The framework for these themes is based on career competencies or ways of “knowing why”, “knowing what” and “knowing whom” (Defillipi & Arthur, 1996) which was more fully described in chapter four. The results show the numbers of volunteers who referred to each theme or reason and the number of times in total the theme was mentioned in some way.

Table 21

Final Coding Template Motivation to go on a VSA Assignment

Career competencies	Definition/Explanation	No. and % of volunteers' transcripts		No. of times themes identified
Knowing why				
KNWY-TIM	Right Time	33	79%	63
KNWY-ALTR	Altruism	31	74%	67
KNWY-M	Search for meaning	30	72%	57
KNWY-CHA	Challenge	29	69%	76
KNWT-ALT	Alternative life/culture	31	74%	67
KNWT-ADV	Adventure	27	64%	52
KNWY-ALW	Always wanted to go	19	45%	24
KNWY-CAR	Career move	18	43%	35
Total				445
Knowing how				
KNWT-SK	Knowledge of skills	33	79%	52
KNWT-SF	Knowledge of self	24	57%	32
Total				84
Knowing whom				
KNOW-HIST	Someone in the past	31	74%	38
KNOW-FRI	Friend	17	40%	18
KNOW-ORG	VSA	15	36%	16
Total				72

7.4 Motivation themes

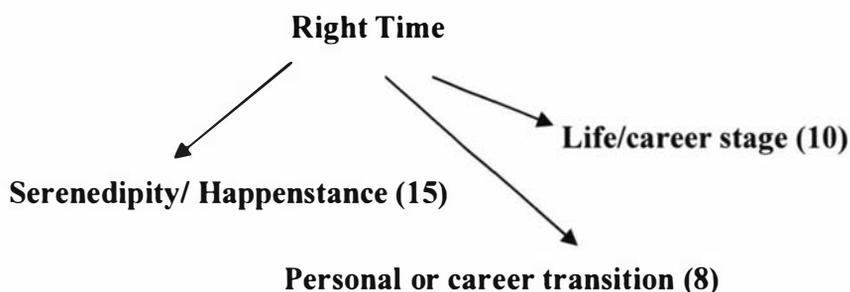
As each theme underlying the volunteers' motivation is discussed the definition used for coding is in bold.

7.4.1 Right Time

A significant number of volunteers, (thirty-three) made comments ascribing the decision to apply for VSA to timing, which led to the coding theme of **right time**. The definition for this theme was: **relevance of the time in life/career to go**. The frequency of this theme was initially surprising but as the interviews progressed it seemed that the theme was almost part of the process of motivation as much as a reason. It is also a significant aspect of Marshall's belief that timing is part of "communion" (1989). Many of the references to timing in this study are about the "right" time for doing the assignment but that "rightness" has various frames for the volunteers, (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Right Time



7.4.1.1 Serendipity or happenstance

The "right time" can seem to be an almost magical fit for the fifteen volunteers who voiced **serendipity or happenstance** as a motive for volunteering. It also may suggest a decision to answer the "call" in the departure phase for the hero's journey (Campbell, 1968). It could also be seen as volunteers exhibiting the skills to "recognise, create and use chance" described by Mitchell, Levin and Krumboltz (1999) related to Planned Happenstance. Volunteers described this immediacy of the timing:

And seeing this job come up, I said, pack your bags we are leaving! It mentioned all the software that I had used. They should have written my name on it (IT advisor).

And I saw it advertised and I saw it and thought, “Oh...that’s me” (structural engineer).

And it seemed to be in the realm of possibility but I never actually thought about it. And it just happened that this year everything fell into place. One co-incidence after another (mathematics teacher).

I just felt this is giving me another opportunity and the door doesn't open twice (ESOL teacher).

To take opportunities and be “ready” fits with the NEO domain of *openness*, which was the aspect of personality in which the volunteers had a high score.

7.4.1.2 Career or personal transition

For other volunteers the timing was “right” because they were in *a period of career or personal transition*. Although all the volunteers were actually in a transition phase as they left their job and prepared and moved to the VSA assignment, the eight coded with this theme were volunteers who mentioned themselves being aware of the transition before the assignment was known. Those who mentioned this transition were from all age ranges and occupations but with slightly more from men in their fifties. Examples of volunteers who talked about transition were:

The e-businessman in his late-fifties:

Well it's a window of opportunity in the sense that I am recently separated from my wife and she is part of the equation still. When I saw it, I went, “Oh Wow this looks like it's up my alley. I think I'll just go and do it and just see what the processes are like”. I wasn't in a career that the market might need attention.

The administrative career woman in her mid thirties who had recently decided that she did not want to work such long hours or spend so much time commuting:

I looked up the web site and then D and I were talking about what to do next and I think the web site had this position.

The fifty-five year old plumber who has spent most of his life plumbing and then sailing:

And usually we rent a house and I get my old job back and life goes on as normal but this time the plumber got too busy and had to employ two other plumbers so I was out of a job but before we knew the work was going to fall off we didn't rent a house this time we knew we were going to do something but we didn't know just what.

And the lawyer in his mid fifties divorced and with no dependent children:

I am by myself now and it almost like subconsciously without knowing what the options that might be available to me. I minimalised my assets so that I made myself prepared for something that I didn't know that was going to come. It was something that I was opening myself to make choices. That was the first thing I wanted to do. It was like I came to this cross roads because I had on one side a very lucrative job, safe, going down the same track that I had been doing, financially secure and making a complete alternative choice, completely the other way and it was that. Then I just said well that is what I want to do and allow a whole new world to open up.

This group of volunteers seem to be aware of a transition phase before a move of some kind and could be demonstrating the "preparation phase" of the transition cycle when the process of expectation and anticipation are paramount (Nicholson & West, 1988). However the small number who acknowledged being aware of any transition suggests it is more of an objective theoretical observation than actually experienced by volunteers. These volunteers seemed to address motivation or sense making by referring to retrospective events (Weick, 1995) which aligns well with the process of discussing motivations in Richardson's study (2002). The volunteers' openness to mobility may again be related to their

high scores in the personality domain of *openness* or to a developmental mid career mobility (Patchett & Sterns, 1984).

These last two motivational themes of **serendipity/happenstance** and **personal transition** are similar to motivational themes noted in Richardson's study of expatriate academics (2002). In that respect these findings add to the expatriate literature by providing further evidence of expatriation arising from unexpected opportunities. However as with the expatriate academics "individual action" underpins the accounts (Richardson, 2002) and this correlates with the volunteer work history theme of enactment.

7.4.1.3 Life/career stage

While some volunteers alluded more specifically to a transition, ten others referred to themselves being at a **specific stage in their lives or career** when they could choose to apply for VSA. Although there is considerable debate as to the specific progression of developmental stages that individuals move through due to the more recent changes in biological, environmental and social environments relating to career (Baltes & Graf, 1996), age and life stage were commented on by the volunteers. They still have relevance to understanding these volunteers' motivation. In the western world organisations are changing shape, many women are delaying having children and attitudes to dual career couples, women's careers and retirement ages all influence life span theories of career development. These influences have contributed to traditional career development stages and chronological life development not necessarily coinciding (Feldman, 2002).

The volunteers noted this timeliness or stage at various ages. Some, such as the young woman who did not yet have home or family commitments said:

And all these things just slotted into place and suddenly I thought, "Yeh I can go. Just the timing of the whole thing and I've basically got a two- year time slot now which

I'm using up. Before other commitments start hitting me so..." (education administrator).

More of the volunteers were middle-aged and, as noted above, this may not mean mid career but a time when one re-evaluates one's commitment to one's career (Feldman, 2002). More than one volunteer related the stage to having some freedom from family commitments:

The other thing is my children are both off my hands and my partner hasn't got any children (engineer).

And then I saw it in the newspaper... I've reached that stage of a change because my daughter's gone to uni and we took a year off and we went away last year and then she's off at uni and so I can do something different (midwife).

We've known about VSA for a long time. We first considered doing a VSA assignment round about the time when we first got married...in the late 60's ...didn't do anything about it at that stage took the other path...career and family so it is something we came back to (small businessman).

Others were at a stage which might be termed end of career, retirement or an end of paid work, but ways of thinking of retirement are changing (Feldman 2002). Depending on a variety of personality, social and economic factors which do not necessarily fit with chronological age, some of the volunteers were motivated because of their "retirement" state.

Then I looked at what to do at the end of my working life and I actually put it to my husband years ago that I'd love to go VSA (physiotherapist).

I have tried retirement twice before but it is not successful with me. I need the challenge (art teacher).

At this stage in my life I want to travel and see something of the world (small businessman).

Some of the volunteers identified the opportunity as having arisen at an appropriate time in their career to do VSA, such as the tutor in English as a Second Language going to train other teachers in Viet Nam:

I have seen it advertised in the paper, in the ODT and I've written away for information about it I think twice before and this time it was the right time in my career.

The resource management advisor assigned to Cambodia:

Partly because I was thinking of leaving my existing job anyway so it was time to do something different in my career.

7.4.2 Always wanted

The theme of **always wanted** sometimes appeared to overlap with **timing** but as these extracts show there was a quality of knowing a “**life’s dream**” which could be the mid life developmental creative energy discussed by Seligman (1994). The similarity of some of these extracts seems to emphasise the motive.

I remember being interested in it when I first heard about it and then when I first graduated from university, em I would have been 19, I looked into that as a possibility and I remember coming down here to see a friend and being told you don't have specific skills so that to me was... well I'll look at other options. So it has been tucked away there yes (teacher).

I suppose it is a thing I've known about for so long that I can't remember when I first did... I just knew about it when I was at university ... we used to talk about it ... I always want to work for VSA. I suppose it is a thing I've known about for so long that I can't remember when I first did (social researcher).

I had this dream of going for about nearly 30 years not explicitly working for VSA but either VSA or World Vision or something like that. It has been a long time dream (businessman).

When I was growing up we had occasional relations visit the family. In fact there is one man in particular, a cousin of my fathers, who worked as an accountant in various missionary set-ups in India and Africa and he every 18 months or whatever would come back to NZ and come and visit, and that sort of gave me this dream (desktop publisher).

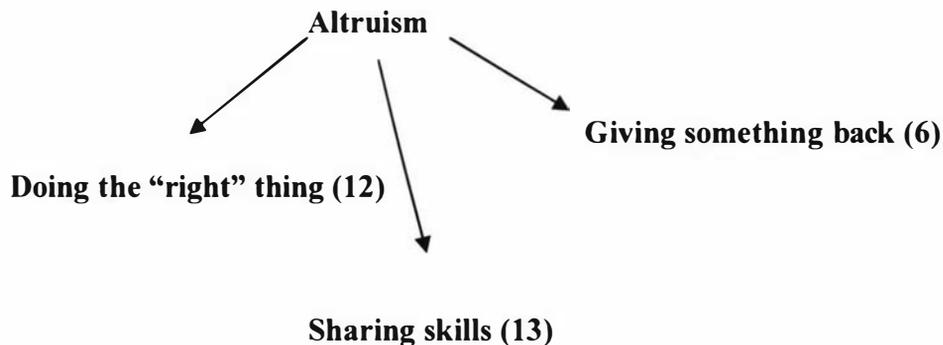
I was quite keen to get into voluntary sort of work right from when I was a medical student. I thought I might like to do it one day. It really was at the back of my mind (doctor).

7.4.3 Altruism

The second most coded motivation for deciding to go on an assignment was altruism (31).

Figure 7

Altruism



In relation to two years' voluntary work, the high number (31) who made comments relating to **altruism** (Table 21) might be expected. It also might be expected if using the metaphor or framework of the hero who is "generous and self-sacrificing for a worthy cause" (Campbell, 1968). In this study, the narrower Oxford dictionary definition was used to code the theme: **an unselfish wish or concern to help others less fortunate in the world**. In terms of Pearce's (1993) definitions of altruism and pro-social behaviour described in chapter three, the fact that most were going to spend two years on assignment and all were working for a monetary allowance which was the equivalent of a local wage, suggested

the necessary “self sacrifice” required for his definition of altruism. The high number coded in the theme also relates well to the volunteers’ highest scoring anchor in the Career Orientation Inventory, which was the anchor of *service/dedication to a cause*, and to the high scores in the domain of *agreeableness* in the NEO Personality Inventory defined as those who are altruistic, sympathetic and co-operative (Tables 16 and 17 in chapter six). Both these scores together with the volunteers’ comments would tend to support the studies mentioned in chapter three describing the phenomenon of altruistic personalities and their importance in the field of volunteering (Pearce, 1993).

However even using the narrow definition of altruism was not straightforward and as noted in Figure 7 there were differences in exactly how the volunteers described this reason for volunteering.

7.4.3.1 Doing something “right”

These twelve volunteers described their reasons for going as “**wanting to do something right**” which suggests a deeper moral or ethical reason for volunteering such as that based on virtue theory (IEP, 2001).

I always... well even when I was at school I had some kind of altruistic desire to do something. And you look back at it now and think how naïve and simple, but I think there was something in there because ...and I somehow knew this was a good thing and a right thing and it also seemed like a really interesting, fascinating thing to get into (IT specialist).

We have a conscience and we don't feel that we can save the world but I feel I don't have a choice in this. It is my duty to do what is right. And it is hard to find scope to do what is right, and this may not be but VSA is an organisation that has a good ethic; passing on skills instead of giving people stuff. I really like that and I think that if there is a way of helping people then this may be the model (small businessman).

These volunteers appeared to have thought quite deeply about the issues of development and what aid might mean. They had studied VSA's philosophy and found its ethical position regarding development and aid suited them. This finding implies a subjective understanding of volunteering. There is no weighing of pros and cons.

7.4.3.2 **Sharing skills**

The thirteen who specifically identified the importance of **skill sharing** also seemed to have considered the ethics of aid and were attracted by VSA's skill-sharing philosophy:

For myself, it will be knowing that they have been able to move themselves to where they want to be. If I can share skills that can empower them to build their waka and put it on a path then I will consider that a success (kindergarten teacher).

So I guess it is more knowing that you have made some sort of contribution, and there is someone there. If there is someone after me to do some skill sharing (financial advisor).

So for me if I have done something that will enable the people that I am working with to use the skills that I have been demonstrating and to carry that on that will be a success (educational administrator).

These comments could be seen as enabling others to extend their "personal capital" by sharing and teaching. However they could also be seen as volunteer's benefiting with some kind of "reward" for their efforts, much more akin to the behaviourist approach to volunteering.

7.4.3.3 Giving something back

This edging to a behaviourist approach is also seen with a smaller group (six) who had a profound belief about **giving something back to people** in a less tangible way than skill sharing, while possibly receiving something in return:

Also giving something back. It is my choice and it is not for money and I think it will give something back to me and I'll give something to them (engineer).

And in a way I think you invent your own philosophies or reasons for being if you don't have another one and I do sort of think well you go through life accumulating stuff and get rich and all this kind of stuff or what would drive me more is ...I would like to have made an impact on other people in a good way (IT specialist).

7.4.4 A search for meaning or purpose

The range of expressions, which were coded to the theme **meaning**, were ones, which entailed a **sense or significance of purpose**, or a **deeper, meaning in life**. In the metaphor of the hero's journey these comments could be construed as the expectation of "transformation" (Campbell, 1968; Osland 1990, 1995), or communion as part of enactment (Weick, 1996). Richardson's expatriate academics were looking for "life change" which they later describe as "transformational". Volunteers in the study had few illusions and many thought that this might be a significant experience for them, one that they were seeking out. Individuals willing to take such an opportunity could be seen positively as living out a protean career involving self reflection, being driven by inner values and being open to transformation or they could be seen as restless individuals high in the personality trait of *openness* who find it difficult to accept their lot in life. Many of Richardson's academics were choosing to expatriate because of boredom or a desire for escape (2002) and some of the volunteers' transcripts did were similar:

And N, our town ...is a wonderful, pleasant, safe really nice place to live...but there has to be more to life than that (IT specialist).

At the moment I am working for clients, to make them more money and there is nothing that really draws me. I don't really get a huge amount of enjoyment out of it, yeh, it is hard to explain, there has to be more (tax accountant).

Others have less negative implication but are similar to the Peace Corps descriptions of the “sanctioned withdrawal from conventional society in order to discover their true selves” (Starr, 1994). Men and women from across the occupations, and from older age bands, expressed this motive, for example in these extracts:

And then I was building a house and I just thought I've got to be doing something different ...there is something more to me than this (forester).

Yeh this assignment is more about exploring another world and not exploring the professional world (businessman).

This theme was appeared to be relating to deeper values about life and career and showed the depth of thinking and reflection that the volunteers had been willing to be involved in before applying for VSA.

7.4.5 Challenge

Those volunteers whose comments refer to a need or desire for **challenge** which includes various kinds of challenge suggest the very essence of the hero's journey where “challenge and transformation” are to be expected. Again there is a similarity with the academics in Richardson's (2002) study who voiced reasons of adventure, travel and challenge for their decisions to expatriate.

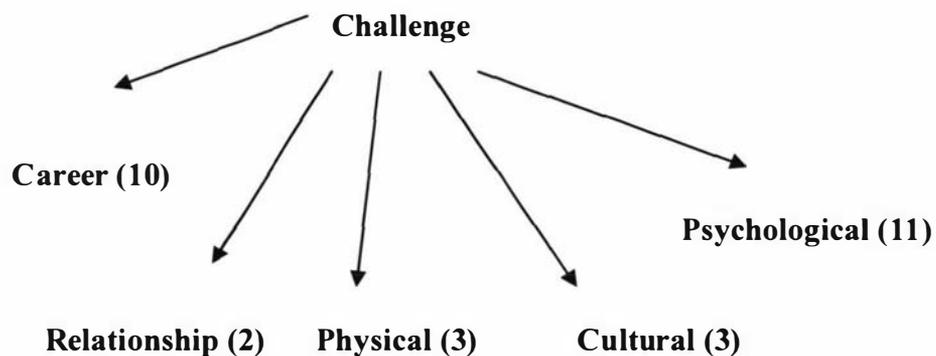
These reasons could be seen to be exhibiting the type of protean behaviour I identified in the volunteers' work or career histories, (described in chapter six). Their described motives also fit well with most of the NEO personality profiles which showed high *openness to actions, values, feelings and ideas* and COI career anchor preferences for *lifestyle, autonomy* and *pure challenge*.

When the volunteers mentioned their wish for challenge it was in various contexts and these were coded into appropriate sub-themes. These have been shown in Figure 8.

For the theme of **challenge** the definition used in this study was any expression which related to a **demanding or stimulating aspect** of the idea of the VSA assignment. The significantly high number of volunteers whose dominant career anchor was *pure challenge* also complements this theme.

Figure 8

Challenge themes



7.4.5.1 Psychological challenge

Eleven volunteers were identified as wanting a psychological or personal challenge. This theme is related but differs slightly from the **meaning** theme. This theme notes volunteers who talked specifically about the challenge of the assignment for them psychologically rather looking for existential or deeper meanings for themselves.

Comments such as these often mentioned the feelings that went with the challenge, both fear and excitement, which could be described as the internal call for the hero's adventure and the willingness to be engaged in communion:

I am doing this for me...em...because I need to re-affirm, I need to push myself a little bit over the edge and see what happens (banker/desktop publisher).

It is like a sky dive...there is no coming back...that is the scary and exciting parts together (educational administrator).

I think it is going to be quite hardit is going to be quite lonely you know... sometimes you might wonder why you ever decide to go in the first place (businessman).

The other part of it is to have some challenge and personal growth. Will I be the same? (financial advisor).

You know people talk about the stream or river of life and I thought I am one of these ...we are all like Pooh sticks...and we are all going down the river of life and I have got in one of these wee eddies at the side and I am going round and round and I can't get out... but we all go down the gurgler at the end ...and ... I don't want to be at the end of my life and be sitting there thinking. Oh I wish I had done (IT specialist).

7.4.5.2 Career challenge

For ten volunteers the challenge was related to career, such as the mechanic off to the Highlands of New Guinea:

I suppose I'm at a time where I am getting a little bit sick of what I am doing in my job here and would just like a challenge....to do it differently

The chemist/brewery manager/orchardist heading to the Solomon Islands to help set up a small business:

We'd been on the orchard for nearly 20 years and then," what next?" the opportunity of doing something outside the square was there, and VSA was it... outside the square.

The art teacher going to lecture in a Tanzanian polytechnic:

I knew that my contract job here was coming to an end .I sort of felt that for some time. It is now all sort of going very nicely thank you and yeh, there is no challenge left. And what topped it all off was my husband was talking about a little two bed roomed flat in L and settling down for retirement.

The primary school teacher going to a remote island in the Pacific Ocean:

Then the actual VSA didn't come into mind until at the beginning of the year realising that I had a job I could do, in a really nice school, lovely kids in a very predictable community and conventional and the challenge of my job had gone for me.

7.4.5.3 Relationship Challenge

Although it was not their major reason for going two volunteers saw it as a challenge for their relationship because of the separation for those whose partner was not going or because of the closeness of working together in a different culture.

Well to come out of it healthy and happy that's...the two of us together yea and still enjoying each other's company.

If G and I are still together that will be a big success.

7.4.5.4 Physical challenge

For three volunteers the challenge was a physical one:

There is also that challenge of doing without. And it will be a challenge for us to see if we can still fit in that old fashioned life... If we can hack it. And if we can prove ourselves we can live without electricity, you would walk away with a sense of achievement (disability worker).

7.4.5.5 Cultural challenge

And for three others the challenge was cultural or interactional:

Yeh, just personally challenging myself by being in a different environment (accountant).

Going there by myself and meeting new people. If I can deal with it all I definitely will feel successful. To have to initiate contact with people will be out of my comfort zone but I will be a lot better for it (teacher).

VSA said I'm going to be the only white face there (businessman Solomons).

7.4.6 Adventure

For the theme of adventure, **the definition** was any comment which expressed **adventure, a sense of new horizons which involved travel into the unknown..** Just as Osland's (1990; 1995) businessmen and Richardson's (2002) academics saw their expatriation as an adventure, twenty seven volunteers spoke of their VSA assignment as an adventure and they wanted to have. They could be easily be envisioned as the hero setting off on the journey:

I was just reading about adventurers and there is really nowhere left on earth that you can go where no-one else has been. So this is the next best thing, (mechanic).

When my parents had missionaries staying in the house always there was somebody from Africa and even as a little child I would prick up my ears and I was brought up on Jungle Doctor's stories full of adventure, like this! (art teacher).

I was saying I couldn't believe I'm off to the Himalayas... I've always wanted to go and when I was only really little and I remember being fascinated by them when we studied Edmund Hillary when I was little and I remember thinking, "Wow!" And so I've always wanted to go there. I have been there but it is so magnificently amazing, the fact I'm going to live there just blows me away (engineer).

Some of the volunteers with partners talked about the adventure being done together:

Travelling, new languages, the learning, also it is a huge adventure it is an adventure that we do together.

An older volunteer noted:

Yes I'm not quite ready to sit in my rocking chair so it is still an adventure.

The desire for challenge or adventure was mentioned one hundred and twenty-eight times in forty-two transcripts as a motivation to volunteer overseas compared to the sixty-seven times altruism was mentioned. That finding seems important because it signals the going overseas or expatriation as a desired challenge or adventure is as much or even more significant a motivation as the volunteering nature of the assignment. The motivation of challenge/adventure resonates with other expatriate literature (Richardson, 2002; Black et al., 1992; Osland, 1990, 1995). Understanding challenge/adventure in this way aligns with Campbell's (1968; 1988) definition of an adventure as an opportunity to do something outside the "normal" range of experiences. Hence it seems to demand a broader understanding of adventure outside the context of myth. Specifically it suggests that the opportunity for adventure is not restricted to mythical heroes. The volunteers in this study believed they could enjoy challenge and adventure by choosing to do expatriate in the manner of volunteer overseas development workers.

7.4.7 Different culture or way of life

Also related to the theme of adventure were the thirty-one volunteers who talked about their desire to live in a different culture or to experience an alternative way of life or have a different type of adventure or challenge:

S'pose one of the early influences was when I was 12, um just finished standard 4 and in the Christmas holidays the whole family went to Tonga because my father is a plumber and um he and some friends of his were doing some work over there and so rather than leave us all behind with a baby sitter they took all of us, and so we stayed in a house there for about 6 weeks I think it was seeing a completely different culture and I thought wow that's quite neat (environmental officer).

The chance to experience this sort of immersion in a society that is so different from our own (businessman).

When you holiday in a country you really don't find out how they live properly (mechanic).

7.4.8 Career move

The theme of **career move** raises the question of the researcher's definition of career. Although the definition I chose to use for this study (in chapter three) was more all encompassing than paid work, the volunteers own definition appeared to be related to paid work. As it was important to be true to the scripts, for purpose of this theme I used the definition, **related to a career move in paid work**. Some of these career moves are specifically related to volunteers moving into paid careers in development or overseas experience which they see as benefiting their subsequent careers. These eighteen volunteers were not specifically looking for a career challenge but for useful experience. This reflection and sense of the importance of new learning can be interpreted as is indicative of a protean career orientation. The volunteers also had a sense of confidence and personal directions. These are pragmatic motives which appear behaviourist:

And I think it is a really good stepping stone to lots of places I'd quite like to work in, and they need the experience of working in a developing country (lawyer).

Well my goal really is to move out of education admin and what I'm looking for is experience... VSA can provide that (educational administrator).

And gives me some opportunity to really experience good clinical medicine in a third world setting (doctor).

I am really interested in development issues (kindergarten educator).
 You couldn't get into that type of job here ...so easily (tax accountant).

I mean doing this VSA might lead into doing some other work (businessman).

It is a continuation of what I have been doing but a new chapter in the way I am
 doing it (lawyer).

Although numbers are small it is of interest to note that the majority of volunteers who chose this as a reason for volunteering were in the age groups 20-50.

7.5 Age and gender relationships to motivation

Statistically the analyses of the NEO PR and COI results showed no significant differences in age or gender results in personality profiles and career anchors. However the qualitative aspect of this study using interviews allows much greater nuances to be identified. The NVivo programme used in the analysis of interview transcripts allowed much greater detail of analysis related to gender and age group. Table 22 shows the number of volunteers in each age band and gender group whose stories related to the themes of motivation described in this chapter.

Table 22

Age Relationships to Motivation

	Under 40 N=13	40-50 N=12	Over 50 N=23
Adventure	11	7	9
Alternative	10	6	11
Altruism	9	9	13
Always	7	6	6
Career	8	6	4
Challenge	11	8	6
Meaning	8	9	13
Right Time	9	8	12
Cultural	5	2	11

When this table is analysed regarding age groups, it appears that those volunteers under 40 are may be motivated more by **adventure, challenge and alternative**

lifestyle whereas those over 50 may be motivated more by **altruism, meaning** and **right time**. The group in their 40's are interestingly in the middle with motivation being seen more for **altruism, challenge** and **meaning**.

In spite of the debatable relevance of life stage models discussed in chapter four these results are consistent with models such as those of Erikson (1963), Super (1992), Levinson (1986) and Levinson & Levinson, 1996). Those under 40 would fit a developmental stage of young adulthood where issues of career and personal identity as well as intimacy and relationships are faced. The motivation themes of **adventure, challenge** and **alternative lifestyle** might be seen as appropriate for this stage. Those over 50 would fit a different developmental stage, that of adulthood or middle adulthood, in which the concept of generativity could be seen as significant. **Altruism, meaning** and **right time** also appear to be appropriate for this group. Those in their 40s may be considered by some as in a stage of adulthood, hence the themes of **altruism** and **meaning** but according to Levinson this may well be a transition phase in which the theme of **challenge** is still totally appropriate.

On the whole volunteers in the 40-50 age ranges gave more weight (75%) to **altruism** for their motivation to do volunteer development work and this would seem to support Omoto et al's (2000) comments, mentioned in chapter four, that the volunteer role for older people at a particular stage of the "life course" leads to motivation for "societal reasons". Whereas younger people volunteer for interpersonal purposes which could be seen as the motivations coded as **adventure, challenge** and **career**. However the under 40 age group were coded for 5.92 categories per person, the middle age group for 5.08 and the older group for only 3.72 categories suggesting that they have a **diffuse** motivation and the over 50 group is more **focussed**.

The gender comparisons shown in Table 23, made without breaking the data into age bands (as this makes extremely small sample numbers) suggest differing emphases in motivation themes. Volunteer females are motivated more by the **right time** to go, looking for **meaning** and **challenge** of some kind, whereas volunteer males are motivated by **altruism, meaning** and **cultural difference**.

Table 23

Gender Relationships to Motivation

Themes	Female N=27	Male N=21
Adventure	15	12
Alternative	14	13
Altruism	16	15
Always	14	5
Career	12	7
Challenge	17	8
Meaning	18	13
Right Time	19	10
Cultural	6	12

7.6 Motivation “knowing whom”

De Fillippi and Arthur’s third way of knowing is **knowing whom** described as: abilities to make attachments make contact and build relationships with others in all aspects of career (1996). These competencies in “networking” result in obligations, feedback, reputation and sources of information, and at this stage of pre-assignment the human influences on their motivation were coded into the themes of **recent friend, historical contact** and **VSA itself as an organisation**.

Richardson (2002) suggests that the decision to expatriate is closely linked to the social context in which it takes place and she cites the importance of family and past social relationships. The “knowing whom” motivations could be construed in this context and while findings in this study did not suggest immediate family as significant, the volunteers perceived friends, recent and former and the world of VSA itself as part of the social context which influenced their decision to volunteer overseas.

7.6.1 Recent friend:

A friend was in Bougainville last year so I guess I learned more about it from him

And then we met ...we went to Kiribati ..My sister and her husband were working there for UN and we stayed a month with them, and there were VSA people and we were drawn into their orbit.

Came across a wonderful colleague who had done some volunteering in Tanzania.

7.6.2 **Historical contact:**

I've known people that have done assignments and friends of friends for a numbers of years.

A number of years ago one of my best flat-mates went to Solomon Islands as a VSA volunteer.

7.6.3 **VSA itself**

I actually read an newspaper article and it just sort of stimulated some interested in VSA for me then I made enquiries and I got an application form and sent that information away and that was 1992 I think and then just over the period of years they had made offers of different roles and I sort of wasn't really ready for it.

VSA contacted C and said there is this job in the Solomons...are you interested in applying?

7.7 **Conclusion**

This chapter has continued with the presentation and analysis of the pre-departure interview data and has shown how the data address part of the first research objective related to why the volunteers choose to volunteer. The multiple reasons for choosing to volunteer have echoed a number of theoretical themes in the career theory, volunteer and expatriate literature.

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that volunteers in their motivation to take up a VSA assignment display attributes of a protean career orientation (Briscoe and Hall, 2002) described in chapter four. Their reasons for choosing to volunteer with VSA were both **values driven** and **self directed**. Three of the

most frequently stated motivations to embark on this career episode were related to volunteers' **values** such as **altruism** (74%) a search for **meaning** (72%) and an **alternative life/culture** (74%). The other most frequently stated reasons of **right time** (79%), **challenge** (69%), **adventure** (64%), **always wanted** (45%) and **career move** (43%) were influenced by self reflection and self direction, not by company decisions or requests.

Ten of the volunteers actually referred to the VSA assignment fitting a particular career or life stage such as before buying a house, the children having left home or getting more of a specific type of work experience before they could apply for a more responsible or technical position. Although only eight volunteers were aware of being in a transitional phase of their lives, most exhibited the some of the tasks, and strategies of Nicholson's *Preparation stage* of actually being in a transition from one place of work or being to another (1990). Few of the problems were mentioned. Perhaps because they had just completed their briefing session and lots of questions had been answered. The volunteers had helpful expectations, motives and feelings while they also had some realism and had done some self appraisal of their roles.

The use of a subjective approach to understanding volunteering provided evidence of multiple reasons to volunteer which were not totally rational and objective. Some of the volunteers who talked of the **right time** (79%) suggested it was a *process* of motivation as much as an actual reason. and this could be interpreted as rational and pragmatic. However, others who mentioned **right time** talked of spontaneity in which conscious pragmatism is not evident and suggests further evidence of a personality type who volunteers.

When the metaphor of the hero's journey is applied, the process appeared very similar to expatriate managers and academics (Osland 1990; 1995; Richardson, 2002). There was similar sense of answering the "call to adventure" as the opportunity to volunteer became available. What is not addressed in the hero's metaphor is timing and although the opportunity may have been available previously, and in many cases it was, the volunteer said the timing was "not right". For VSA volunteers, VSA and its excellent briefing staff who include

local cultural mentors acted as “supernatural aid” and this gave the assistance as suggested in the metaphor.

The findings in chapter six which reported themes of career stories suggested that enactment was a dominant theme. This was not coded a motivational theme in this chapter however it was defined for this study, in chapter six) as people **choosing how they live their careers or lives and their actions in pursuit of these choices** (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999)

and the findings in this chapter suggest that the motivations of the volunteers suggest self direction and clear choices about how they are going to live and work for in their next career episode.

At this pre departure stage, volunteers were asked about the career directions anticipated on completion and these findings will be presented in chapter nine. There they will also be compared with volunteers’ comments related to this question at the mid assignment and post assignment points.

The next chapter addresses the experience of volunteering for VSA by exploring the answers to questions put to volunteers by email while they were on their assignments.

Chapter Eight Results III: Experiences of VSA

8.1 Introduction

As noted in chapter three, despite an extensive body of literature regarding expatriate assignments there is little description of individual experiences and little on the expatriate who does not go overseas as part of a company project. Suutari's study of independent "global managers" (2002) and Richardson's work with expatriate academics (2002) go some way to filling that gap. However most studies including Suutari's are retrospective and rely on the expatriates' post-experience narrative alone. Some of the academics studied by Richardson were still overseas when interviewed so her study is most similar to this one.

This chapter focuses on the volunteers' accounts of their experience overseas while they are still experiencing it. Although the writing of the replies, to some degree involved reflection and evaluation the participants were still living in the situations and the comments have a focus of sense-making which is different to that of the more fully retrospective sense-making of chapter nine (Weick, 1995).

Some of the replies will be compared with the motivations which the participants described in the pre departure phase. The chapter attends, in some measure, to the second research objective.

Objective 2. To explore the nature of individuals' experiences of volunteering overseas as a previously unresearched theme: in particular, salient experiences, positive and negative features, self-perceived adjustment and effects perceived retrospectively.

The chapter also continues to address objective 3:

Objective 3. To contribute to career theory by adding data from and interpretation of the careers of, a specific group whose career transitions could now be viewed in different ways given the dominance of the "new" career

discourse; and to specifically investigate the degree of fit of VSA volunteer development workers to the protean career ideal.

As described in chapter five volunteers were sent a questionnaire midway through their assignment (Appendix 6). The questionnaire, sent by email to all but four volunteers and by airmail to the others, allowed the volunteers to answer nine questions in a narrative format. These replies were then imported into the NVivo programme. These narratives were analysed and the final resulting themes or codes are presented in a similar form to those in chapters six and seven. The data from the two questions in the questionnaire, which are closed in format, will also be presented. The number of volunteers who answered the mid assignment questionnaire was 29 out of a potential 42 (69%). The decrease in sample numbers was explained in chapter five (5.7).

8.1.1 Mid questionnaire methodological issues

The questionnaire sent by email was answered in written format as opposed to the spoken format of the pre departure interview. This meant that some of the volunteers wrote short succinct answers, while others wrote at some length. There was less data than from the pre-departure interview but it was analysed using a similar coding process.

8.1.2 Adjustment and success

There is considerable literature on sojourner or expatriate adjustment as outcomes related to assignment success (Church, 1982, Mendenhall & Oudou, 1985), whereas Ones and Visvaran (1997) suggest that adjustment “is not an end in itself ...adjustment and adaptation are relevant to expatriate job performance, probably only as determinants” (p. 80). If this latter position is taken, then answers given to the mid assignment questionnaire give a useful insight into adjustment to culture and task. This chapter will look at these answers and will present themes found. The hero’s adventure metaphor also addresses adjustment for expatriates (Osland, 1990; 1995; Richardson, 2002). The metaphoric “crossing of the first threshold, the belly of the whale” may be identified as the initial discomfort and shock of settling in to a new job in a new country. The “road of trials” follows when the

challenges of the assignment begin to be seen and experienced. Finally in this chapter the beginning, at half way through the assignment of the awareness of the metaphorical “ultimate boon” whatever that may mean to the individual volunteer. Adjustment is also addressed in the transition model (Nicholson & West, 1988). This stage is the volunteers’ assignment is the encounter stage when there is some confidence in coping but also shock, regret and the need for social support is apparent as is the freedom to explore the new.

This chapter will also report an assessment of the volunteers’ subjective estimate of assignment success at the mid way point (8.4). The subject of assignment success will be more fully discussed in chapter nine.

8.2 Experience at mid-assignment

The questions asked at this point in the assignment were intended to gauge how the volunteers were coping and how much their original motivations were being realised.

8.2.1 Question : How is your experience working out?

This first question was asked to find out how volunteers were experiencing their assignment in general and how they were experiencing living and working overseas. Nineteen of the replies had positive answers to this question (68%). Some of the replies were simple, using one word such as: well, very well, good or great! Others replied more fully with explanations, for example the structural engineer in Bhutan:

My experience of a volunteer so far has been incredible. I wasn't sure how much I could achieve...my hopes for my assignment set low. Almost immediately I felt I was effective, I was part of the team.

The art lecturer in Zimbabwe:

I have been very fortunate, because my assignment was tailor made for me, and I have fitted into the situation as if it was a comfortable shoe.

And the business manager in the Solomon Islands:

Very well. It has certainly shown me another culture and lifestyle that I had very little knowledge about.

Nine of the volunteers stated that the experience had been mixed. Some said it was difficult at the start but that it had improved, such as the educational administrator in Cambodia:

The first 6 months were really tough work-wise as there were no guidelines at all as to what was required and no feedback to help me ascertain whether what I was doing was what they wanted. I did a lot of sitting and watching and listening, which certainly paid off in the second 6 months. From talking to other volunteers I think this is normal but coming from a working environment where you get constant feedback and a job description, which at least gives you an idea of what you should do the first 6 months were certainly very challenging. Things started to click into place after 6 months and I think people started to relax a bit more around me, understand a bit better what VSA are all about and I started to make friendships. Personally my experiences have been nothing but good. I love living in T and enjoy all aspects of life here as a volunteer.

The office administrator in Vanuatu:

As the 'unassigned spouse' I had different challenges from my partner, in terms of developing an identity. But I soon did that, through various informal activities. I am now in the process of developing my own volunteer assignment, working to support a local arts group.

Others such as the shipping business manager in the Solomon Islands were ambivalent:

Living conditions are very basic, with no running water inside the house, no stove with oven, however we have a frig/freezer that makes life bearable. Food wise we have

plenty of local market vegetables and fruit, but supply of meat is restricted to frozen mince, sausages and chicken (some fresh chicken) but reasonably good supply of fresh fish. Transport out of the province is restricted, a very unreliable air service, an only alternative is a 20 to 25 hr voyage by ship.

The doctor in PNG:

Ok. But only Ok. P. M. is not an easy place to be a volunteer ...it is not a great place to not have much money in that there are not many cheap entertainments; food is expensive and poor quality. The job I do is fine and VSA's partner organization a well run, albeit small NGO. I guess that a proxy indicator of our experience is that we are considering leaving our assignments early although not so terrible as to want to leave VSA and our employers here in the lurch.

At least three volunteers described their experiences as a "roller coaster", in Viet Nam, South Africa and PNG:

It's like a roller coaster! Not in terms of living in another country, loneliness, culture change etc that's all fine. But work wise, it is actually highly stressful, and that is something I wasn't prepared for.

Good and bad with the good usually prevailing. I am writing this at a very frustrating time (of which there have been a few) but with the awareness that it is not always like this, and the expectation that it will improve soon.

It has quite drastic highs and lows.

There was only one fully negative response but when some of the volunteers who did not send a mid assignment response were asked about this at the end of assignment interview, two of them stated they were too stressed or too tired to reply, perhaps more in the transition state of "shock".

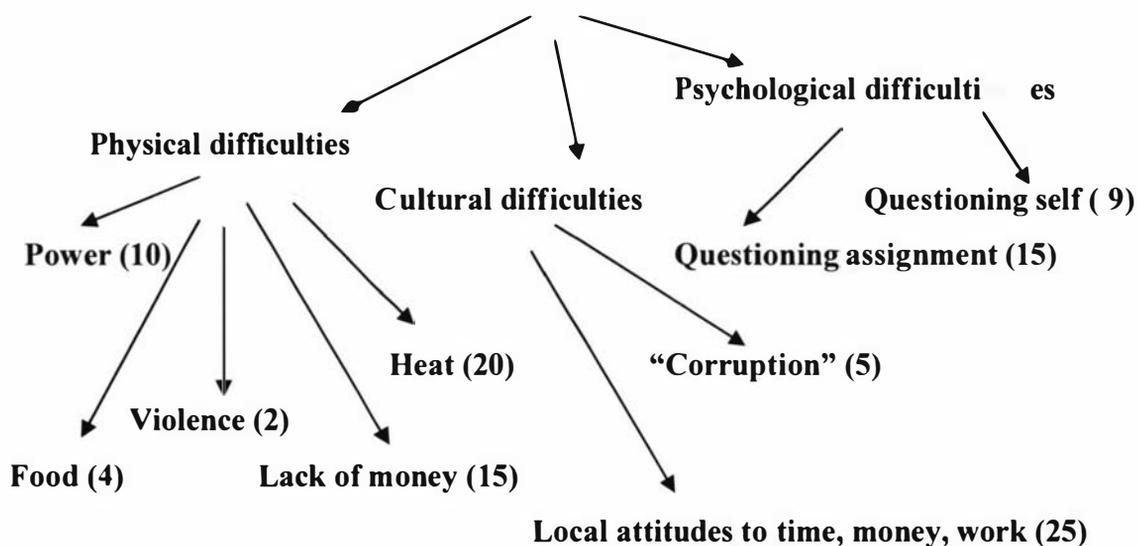
8.2.2 Question: What are the less good and good days like?

8.2.2.1 Less good days

This question gave the volunteers the opportunity to expand on their experiences and gave them “permission” to write about their negative experiences. All 29 of the volunteers completed the question related to less good days. Many of the descriptions of the less good days fitted well with metaphor of the “crossing of the first threshold” and the “road of trials” expected to be encountered in the hero’s journey as recounted by Osland’s (1990; 1995) and Richardson’s (2002) expatriate stories which echoed Campbell’s hero’s adventure (1988) (Figure 9). These stories illustrated the impact of being “thrown” into another culture as a major threshold to cross. This is the “encounter” stage of transition, which may be the most stressful, but as Nicholson and West note (1988) it may also be a time of excitement, optimism and discovery as described in the “good days”.

Figure 9

Themes of less good days at mid point



Volunteers’ “trials” included experiences of coping with **physical difficulties** such as heat, lack of power, food or money to do the task required, even violence. There were also descriptions of, **social** or **psychological difficulties** where cultural differences in relation to time, money, business and aid posed challenges for volunteers in all the countries and even triggered a questioning of their

usefulness as volunteers. This suggests a profound challenge to their values and to the essence of their VSA assignment. One such comment came from the educational administrator in Cambodia struggling with what she could achieve as she crossed the cultural threshold:

A bad day is filled with frustrations; lack of understanding and life here just seems a complete mystery. The power will fluctuate all day making the computer die every 5 minutes, a snake will take up residence in the toilet, all staff will have mysteriously disappeared, my translator is sick and despite trying I can't seem to achieve a damn thing all day or maybe all week. You feel tired and wonder just what you can hope to achieve in just 2 years.

The computer consultant in Vanuatu who, like many volunteers, couldn't help but compare his role with other, highly paid consultant aid workers:

Frustration at being "stood up" yet again by people who were meant to turn up for a meeting. Coming into work at the weekend with highly paid consultants who leave early and then being sent a bill by the government for the "free food" we were provided with! Wondering why I am wasting my time and not earning any money doing something that is not appreciated.

Even the structural engineer in Bhutan who was usually very positive had her trials:

A less good day involves landowners yelling at me for hours, not listening to anything I propose and worst is when they burst out crying and wail in another language ...or when you are standing with no money, all your belongings have been stolen and someone has just walked up and spat in your face.

And the business manager in the Solomon Islands with thirty-five years experience found the greatest trial was what the West calls "corrupt practices":

A typical day in the first six months when trying to sort two and a half years of accounts that had never been audited or accounted for, days full of unbelievable surprises of misappropriation of money, bad management, no accountability, no reporting, no budgets etc. and a less good day would be some problem relating to an historic debt that I should have been informed about suddenly becoming an issue

with payment required urgently, where to find the funds to pay for it...Discovering that a Director had misappropriated close to \$250,000 of company funds....

The idealistic young doctor also had some challenges in Papua New Guinea:

A bad day for me is to arrive at the clinic to find that the electricity has not been paid for and no fan. Patients are waiting crankily. I see upwards of 50 patients, have no break and get dehydrated. One of the nurses doesn't turn up for work and the other local doctor who works with us keeps on giving injections when none are indicated. The TB control nurse has found another 4 defaulting TB patients. If any time is left in the afternoon I get to go and see the local health bureaucrats who nod and say yes and steal all the money and drive around in the latest 4WD. Nothing has been done on our proposals for clinic maintenance and he has decided to close down another of the clinics that HOPE is involved in.

The local government business advisor in South Africa who was challenged much more than he anticipated:

Much harder work than I expected. I am doing the same work as I would have been doing in my toughest work assignments, but with the additional complications that the stakes are higher - you are constantly aware of the desperate plight of the poor, On a good day, it can be very rewarding; but on a bad day, very, very frustrating. How similar the managerial problems in the Municipality are to those in an NZ council 15 years ago; how they can be even more frustrating! And the extent of the difficulties of real work- and issue-related communication with my black colleagues: intonation, different use of words, and a different sense of logic.

And the story told of the volunteer in Zimbabwe:

Three days ago I was mugged by two men and robbed not 40 meters from my front door. Fortunately I am healing quickly, but the contents of my little bag included all three driving licenses which I use as ID, my truck keys, my house keys and my digital camera, Z\$20 thousand, and US\$10 which my husband had given to our guard for his driving licence, so that he could achieve his dream of driving a big truck!

These descriptions of difficulties of the volunteer overseas assignment suggest details not usually found in large scale retrospective surveys of volunteers (VSO; 1998; AVA, 1998) or of even of paid expatriate retrospective accounts (Osland,

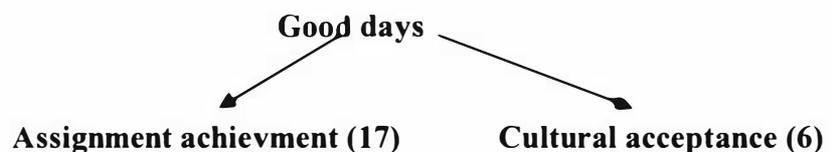
1990, 1995; Richardson, 2002). The email comments which accompanied the attached diaried response frequently stated that it took ages to get started but once they did it was “like a flood water”. This again reminded me of the power of the individual’s narrative or story in strengthening identity and self esteem especially when life was difficult (Randall, 1995; Giddens, 2000; Hutton & Giddens, 2000). Hence even the experiencing of the challenges became retrospective and the narrative helped make sense of them (Weick, 1995).

8.2.2.2 Good days

The narratives of the good days served the same purpose. The descriptions of good days could also be seen as the volunteer again enacting their career, becoming involved in communion. It could also be seen as the beginning phase of the metaphor of the “ultimate boon” of the hero when he/she discovers inner strengths and is “transformed”. Some of the motivations for volunteering were also being realised. The success narratives could be grouped into two main sub themes which are not mutually exclusive: **assignment achievement**, and **cultural acceptance** (Figure 10). When related back to the NEO-PR profiles of the volunteers in chapter six, the high scores in the domains of *openness* would suggest that the volunteers would be likely to be accepting of these new experiences. This also confirms Ones and Visvaran’s (1997) suggestion that “Openness to Experience” is a predictor of expatriate assignment adjustment.

Figure 10

Themes of Good days at mid point



Assignment achievement was evident on some good days such as was expressed in a comment from a volunteer in Viet Nam:

I think that I have worked hard to understand the why without judging, and to try and understand their work and life, and society and education and history that have

created the big picture. It has meant that the midwives have developed a lot of trust in me, because I did not just come in and criticise their work, which is what they are used to, and expected. I have come to really, really like the midwives I work with. Now I can see the good things, the tiny changes that are big steps (midwife educator).

From Vanuatu:

Being involved in something like the opening of a Smolbag film or watching one of their plays in a packed theatre with fifty or so Ni-van kids all sitting goggled-eyed on the floor watching and listening and not being obnoxious, and thinking, it's such a privilege to be involved in this. I am soooo lucky and extremely glad I'm here. I'm proud to be associated with Smolbag and on a good day proud of what I achieve.

When the cultural "challenge" had been lived and worked through, it was commented on as acceptance. Acceptance such as this could be construed as part of the hero's "boon" which was described in comments such as:

To cut a very long story short...I feel accepted in Cambodia (educational administrator).

In the Solomons:

We have become part of the K community, and as such have been accepted by the local people, we enjoy the simple processes of daily life such as buying daily food at the local market from the villagers who have grown it (business advisor).

One volunteer in Bougainville talked about his days as full of variety

From what you may gather here there is no typical day as every day presents a new challenge, so no days are dull and this expectation provides a small sense of excitement and a readiness daily for what may come (technical instructor).

8.2.3 Question: Is the experience fulfilling your expectations?

Seventeen of the 29 volunteers responding (59%) reported that at this mid assignment point, their expectations had been met. The answers to this question

appeared to fit some, but only some, of the volunteers' key motivations for going (see Table 23). The motivations related to timing or something they had always wanted to do were not commented on, nor was the search for adventure or meaning. It is possible that this mid way point was too early for the volunteers to acknowledge the achievement of these motivations as comments noted in chapter nine do reflect on them. Many were still on the hero's "road of trials" and for them the "boon" was some way off. Fulfilment of expectations could also be seen as allied to perceived "success" either assignment or personal success.

Table 24 shows that the motives of challenge, career and altruistic expectations were apparently fulfilled more readily and that the experiences of the assignment were already allowing some positive outcomes related to expectations. Later in the questionnaire when answering questions regarding how they had changed and what they had learned, volunteers noted some of the motivations related to personal challenge and meaning were seen to be fulfilled. **(8.3)**

All the volunteers answered this question and most in some detail. One volunteer in Bougainville reported that all his expectations had been met:

My reasons for wanting to do volunteer abroad were to work overseas, experience different cultures and generally change my future outlook on life. So far these expectations are being fulfilled and I am at this point gaining more than giving

And another had adjusted his expectations such as an agricultural trainer in Vanuatu:

My expectations were a little high to start with but you soon lower your expectation, get on with the project and things do get off the ground eventually.

Table 24**Comparison of themes of motivation and fulfilled expectations**

Definition/Explanation of theme	No. of scripts where themes were identified pre-departure n=42		No of scripts where themes identified mid assignment n=29	
Right Time	33	79%	0	
Altruism	31	74%	7	25%
Meaning	30	72%	0	
Challenge	29	69%	13	45%
Alternative life	27	64%	3	11%
Adventure	27	64%	0	
Always wanted to go	19	45%	0	
Career move	18	43%	10	35%
Interest in living in different culture	11	26%	8	28%
Disillusionment regarding of some/all expectations	NA		6	21%

As noted in Table 24, many of the comments included **challenge**, (69% of the volunteers) both professional and personal. Such a high number is to be expected when so much was new for the volunteers. They described conditions where they harnessed previous skills and knowledge as well as situations where they were called upon to use new skills, previously untried:

I have been personally challenged a lot and I have learnt a great deal as I had hoped to. Also, earlier this year I was seconded to work on a UNDP project for a month this has met my expectations of professional development, as it was a great experience (lawyer, Solomons)

What I was looking for was a challenge and it is, in more ways than I would have thought, something that utilised all of me - all the skills and experiences that I had gathered thus far in my life and I am really happy to find that it is certainly pulling on every skill I have and a few I didn't know I had (educational administrator, Cambodia).

The administrator working with an arts organisation in Vanuatu:

It is pretty much as I expected. I have lived in a remote aboriginal community in Australia and am used to the challenges and ironies of development.

And the mid-wife educator in Viet Nam:

It is probably both as challenging and more rewarding than I thought it would be.

For one volunteer in probably the most difficult environment, the challenges were profound:

It is a challenge even to survive...the island has run out of food three times and out of water once.

The findings also showed that volunteers had their “expectations fulfilled” in their wish to experience an **alternative way of life/culture**. This is demonstrated by volunteers’ comments, for example the business manager in the Solomons:

I was looking for a complete change of scenery and a chance to give some of my skills for two years. I wanted to live in another culture and see what it is like to be the only “Whitey” around.

Or the desktop publisher in northern Laos:

Yes, in many ways: I'm experiencing a completely different way of life, learning new life values and having to learn new ways of working, and another language. I'm also making new friends and really enjoying living in a different culture. I do enjoy the simplicity and lessons of life here: hand washing, shopping at the market, the fact that all the people here are basically working very, very hard to provide food for the table and a shelter over their heads.

Some volunteers had expressed specific **career and skills related to career development** as motivators for volunteering and how these were being fulfilled was described in their replies such as the secretarial worker in war torn Bougainville:

I also wanted to do something different to the secretarial work I have always done. Although I certainly do quite a bit of office work, it is more rewarding in that I am

transferring my skills to others who are soaking up the information. I have also been given the opportunity to do work that is not secretarial in nature at all, e.g., researched and put together a two day workshop on nutrition, including visual aids, and spent two weeks in a remote village helping run a sewing workshop.

And the midwife educator in Viet Nam:

I do remember that in part it was to see if I would want to work in development work, and the answer to that is yes, I do. I think I am quite good at it, and would like to continue doing this sort of work.

And the accountant in Bhutan:

I have had better work experience here than I had in any of my previous positions and it will look good on a CV.

A smaller proportion of volunteers than might have been expected also replied that their expectations of **altruism or making a difference** had been fulfilled (26%). They had achieved altruistic success or had met project goals:

Yes the experience is fulfilling more than my expectations, I am making a difference, people smile more in my office people believe in themselves more and as for the hard bits well if it was easy I wouldn't need to be there (engineer, Bhutan).

Yes, but in a far more nebulous way. Although I am passing on some technical skills I think the longer term interactions we have are helping the ni-Van staff to understand why we do certain things in certain ways. I like to think they will have a better understanding than that gained by the rote learning behaviour commonly seen here (IT consultant Vanuatu).

It is, and even more than expected. I had wanted to pass on skills to people who would appreciate them. I envisaged that perhaps 40 people would benefit in a year, but in fact this figure is multiplied by many times as I am giving out to teachers and lecturers who pass their newly acquired skills immediately to their own classes of students (art lecturer Zimbabwe).

For six volunteers at this mid assignment stage, their expectations had not been met (Table 23). Some disappointments were related to exclusion from the novel culture or what Richardson termed “outsiderness” when the expatriate academics in her study voiced a feeling that they “were not able to understand and experience the host country in the way they had hoped for” (Richardson, 2002, p.34.). These volunteers expressed such feelings:

One of the main reasons why I joined VSA was for the experience or living in a different culture. However it is hard to be immersed in the culture in T, in some ways it is very western. I have no good Bhutanese friends and spend all of my free time with other expats (accountant, Bhutan).

I had visions of a volunteer experience with a heavy local element to our social lives. Here we pretty much socialise with expats (most of whom we would have nothing to do with in NZ/Aust) as it is hard to break out of the local scene. There are not many palm trees and no vegetable garden (doctor, PNG).

Others were disappointed with the set up of the assignment as it was not as seemed to be envisaged in their job description:

Probably not! This is not my first VSA assignment so believe that I came with realistic expectations. I must admit that I did expect with this assignment, that the investigation into the feasibility of a viable assignment would have been a bit more thorough (business advisor, Solomons).

No, it is not fulfilling my initial expectations. At first it was inferred to me that I would be equally "employed" by the partner organization and be involved etc on an ongoing basis. In the beginning I acted as an "equal" partner with A and participated in meetings, decision-making etc. But it has dawned on me (eventually) that I over-rated my position. Since then I have learned to stay in the background and “only” be an assistant, which is in line with other people’s expectations (educator, Vanuatu).

Five volunteers were ambivalent about their expectations being met. (Table 24) Examples of these were:

Yes, I guess so. I had those expectations over a year ago and it's quite hard to think now what they were! I didn't expect the assignment to be a bed of roses and of course, it isn't. Some of it is enjoyable and satisfying, some of it not so (ESOL

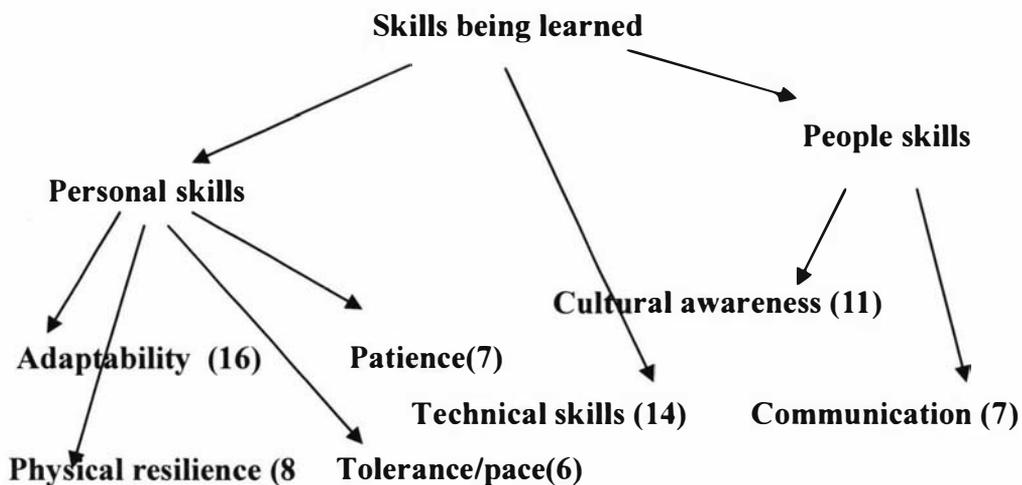
8.2.4 Question: what have you learned?

This question, asking specifically what had the volunteers learned about themselves, life and work, and what advice they would give to anyone thinking of volunteering, provided answers related to “knowing how” competencies. Using the hero’s journey metaphor, these answers provided examples of the hero’s “boon” able to be brought back as well as some of the signs of the hero’s possible “transformation”. The volunteers described many new skills, some of which were previous ones being consolidated, some completely new. They also described aspects of further self awareness. These findings resonate with the personality characteristics gleaned from both the volunteer work histories and the NEO-PR results of openness to new learning and self reflection. The answers were coded into themes of personal skills/attributes, people skills and technical skills (Figure 11).

8.2.4.1 Skills being learned

Figure 11

Skills being learned



The themes of “knowing how” skills learnt from the mid assignment comments were grouped into three: personal skills which were those related to the volunteer’s way of being or coping, people skills were those involving communication with others and included cross cultural communication and technical skills related to occupations or practical skills which were involved in the daily living while on the assignment.

The skills or attributes, under the themes of personal and people skills which the volunteers stated that they had learned, match well with those described as essential for development and aid workers (Kealy, 1994; Carr, McAuliffe & MacLachlan, 1998). In particular the attribute of adaptability appears to be a key task in the transition process, (Nicholson & West, 1989). It is also an attribute of an individual who has a protean career orientation (Briscoe & Hall, 2002) and is consistent with the domain of *openness* in the NEO- PR in which the volunteers’ scores were greater than the norm. Physical resilience is also part of this domain. Comments such as these describe the acquisition of adaptability:

Be prepared to not be prepared. Be open to sharing your feelings and accepting help because there will be times here when you need to ask for help and to return that help when others need it. That every experience will be different not just from country to country but from rural to urban and from assignment to assignment. As long as you are happy to roll with the punches and to laugh a lot then you should enjoy the experience (educational administrator, Cambodia).

Learning to make decisions based not only on clinical ‘best practice’ but also with resources in mind something that isn’t generally necessary in the first world (doctor, PNG).

I have learned not to get so worried about communication problems and misunderstandings (accountant, Bhutan).

The attributes of patience and tolerance were frequently mentioned by the volunteers as being important in having any measure of success in the assignment:

I have recognized that I have the capacity to be very patient something other people have told me in the past but I have never really believed. If you were not patient here you would go mad rapidly! (ITconsultant, Vanuatu).

Tolerance in learning to work at a slower pace with lowered expectations was emphasised often:

The most difficult adjustment I have to make is to slow down and lower my expectations. The staff here do not work at the same pace, or put the business first as I would expect in NZ (business advisor, Solomons).

People skills such as the ability to communicate and live and work in a different culture were also cited frequently as important skills, which the volunteers had realized they had or had developed. Such “cultural learning” is what Bochner (1986) describes as figuring out both the social behavioural clues as well as the requirements of another culture and this is illustrated by this volunteer’s comment:

Being able to communicate in Khmer (even with my limited ability) has certainly enabled me to understand viewpoints and issues but also made me realise that I could never really fully understand - that cultural differences are even bigger than I thought they were. My past study has certainly helped me to understand cultural difference but my depth of knowledge in this area has certainly increased since I’ve been here (educational administrator, Cambodia).

The range of technical skills the volunteers learned varied from the expansion of their own technical/professional skills such as in law, agriculture or physiotherapy, to new practical skills involving anything from computers to water supplies and new teaching skills in every occupation.

Comments from two of the volunteers seem to capture the essence of the impact of their experience at the mid point; that is the development of adaptability, especially cultural adaptability, and the acquisition of novel learning and skills.

The young lawyer in the Solomons:

I think I could write a short book on what I have learnt. I guess the main thing personally is that I have learnt I can deal with a wide range of situations and adapt relatively easily to different cultures. I have learnt that the skills I acquired in New Zealand prior to coming here are useful and transferable to different Commonwealth jurisdictions. I have learnt not to be judgmental and that the Western way of doing things is often inappropriate and unlikely to work in developing countries; people need to develop their own solutions to problems in a way that is appropriate within their culture.

And the technology programme developer in Bougainville:

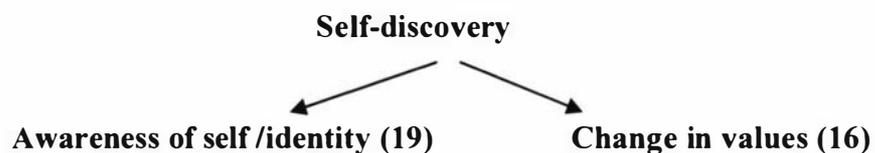
Perhaps the major thing is that I am able to fit comfortably into another society and become settled in an environment outside my comfort zone. I have a fairly easy going temperament and am relaxed in most situations and am able to accept change if change is positive. I have in the past been a bit of a “do it yourselfer” and with this environment it allows for that culture again. There are projects here which I have never imagined I would have ever done in the past e.g. village and school water supplies, developmental stage of coconut oil to fuel, involvement of chicken hatcheries and egg production, involvement in looking at the potential of renewable energy sources. This has allowed me to use many of the skills I have, and to increase the range by tackling things I would not have imagined ever becoming involved in.

8.2.4.2 Self discovery

A number of volunteers were able to articulate impacts of a more psychological kind which appear to suggest a deeper understanding of themselves. These have been grouped into themes of: **awareness of self** and **identity** and **changes in values** and shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Self-discovery



These themes are interlinked; values serve to maintain self-esteem, and identity or self-awareness could involve awareness of values (Rokeach, 1973). However because of the importance of values in this study of volunteers' motivation these themes were separated. **Awareness of self and identity** for this study is defined as **an ability to self reflect and understand how the volunteer behaves in relation to others and having a more complete understanding of themselves.** **Change in values** is defined as **change in attitudes to ideas that were important** to volunteers. There were also comments made regarding the impact on couples' relationships.

8.2.4.2.1 Awareness of self and identity

One of the most frequently and clearly expressed motivations of the volunteers before departure was to find some kind of meaning, purpose or understanding of their lives (79% of transcripts). By mid-assignment, some of those volunteers, both male and female and from all age groups were already discovering how their internal coping mechanisms operated: and in a hero's journey terms they were "on the road of trials" and they were experiencing an awareness of "self":

I can survive ...I don't get down for more than an hour, I keep busy; you have to take a grip of yourself and keep going (technical educator, Solomons).

I have re-learnt how important privacy is to me... I have really come to appreciate my own rhythms and I think I would not be so quick when we get back to New Zealand to take on a routine, 9-5 job that I wasn't totally fired up about. More than ever I am learning to value and give space to my creative side... This has been a great opportunity to think 'outside the square' about what we do next as a couple and as individuals (desktop publisher Vanuatu).

I learned about myself... that although initially thinking I wasn't going to cope with a house that was a shambles, a main street of shops that were tin sheds (and nothing like Lambton Quay), and that I wasn't the 'right' age to be doing this (when we arrived we met other volunteers who were a lot older than me and had already been here for a year and who seemed far more capable and confident than me), that I was able to adapt and rise to the challenge and make a valuable contribution to the lives of people in Bougainville (office administrator, Bougainville).

That relationships with people I already know are incredibly important to me, and that relationships in general are a key focus in my life. That I expect to be treated as an equal and don't like being bullied. I have to learn how to deal with that (ESOL teacher, Viet Nam).

Living on my own away from my family has given me time to think and sort a few things out in my head. A more basic existence helps my spiritual life. I can be very happy living on my own (after 29 years with my Family). Last but not least---As a Christian, I have time to be quiet and study the Bible (business advisor, Solomons)

Such comments suggest an ability to reflect and process experiences productively which is in line with the scores of average or below in *neuroticism*, suggesting emotional stability in the NEO PR. This is seen as an important predictor of successful adjustment (Ones & Visvaran, 1997).

Some of the volunteers described changes in their understanding of their identity. Does taking a hero's journey to find a feeling of value and of ultimate usefulness succeed (Becker, 1973)? Some of the volunteer comments suggest that by mid assignment important issues were being grappled with and some volunteers were aware of themselves from a different perspective. These different perspectives were affecting their lives and thoughts on career development:

That while I have many concrete work skills, my strength lies in being myself (HR advisor, S A).

I have probably gained more than I have given and it has given me the opportunity to find a different me (technical advisor, Bougainville).

I have learned about life is that it is too short to be trapped in the 9.00 am to 5.00 pm grind and that grasping the opportunity to live and work in another country is a great way to live (office administrator, Bougainville).

I have learned to see myself more through the eyes of someone else as previously was the case and have become more critical about my shortcomings, because there is simply so much more time for reflection. Plenty of it occurs (kindergarten educator support, Vanuatu).

As noted in 5.5.1 the process of re-considering and evaluating one's life/career can be a powerful process in re-affirming identity (Randall 1995). Being willing to reflect upon one's identity is also seen as an important process for those who have a protean career orientation (Briscoe & Hall, 2002).

The comments regarding personal relationships and family in New Zealand both together and apart for the assignment at mid assignment were positive.

Comments related to couple issues were more like these:

Spending at first so much time apart and subsequently so much time together has both tested and strengthened our relationship.

A major "risk" if it could be put that way, would have been in my relationship with my partner. This was only a young relationship in respect of doing a something like VSA, which in its self throws up so many challenges in the assignment as a whole, let alone developing a personal relationship. This has grown and strengthened overall having to be a support unit to one another in a number of instances.

The lack of emphasis by volunteers on family issues, worries or influences differs in this study from other expatriate literature (Osland, 1990, 1995; Richardson, 2002). This may have been because none of the volunteers in the study had actual direct or immediate family responsibilities. I discovered by chance that two separate volunteers had returned for a week to New Zealand (at their own expense) to attend to a parent's funeral and had then gone straight back to their assignment. This is also a difference from the study of New Zealand VSA volunteers done in 1998 by Hudson when the most stressful issue was lack of contact with friends and family. In 1998 none of the VSA partner countries had email, all but one of the volunteers in this study had access to email. This communication aid may have made a significant difference.

8.2.4.2.2 Change of values

Many of the volunteers reported challenges to their personal, existential and cultural belief systems or values. The hero's journey again delivers the challenges

and offers “transformation” or understanding, change or acceptance. For some of the volunteers this was quite profound:

Development is a huge business and is done in many different ways. I am curious to find out more and hope one day to have an objective discussion with the local people about what their thoughts are on “being developed” (small business advisor Solomons).

That if I thought I lived a voluntarily simple life before, that that was from a rich persons perspective. That ‘simple’ and ‘luxuries’ mean different things in different cultures; that affluence is relative (midwife educator, Viet Nam).

I think it is more a case of strengthening my understanding through seeing people in different cultures and situations. It has made me realise what a busy and achievement- focused culture we have in New Zealand (HR advisor, SA).

That the concepts of life and death are not the same throughout the world (doctor, PNG).

The things that make the real difference are all related to people. The world is full of money-grabbing shits and pompous blowhards (arts advisor, Vanuatu).

I have learned not to assume that what you believe is right or fair in our society is not the same in this society (business advisor, Solomons).

These comments, related to the themes of self discovery, connect with the themes of motivation for volunteering overseas of personal challenge, adventure and a search for meaning. The themes also resonate with those of the expatriate academics whose motivation was “life change” and who described different kinds of “transformation” (Richardson, 2002).

These comments also suggest subtle changes to values related to lifestyle and career and will be followed through in chapter nine when the after assignment interviews are analysed and when before and after assignment results of the Career Orientation Inventory or career anchors are compared.

8.3 Volunteers' measure of assignment success

As noted in 8.1.2 adjustment may be part of the process of assignment success and the types of comments in 8.2 have shown some of that adjustment process. However as a final task, the volunteers were asked to actually quantify their "success" and were asked to mark two 1-10 scales to show measures of perceived assignment success and personal success at the mid point of their assignment (1 being low and 10 high as a measure of success). Table 25 shows the distribution of scores for perceived assignment success. Table 26 shows the distribution scores for perceived personal success.

Table 25

Distribution of scores for perceived assignment success N=29

Assignment Success Value	Frequency	Percentage
1	1	3.4
3.5	1	3.4
4	1	3.4
5	3	10.3
6	5	17.2
6.5	1	3.4
7	6	20.7
8	7	24.1
8.5	2	6.9
10	2	6.9
Total	29	100

The mean was 6.72 and the median 7.

Table 26

Distribution of scores for perceived personal success N=29

Personal Success Value	Frequency	Percentage
2.5	1	3.4
3.5	1	3.4
5	3	10.3
5.5	1	3.4
6	5	17.2
6.5	1	3.4
7	4	13.8
8	8	27.6
8.5	1	3.4
9	1	3.4
9.5	1	3.4
10	2	6.9
Total	29	100

The mean was 6.96 and the median 7.

It appears that in spite of many challenges and difficulties at the mid point, 79% of the volunteers believed that they were more than fifty per cent successful both personally and professionally in relation to their assignment. They appeared to be consolidating their beliefs in managing “adjustment” to their new roles and could be described as being in the stage of “stabilisation” (Nicolson & West, 1998). They could now enjoy their assignment and continue to experience the hero’s journey with whatever it might bring.

8.4. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the volunteers as they experienced their assignment in a developing country. Not all participants completed the questionnaire. One volunteer withdrew before departure, some returned early and some chose not to complete the questionnaire. I talked to most (all except three) of those who did not complete the questionnaire yet completed the assignment and as noted previously their reasons were often practical e.g. not enough power or just too hot and sticky to do more on the computer, but three said they were too stressed and did not want to actually admit their problems .

However a return rate of 69% with most providing lengthy narratives gives a fairly complete picture of the volunteers’ experiences. The chapter followed through answers to the questions posed by the email questionnaire and identified some similarities in expatriate experiences, consideration of how the volunteers’ expectations were being met, what the volunteers had learned and how they were coping with the experience. The majority of those who replied were being challenged and also thought they were managing. The move to a different culture, home and work environment is a huge transition. The timing of going was never mentioned while they were **in** the experience. In terms of the transition cycle, they had gone through encounter/reality shock and were experiencing adjustment, some had begun to stabilize (Nicolson & West, 1988). They were showing their flexibility, a crucial aspect of “communion” when meeting their new environment (Marshall, 1989). They were also on the hero’s “road of trials” and some were beginning to be aware of the “ultimate boon” (Campbell, 1988). Results showing volunteers’ openness to new learning skills and personal awareness and their

ability to cope with many challenges with adaptability measure suggest a continuation of the protean career orientation attributes identified in the volunteer pre assignment career stories (Briscoe & Hall 2002). The themes identified such as the volunteers' willingness to cope with considerable challenges appear to be consistent with explanations relating to participants' personality traits of openness and psychological stability.

Volunteers' measurement of assignment and personal success showed that the majority believed the experience to be successful at mid point.

Having explored the character traits, career histories and motivations to volunteer for VSA in chapters six and seven and the experiences of volunteering in this chapter, chapter nine will explore the volunteers' evaluation of their assignment experience upon their return to New Zealand. The effect of the experience on the stability of personality traits and career anchors will also be outlined and discussed.

Chapter Nine Results IV: Participants' Evaluation of VSA

9.1 Introduction

Chapter eight explored the volunteers' experiences of VSA while on their assignments. This chapter takes that exploration a step further, focusing on volunteers' evaluation of their experiences both professional and personal, upon completion of their assignment. As noted in chapter five the numbers who were interviewed after their assignment were greater than those who sent back mid-assignment responses, so there is a fuller representation of volunteer evaluation at this point. The volunteers had been back about four weeks when the post assignment interview or debrief was done. Most had been on some kind of holiday either on the way back or upon return to New Zealand. Some had extended their assignment, some had already started in a new job, others had what they described as temporary jobs to pay the bills and some were taking time out to look at new options.

At the start of the interview time the volunteers completed the NEO PI-R, the COI and a short questionnaire regarding measures of success, assignment influence and future plans (Appendix 7). This simple measure was derived from both discussions with VSA regarding lack of any documented measurement of perceived assignment success and the gap in the expatriate and volunteer development worker literature of any such measure. Those who were not involved in the qualitative part of the study completed the NEO PI-R, COI and questionnaire when they came to their assignment debrief and returned them by mail. The brief questionnaire allowed **all** participant volunteers to evaluate the experience in some way.

The interview was conducted using open-ended prompt questions (Appendix 8) and took between 40 and 60 minutes. Some volunteers came back only briefly and the interview was done by telephone, recorded and transcribed. Five volunteers who chose to extend their assignment did not return to New Zealand. They were asked to complete the open-ended questions by email and all agreed to do so resulting in transcripts similar in length to the transcriptions of the interviews. They also completed the NEO PI-R, COI and short questionnaire.

The chapter further addresses the following research objectives and hypotheses:

Objective 2. To explore the nature of individuals' experiences of volunteering overseas as a previously unresearched theme: in particular, salient experiences, positive and negative features, self-perceived adjustment and effects perceived retrospectively.

Related hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a. The VSA experience does not affect the personality traits of the selected volunteers.

Hypothesis 2b. The VSA experience does not affect the dominant career anchor of the selected volunteers.

The chapter also continues to address objective 3:

Objective 3. To contribute to career theory by adding data from and interpretation of the careers of, a specific group whose career transitions could now be viewed in different ways given the dominance of the "new" career discourse; and to specifically investigate the degree of fit of VSA volunteer development workers to the protean career ideal.

The intention of this section of the study was also to consider the perceived impact of the VSA assignment on the volunteer's life/career. As noted in chapter four, the use of a narrative approach allowed the volunteers to consolidate their retrospective assignment story and gave them a time to make sense of their experience and its impact (Baumeister, 1994).

This chapter also presents two groups of quantitative results: some which describe the volunteers' perceived measure of assignment and personal success and the perceived influence of the assignment on their careers and lives and a second group which compares the personality profiles and values or career anchors of the volunteers after their assignment experience with those assessed before their departure.

9.2 Assignment success

9.2.1 Measures of success

Evaluation involves assessment of success and as noted in the expatriate literature discussed in chapter three, the success of company expatriates was usually measured by company outputs, cross-cultural adjustment and completion of assignments (Caligiuri, 1997). As noted in chapter three VSA struggles to measure assignment success apart from completion of volunteers' term of assignment. There is a lack of performance indicators to measure against and as has been demonstrated in this study many prior job descriptions are quite at variance with the experienced reality in the field. It appears that the main indicators of success are assignment completion, feedback from partner organisations that the volunteers are well respected and a desire by the organisation to have further volunteers in different positions. Being volunteers and being paid only a local salary equivalent may lessen the risk of the volunteers **not** "working themselves out of a job" and therefore "completion" of some kind may be more realistic (Carr, 2000). Further, the NEO-PR traits of *openness*, *agreeableness* and *conscientiousness* have been suggested as predictors of equity sensitivity (related to salary and position) which contributes positively to expatriate field effectiveness (Carr, McAuliffe & MacLachan, 1998). The positive outcome of "contribution to social capital", as suggested by the new CEO of VSA (VSA, 2004) may be more easily identified in a study such as this than by any kind of financial or statistical measure. However at best, there is the volunteers' subjective appraisal of their assignment success and this will be explicated in this chapter. Such a process of appraisal has not been previously documented by VSA.

As noted in 8.1.2, volunteers' apparent adjustment to the assignment and culture suggested that at the mid point they were in the stage of "adjustment" moving into "stabilisation" (Nicholson & West, 1988). This set of data suggests that they have fully moved to the "stabilisation" stage where they are describing sustaining trust, commitment, selecting goals and are evaluating. Even the failure and fatalist comment of those who returned early fit this stage. All the volunteers

who did not complete their assignments returned before the mid point. In other expatriate studies there have been attempts to gather fuller, more personally detailed accounts of success or otherwise (Osland, 1990; Inkson et al., 1997; Peltonen, 1998; Richardson, 2002). This chapter attempts to add to that knowledge in addition to adding empirical data regarding the intrinsic benefits of such volunteer development work to volunteers.

9.2.2 Overall evaluation

When asked at the start of the post assignment interview how their assignment had gone “in general” most volunteers did not hesitate and gave concise replies. These varied from very positive to mixed. Some of the most positive comments included:

It was easily the most important experience of my life so far (accountant, Bhutan). Generally fantastic ...a positive experience for me both personally and professionally (educational administrator, Cambodia).

I'm still looking ahead in terms of my professional development and the path my life is taking. There's no going back and I wouldn't want that now. VSA has opened up possibilities for me that I couldn't have imagined both professionally and personally, so the experience rates highly indeed (educator, Tokelau).

These comments were from under thirty year olds (male and female) and are similar to the type of “turning point” comments, which Starr (1994) noted from his Peace Corps subjects. They also tended to consider the assignment from a personal perspective. Older volunteers also described the experience very positively without necessarily perceiving an impact of such huge change. Comments such these were given:

Overall it was great because I had a wonderful job description, great partner organization and the assignment was well done ...well researched and well policed so I was really lucky...personally I was just there and I loved every moment of it (physiotherapist, Viet Nam).

It was great, it was awesome, challenging physically, psychologically, emotionally, and it was ... I sometimes think I don't have enough words to describe it. It is a bit like giving your painter an easel and they don't have enough colours but all in all it was wonderful (kindergarten educator, Vanuatu).

Some of volunteers had mixed comments, the narrative approach allowing volunteers' contradictions to be more easily expressed than in a quantitative format (Baumeister & Neuman 1994):

Some bits were absolutely brilliant and some bits were appalling and it felt very different from what I expected (local economic advisor, SA).

Personally it was fantastic... in terms of my work it was often quite difficult (engineer, Bhutan).

It was a bit of a roller coaster. It was highs and lows but it finished on a high (journalist, PNG).

Well it was like a roller coaster...up here one time and the next you were thinking, Oh dear. I guess it is like child birth you think you'll never go back and do that again but you remember the good things, (educator, Vanuatu).

At different times it has been interesting, boring, fulfilling, frustrating, fun, hell. Overall I am glad we did it, especially when I get e-mails from my previous colleagues who are stuck in the same old rut (IT advisor, Vanuatu).

There were no totally negative evaluations from those who had completed the assignment but most of those who returned early gave mixed or more negative evaluations, for example:

Yes a very positive experience if we could set aside why we left early (plumber, PNG).

There were only two completely negative evaluations and those assignments had failed for a variety of reasons usually beyond the volunteers' control. These were

It was a shambles (forester, Vanuatu).

Am now finished as a volunteer (small business advisor, Cambodia).

These initial comments provided an emotional tone to the evaluation. The next questions provided replies which had more specific details of the volunteers' evaluation.

9.3 Challenges

As already noted, the narratives included challenges, which were seen as an important aspect of their assignment. Although the mid-assignment responses focused more particularly on challenges (chapter eight) some volunteers again mentioned them. This was not unexpected as one of the most commonly stated reasons for volunteering was for some type of challenge, but at this point of total assignment evaluation, the challenges mentioned were not about the more basic or physical challenges such as shortage of water, or language difficulties but about some very big and fundamental challenges not fully appreciated or expressed at mid point. There were no apparent differences in reported challenges among different age groups but some cultural challenges were more gender specific mainly due to cultural ways of socially mixing.

9.3.1 Assignment challenges

Some of the challenges noted by volunteers were regarding the assignment structure itself such as these:

Workwise the challenges were initially that when I got there the assignment wasn't really there...so when I got there, there was opposition from the organisation involved because they had not been involved. So that was a terrible challenge right from the beginning so there was nothing to work on. I sat miles away from the people I was meant to be working with. None of them spoke English. The only person who spoke English was the director who wanted me to work in the primary and pre-school area but that was the only directive he gave me, nothing else. So I had no idea what they wanted no idea where they were at, no idea of anything really (educational administrator, Cambodia).

Businesswise it was a bit tough going for a start because it was undercapitalised. No working capital at all, big debts. So it took basically the first year from October to October to basically pay the debts off and get under way (business advisor, Solomons).

I don't know if this assignment is different to others but it was accounting based and accounting is either right or wrong and you can't really be very much in the middle so it is hard to drop your standards. I found that really, really hard and the reality was I simply had to drop them because there was no way. And I dropped them to a level to where I was never really that happy but I got to a point where I thought that's it. We can't drop them any more otherwise I might as well just pack up and go (financial advisor, Cambodia).

Many of the challenges concerned relationships with their local counterparts and led to comments such as these:

I wanted to abort. It was about personalities and the conflict that we had was between one personality in the partner organization and a personality at VSA. We felt that we were not supported by either; we were sort of in limbo, we had no-where to turn. We had to deal with the situation on our own, without the support of VSA and without the support of the partner organization (kindergarten educator, Vanuatu).

I was frustrated quite a lot with the work. And feeling not quite sure what was going on, because of the personality of the CEO and eventually I realised that I don't have to wait for him to say I can do something, I should just be doing what I see as the best way to do it. It was a tiny project and there were about nine on the staff and we were trying to cover a lot, on top of conservation work we were trying to set up training guides, treks and were also trying to do big development plans. It took me a long time to work out someone's approval to actually do something. If I'd learnt that earlier on I'd have been more relaxed (desktop publisher, Laos).

Most of the challenges however were overcome and volunteers saw this as part of the whole process of their VSA experience and a measure of success. The adventurer on the hero's journey will still face trials as they begin to achieve the success or "boon" which is the successful outcome for the mythical hero (Campbell, 1968).

9.3.2 Local cultural Challenges

Many of the challenges were cultural ones and they came from learning to work in a culturally different way. Similar in many ways to challenges reported by many expatriates, these were the challenges, which the volunteers felt pleased to have overcome (Alverson, 1977; Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Caligiuri, 1997; Porter & Tansky, 1999; Downes & Thomas, 1999), and which gave them satisfaction both personally and professionally. These cross-cultural challenges could be seen as part of the general assignment adjustment process (Nicholson & West, 1989), or more the specifically deeper, psychological and socio-cultural adjustment required as cross cultural aid workers (Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Kealy, 1990; Hudson, 2002). The process also relates to Marshall's (1989) communion or interaction with the environment. Such adjustment could also be seen as that of the hero who has braved the "road of trials" and has begun the "transformation" (Campbell, 1968). Campbell's description of the hero's transformation is of a "dying" and a "rebirth" and Osland (1990) has suggested expatriates' cultural experience involves a "letting go" and a "taking on" of personal and cultural certainty in order to "crack the code". The volunteers in this study evaluated their cultural experiences in a similar manner. Examples of "letting go" were:

Many of the people I had to work with were older men ...you can't just go and see someone because it is not like platonic relationships when you have a male colleague in New Zealand (female lawyer, Solomons).

It is about losing face ...and I know I had to learn to not show it. They would say, "She is hot hearted", like grumpy, so I think I learned it does no good (desktop publisher, Laos).

I wrote down my first impressions and it sounds like I was a naive twit. Yes I was shocked at cultural differences and the power that the medical people and allied health people have over the patients (physiotherapist, Viet Nam).

It was a little bit of challenge when I first arrived because I was the only whitey and I was there was quite some months on my own. It wasn't exactly hard but it needed a

little bit of adjusting and a bit of thinking about and also I am quite keen on a little bit of social life and there was absolutely none there. Zero. I think I didn't get asked out anywhere because it is not really their custom to ask you out for a meal. So I didn't get asked out anywhere for months on end and that was a little bit hard just a matter of adjustment really (business advisor, Solomons).

Yes everything belongs to everyone but they don't share knowledge with each other and this was one of the difficulties we found, they won't share it. It is sort of a power game. It took a while to get our heads round that. It was so totally different to our culture. All the possessions are shared but not knowledge (agricultural educator, Vanuatu).

Everybody I worked with has been forced out because of internal politics....all good degrees etcand it was all too threatening and that nexus of bright young driving blacks was just a bit too much (local economic advisor, SA).

And examples of "taking on" or the beginning of social integration were:

And in that society a big smile went a long way. Everyone greeted you every morning and I came to appreciate that even in the dark I would hear "evening Madam C." A neighbourly interest, it could be scary but it was kindly, they knew exactly where we were and our house was their space too or our garden (English teacher, Solomons).

I was accepted into the community completely, literally, when I rented a house my landlord lived behind me and I became part of his family and that is how they treated me (educational administrator, Cambodia.).

People were just so friendly. We got involved in the community straight away. And the local people were great. We couldn't get to town easily so we didn't have much social life with the other volunteers that were there. We learned heaps about the culture and the way of life, it was very special (specialist educator, PNG).

I built a good trusting relationship with Mrs K and got a better handle on the country and the way things worked and what wasn't OK (journalist, PNG).

Osland (1990) suggests that expatriates require a strong sense of self to achieve this integration. The attributes which underpin that strong sense of self can be understood as the ability to self reflect and adapt accordingly (Kegan, 1982),

attributes which are also those defined as necessary to fit a protean career orientation. Overcoming these cultural challenges involved not only interpersonal skills but also a willingness to experience a deeper “transformation”.

9.3.3 Expatriate cultural challenges

How expatriates manage relationships with other expatriates is a challenge which is not often discussed in expatriate assignment literature but noted by Osland (1990; 1995) as one of the factors relating to cultural adjustment. In their evaluation of the assignment, volunteers frequently commented on the “expatriate world”. Nine volunteers talked about the challenges of working with other expatriates and noted varying issues whether they were from New Zealand, other countries or were paid consultants or volunteers. Examples of comments about expatriate challenges were:

And yes in a small community you are friends with people that you may not in a normal situation have ever been friends with. The dynamics of the volunteers change when there are couples too, depending on whether the couples are part of the group. It can get all spread out and the support can get lost (educational administrator, Cambodia).

And the other thing we noticed too is the expat community, and they are a bunch of really cynical people, they look down on the population, they know better, it is all rubbish and if you mix with them you could end up with a different view. People were trying to make a buck and they had a real old fashioned colonial way. We always try to adjust that but it was hard and we noticed it everywhere and yes we whites were lumped together. Often it made a difference that we were from NZ or that we were volunteers (specialist educator, Vanuatu).

I think when you are going to Viet Nam and you think this culture etc all might be too challenging or different and it is, but for me the biggest thing was actually the VSA situation living there (ESOL teacher, Viet Nam).

Some volunteers, living in more remote locations where they met few other expats, had a more positive experience as they relied on these expats for companionship or for help in their assignment:

And there was another New Zealander on the project and we became good friends and so I always had someone to talk to in English (desktop publisher, Laos).

I made really good friends with the doctor there. He's Austrian. It meant there was another whitey there so I became quite friendly with him (business advisor, Solomons).

So for me if the local government wasn't working, I had developed good contacts with the expat community, business and with other NGO groups and we'd just find ways around it. In the end we had people coming with money to buy medicine and we had WHO say "what can we do" and that was through relationships. And unfortunately none of my local co-workers could do this, as they were not in the in groups. I didn't use people but it was a way to get stuff, and be known... golf and soccer. I haven't been a big networker before but it happens naturally (doctor, PNG).

We had marvellous times with other volunteers. Yes they will be long-term friends I am sure (local economic advisor, SA).

9.4 "Transformation" themes

As their evaluation interview progressed, most of the volunteers deemed the experience to be positive and they believed they had learned new skills, had greater personal awareness, greater cross-cultural awareness and insight into their personal and career values. For some volunteers, such insight appeared to affect their thinking into the direction they wanted to take in their personal or professional lives or careers.

These evaluations of their volunteer experience suggest addition or change, the possible "boon" or "transformation" which is the reward for the hero on the journey of adventure to bring back to their own country (Campbell, 1968). They have similarities to evaluations made by the expatriates in the studies done by Osland (1990; 1995) and Richardson (2002). All but one of Osland's (1990) expatriate sample said they had changed while abroad and in this study only those who returned within a few months said they had not changed or learned in some way.

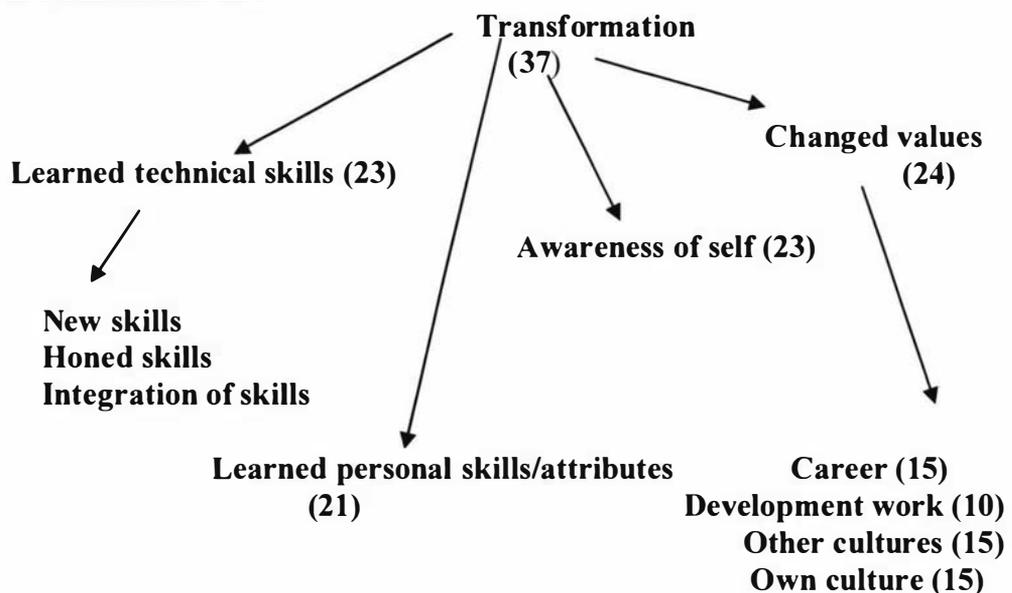
Such transformations could also be seen or as confirming Hall’s 21st century protean career actor who needs to make meaning of their work (2001) and who is values driven (Briscoe & Hall, 2002). They also show an openness and willingness to experience new ways of being thinking and doing thus demonstrating adaptability the other main attribute of the protean career orientation. Like the career stories in chapter four, these themes of transformation also might be described as showing enactment in their career (Weick, 1996).

The next section describes the ways in which the volunteers believed they had changed. Many of these followed on from the volunteers’ mid assignment comments described in chapter eight but at this point retrospective sense making was now influencing the narrative and there is a sense of a more evaluative tone (Weick, 1996).

Figure 13 shows four main themes, which were coded from answers to questions about changes the volunteers were aware of (including cultural awareness discussed in 9.3), with sub themes of changed values related to career, aid work and other cultures.

Figure 13

Transformation themes



9.4.1 Learned technical skills

Technical skills were defined for this study as skills which were practical or mechanical. Twenty-three of the volunteers described new technical skills learned:

I learned how to keep bees and learn to do it here. It might be better than plumbing...and the language a bit (plumber, PNG).

I learned to be confident standing up in front of a whole bunch of people speaking using whiteboard etc (HR consultant, SA).

I learned to live and work with limited tools, with nothing but a pocket-knife. So ask for local materials? And you make it, especially sawing things like no clamping (support for kindergarten teacher, Vanuatu).

The fact that I could create something independently. I always used to look at books and other people's ideas before I'd put anything together and I noticed that I found it relatively easy to put together a programme that I thought was going to be suitable, so I trusted my own professionalism and I think that was really positive. And I got better at the computer and managed to generate some worksheets (business advisor, Solomons).

It was great experience for me. I have never done any teaching before and I'll never get that chance in New Zealand (agricultural educator, Vanuatu).

They also were aware of skills they already had which were honed by the experience:

How to cope, how to survive, all the survival skills, both practical and personal. A lot of it is in your head I feel. You know if you can cope with that you can cope with most anything. Yeh, all my carpentry and trade skills, they were all useful (trades instructor, Bougainville).

Some volunteers also talked about integration of old and new skills:

The assignment allowed me to integrate my existing organisational and administrative skills with some newly emerging ones like working with artists and promoting exhibitions (arts administrator, Vanuatu).

Because I am a jack-of-all-trades, master of none, I like understanding my world and I got into small business through informal learning. So I did things there, then wrote them up and learnt a lot again in the doing of it (small business advisor, SA).

A group of volunteers, more in the younger age groups, described themselves being surprised by the level or type of skills they learned and used:

Yes, I was stretched. I could do more than I ever thought I could. I was able to train people (accountant, Bhutan).

I have done a lot of staff training on the job and team building but never actually run training sessions and standing up in front of a group and organising it and knowing what they need to know, what level to pitch it, guessing their ability. So I found I had strength that I didn't actually know I did have. So I could do things that perhaps I had avoided in the past. But there I had to do them (educational administrator, Cambodia).

I learned a lot because I had to teach. I gave a workshop for about 15 engineers so I had to know not just enough to be able to convince just one person but I had to know enough for people with serious doubt. I had to understand it completely myself and that was a bit scary I must admit (engineer, Bhutan).

I have found out that I know more than I thought I did. I was doing plumbing, draining, electrical work. I just couldn't sit and look at a problem. Sometimes I made mistakes and had to backtrack. I went in to the situation, summed it up and got something going in a very short time (forester, Vanuatu).

Even one volunteer in the 59-69 age group noted:

I think it has actually made me think more of myself. I think I have realised what a range of skills I do have (local economic advisor, SA)

Many of these skills described are career related and give support to the expatriate literature which expounds the positive learning experience of the self

initiated expatriate assignment (Downes & Thomas, 1999) or self initiated career overseas (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle & Barry, 1997). There also has to be a openness to learn new or hone old skills and these volunteers demonstrated that openness revealed in the personality scores in the NEO- PR before departure.

9.4.2 Learned personal skills or attributes

Twenty-one volunteers talked about the importance of the personal skills or attributes they had developed. As in chapter eight these skills were defined as related to ways of being and coping while on the assignment and for this study they included interpersonal skills. Some comments at this evaluation stage were from volunteers who named self-confidence as a new attribute:

I think I learnt lots of things. Maybe I underestimate my ability to cope with things that I actually can. I feel a lot more confident with people. I have learned if you are interested, go and follow it up and go and talk to someone even if it is an important person (lawyer, Solomons).

It was a great opportunity to meet a really different group of people. It broadened our view...toothless drunks and high commissioners. Our strengths are we can go into most social situations and go well, find then and take them, find things in common (doctor, PNG).

In answer to a question about what they had learned four volunteers simply said “patience”, and four “adaptability”. Others described having learned to be more “laid back” or less needing to be in control:

I am very happy to let things take a longer time to happen and in general conversation I am much more willing to let it flow whereas before I perhaps would butt in (physiotherapist, Viet Nam).

So the significant thing was going from that complete control to an environment where I had no control over anything. So I would make some rough guidelines, but that was the level of planning I would do and that was very good for me, that freed up a lot personally (educational administrator, Cambodia).

Some volunteers described other attributes:

I am directive not consultative, which I thought I was! But I was honest and committed (HR advisor, SA).

I have learned to walk away, whereas I have been a bit of the bull-dog ,the English bull dog in me that says you hang in there until your nails wear out. I have decided I don't want to do that any more and I have also have to really think about the issues like...is this about me or is it about other people (kindergarten educator, Vanuatu).

9.4.3 Awareness of “self”

Blustein (1994) noted that how individuals obtain and use “self knowledge” to develop satisfying careers is a central concern for career theory and Campbell suggested that heroes get the transformation they need or want (1968). Thirty volunteers stated that one of the motivations for volunteering was to find some kind of personal meaning in their lives or careers. At this post assignment interview twenty-three described such issues, which suggest the type of meaning or understanding they had hoped for. Osland (1990) notes that expatriates are often forced to examine their lives because the situation demands it and in so doing “experience a different side of themselves”.

Some of the self-awareness that the volunteers described was profound and although many of them were emotional in the telling, it seemed important for them to tell the “Biographic imperative” (Randall, 1995). Details of the specific volunteers have not been given for these quotations because of their very personal nature and of the very small community New Zealand VSA community. These six excerpts are typical of this self-awareness:

I am probably a better person than I thought I was...people just love you...I miss that ...I am not as hard ...I thought I was a hard person. I thought I was someone that was pretty blunt nosed about people while at the time not being able to take it, but I think I am actually quite strong and I knew I was flexible. I guess I have learned that I have got more depth than I thought I had. I had a dark moment of the soul in 1991 and I

didn't really have another one but it was a revisit and a reminder and I got a lot more grounded.

So many people said, "Oh we are going to miss your smiling face, you are always so bright and happy and it is nice to have you around". And I thought. I don't know if I thought of myself as being really happy and cheerful person. I guess that was a nice thing to discover ...maybe I thought I was a bit subdued or I was a bit nervous and I feel a lot more happy and confident...I am a nice person to be around.

The interesting thing I learnt that was that all the things I thought here were weaknesses are actually strengths. But things like I'm kind of friendly open and I just take everyone on board and I just roll with that and don't set boundaries in life. I just roll with it ..and stuff. I like talking to everybody and finding things out but they are probably strengths ...that was why people liked me because I didn't sayhere is our agenda we are going to....etc etc and out the door.

My own mood swings and challenges my perception of the situation could change from one minute to the next and I became quite interested in that, also quite pleased. My normal thing might be to wish that things would settle down and all be the same but now I realise that you get quite bored with that. That is something else I learned. I learned a lot about my own boredom...just kind of reflecting on all those months of having little work to do and realising that I get bored if I don't have enough to do and then I can't generate my own motivation. I shut down a bit but I did learn to manage it. But another challenge is to be much more creative in life in the way I go about doing things because I have found that I have got that inside myself to do that. Once you're dead, you're dead and so I think you should be useful or at the very least inoffensive along the way! What I was doing had to be the most useful thing I've ever done.

Some of the volunteers talked about the impact of the experience being to "settle" them:

Well I certainly feel a lot more settled than when I came back last time. I came back last time to NZ in a state of anxiety and then had an exit depression when I came back whereas this is the opposite. I went off still on antidepressants and just weaned myself off them so I feel like I have come back to myself. I was a bit lost there for a while. I feel much more self-confident. I guess what I have learnt about myself is that now I am ready to come back to NZ I am not sure I was that ready when I came back last time.

Yes before we went away, it was just like another trip. It is changed I think my attitude has changed we want to be somewhere more permanent now.

Others talked about the impact on their faith:

I got into a few tricky situations by changing things around and getting one particular person fired and out of it and had some pretty serious threats and at that time. It really strengthened my faith. In the bible it says provision will be supplied and over there I saw that working. Something would crop up. So it was a faith-building thing.

These statements of awareness of their “self” were ways in which the volunteers were willing to evaluate their experience on a very personal level, seeing a different side of themselves (Osland, 1990). Their high *openness* scores on the NEO-PR would predict that they would be open to self-exploration and further clarity of identity (Tesch & Cameron, 1987). Such self awareness is both the metaphorical “boon” for the hero on their adventure (Campbell, 1968) as well as a literal one which may have implications for their future life/career.

9.4.4 Changed values

As at mid point in the assignment (8.2.4), the volunteers were asked how they might have changed, including their values. Values for this study were defined as ideas that the volunteers believed to be important and of high regard.

In the volunteers’ evaluation of their experience, many described changes in their values in certain areas. These were coded into the four themes of career (13), aid work (8), other culture (10) and their own culture with particular reference to western consumerism (12).

9.4.4.1 Changed career values

Of the fifteen who described changes in career values the largest group (6) stated that they had realised the importance of finding a job which was truly satisfying.

Schein (1985) might argue that they had come to the point of realisation of their true career anchor (These volunteers were interested to have the feedback sheets for the NEO and the COI career anchors, thus the research also serving a useful purpose for the participants).

Some of the comments made by these volunteers were of a general nature such as:

I think I life is really short and maybe we should do what we enjoy and be crazy, maybe I should leave my job and do what I what I would like (desktop publisher, Laos).

Maybe not so work orientated now... I used to blame it on the apprenticeship, the work ethic sort of thing. I want to let J do her career thing before I get a job. It is harder for her to get a job so we will go where she can get one, because my line of work I can find work anywhere. But it is easy to drift back and I really want to do something different (plumber, PNG).

I think something that I learnt there is that I feel more at peace about my identity not being related to my work...I don't have to be anything now. Yes I am very much clearer about the type of work I want to do. I am not doing work I don't want to do but I am lucky that I can do that. I feel less driven by that work ethic (HR advisor, SA).

Others were more specific in their discovery of what was important or new for them regarding their career values:

There are jobs I have looked at in the paper and thought I could do that but do I want commute every day. No life is too short, only 18,000 days left. What is important in my life? You start thinking what is important, and my surroundings are important too, though I wasn't looking for it, the two years away from my normal environment really helped me to develop my personal strengths and get some good insights. It has enabled me to distinguish my "being" from my "doing" self and to identify the aspects of my previous working life that were slowly killing me! I am more open to not knowing what comes next (arts advisor, Vanuatu).

That was one thing that came out of this was a nice thing. My job was technical like a lot of calculations and conflict resolution and I realised how much I enjoyed my previous job at CW sitting down and project managing and yakking to people and

organising different people to do their stuff somehow. I do sort out problems. Yes I clarified that I really enjoyed it (engineer, Bhutan).

It also made me think about money and how much I wanted to earn. I think I want to earn a lot, and I didn't before. All the people earning a lot and they haven't got much going except they are cocky and I think I have done all these jobs and it's interesting and it is contributing and I thought at my 29 birthday L and I had a meeting and I thought blast! It is time to grow up. I'd like to pay for my own hols and take responsibility for myself. I don't want to think that laptops are for grown ups and I'll never get one. So I'm going to get a proper job, none of these playing jobs (journalist, PNG).

That is the other thing that has come out of it. I had plenty time to think and work things out. And I decided I do not like working for these organisations where you rely on other people (technology advisor, Bougainville).

The second part of the assignment was up-skilling "alternative" practitioners. So I have taken on a different group of people. I would never have that experience here. They are not all together, as they are in VN. Now I am far more open to two different disciplines. Yes it has influenced my career attitudes, (physiotherapist, Viet Nam).

Only fifteen out of the thirty-six volunteers reported changed values regarding career. This was initially surprising as many of the anecdotal stories about VSA describe significant personal change, while Starr's (1994) Peace Corps study talks about "a turning point" and Bird writing about VSO (UK) describes the effect as "never the same again". However when the age of the fifteen volunteers is tracked they are all under forty. According to Schein they may be still confirming their career values while the other older volunteers have identified them and the VSA experience may challenge some other values but not affect their career values (1985).

9.4.4.2 Changed values about development work

The group who described a change in values related to development work were shocked into a new realisation that aid was business and this may affect their career decisions depending on how they adjust to the cognitive dissonance of

being well paid while they people they are working with are so poor (Carr, McAuliffe & MacLachlan, 1998):

I am still interested in aid work but I would be very selective in what I did because I am not mercenary enough. I have seen how the whole industry works and there are so many people that you could be morally opposed to. I couldn't take tax-free money. I was offered a couple of jobs before I left (lawyer, Solomons).

I initially thought after I got there that maybe I would like to work in development more and I think I still would love to do that but I learned quite a lot about the Asia Development Bank and the World Development Bank and the more I learnt the worse it became. I just can't work with these organisations that are really only thinking about money and themselves and they actually don't care about the countries they are going into (engineer, Bhutan).

I still like Asia, I really do, but I have even got the wrong kind of political things going on in my head to do development work. Giving people things and handouts, aid, I just don't know about this. I suppose I did learn that. And the financial point of view. It is not a bottomless pit and you can't just spend it, and it got up my nose the amount of money that is given to a country like Cambodia. Millions and millions and see the expats in wealthy houses and big 4-wheel drives. It has just got out of control. It is repeating itself in Timor, Afghanistan and I don't know if I want to be part of that. Yeh, different values. I don't have a problem with development as a career and I understand that it is some people's career; they go from one place to the next.

Sure they have kids and they have to earn a living but there is a limit somewhere (financial controller, Cambodia).

9.4.4.3 Changed values about other cultures

Some of the major challenges that the volunteers described related to cultural differences and an awareness that might have been anticipated (Ward, 1994). The volunteers (15) described these changes in statements such as:

I see myself more accepting of some things and more reflective and because I lived in W most of my life I haven't had a lot of contact with Maori people and I am a little surprised. I would be happy to go and live there whereas most of the white people are desperate to move to Perth or Auckland (small business advisor, SA).

It has confirmed for me something I already knew that our values are not the only values and that other people's values are just as valid and people function in other societies in perfectly fine ways for them; in fact sometimes in better ways and stronger ways. It was good to see a completely different life view. How people relate and operate and the extreme sensitivity we need to even detect that this is happening (small business advisor, Solomons).

As a Maori woman in New Zealand I am not in such a hurry now. Before I left I was really in a hurry to have change happen as a Maori woman and for my people (kindergarten educator, Vanuatu).

I learned that people are people no matter what, all types everywhere, and that others stereotype white relationships. I experienced prejudice (HR advisor, SA).

I am a little bit less sympathetic to people in Australia and New Zealand who think they have a hard time compared with PNG. Unemployment and women are never educated, no money, no sanitation, no food, kids no opportunities. Those others failed to take them in New Zealand (doctor, PNG).

I think I had a feeling of lived a reasonably privileged life and maybe wanting to make some contribution to people who were not so privileged when I got over there I found their way of life is really privileged as well.. I think I have discovered that what I knew about the Pacific was tiny. The people there are perfectly happy to run all their own affairs really. This whole aid thing, well I am not sure (educator, Vanuatu).

I wanted to go back because of the political changes and I think it is more that I have come to terms with the fact that SA is just like everywhere else and in a way it is like a microcosm of the world and so I probably have more acceptance of how long it takes to change things and like this is how it is...rather than feeling very angry about how slow things are there and how racist it still is. While I could see the faults in NZ I always thought SA was so much of a worse place and in some ways it is but it is still essentially the same difficulties...so, I had quite a big acceptance ...I certainly didn't think I could change the world but now, more of an acceptance of well this is just how it is (HR advisor, SA).

Some of these comments reflect the volunteers' coping with the most highly rated paradox of the expatriate businessmen in Osland's study (1990; 1995); that of

positive regard yet caution with local and coming to terms with stereotype and individual differences of locals.

9.4.4.4 Changed values about their own culture

Fifteen volunteers commented about the challenge to their own western values, particularly in relation to consumerism and possessions:

So many people in NZ seem to lead such frantic lives and have huge expectations of how you/your life/your goals/your house/your leisure pastimes should be and somehow we never fitted the bill. So I fit it even less now (educator, Tokelau).

N seems to be one huge café and gift shop. No **real** industry, just fripperies. Everything in our society is just to provide the icing on the cake because everyone (not true I know) has the necessities sussed (IT advisor, Vanuatu).

My attitude to riches and consumerism. What on earth are we doing here? We enjoy so much yet we keep on wanting more consumables (HR Advisor, SA).

I have changed that I have got a whole different attitude to possessions. I don't need possessions. I just had a look at my home and I thought I don't need half these things you can live without them (technical educator, Bougainville).

Yes we have all these boxes and boxes of books that we don't need and now I have decided to use all my beautiful things, don't keep them for Sunday. I feel entitled to use them (HR advisor, SA).

These technical and personal skills, revelations of self-awareness and identified changes in values could all be framed in terms of self perceived 'career capital' and in particular "knowing how", skills and expertise (De Fillipi and Arthur, 1996). They could also be considered "transformational" and could be considered as "boons" by the returning "heroes" (Campbell, 1968). They also appear to be as a result of willingness to self-reflect and the personality trait of *openness* in which most scored highly in the NEO PI-R. In terms of the concept of the protean career, the volunteers appear to exhibit what Briscoe and Hall (2003) describe as the protean careerist who is "values driven in that personal and not external

values provide the guidance and measure of success for the individual's career” (p. 4).

9.5 Descriptive and comparative statistics

9.5.1 Assignment satisfaction or success

Complementary to the narrative descriptions of evaluation with their assignment the data in Table 27 show how the volunteers measured their satisfaction with assignment experience professionally and personally in the post assignment questionnaire (Appendix 7). The scale was from 1 to 5, 1 being not satisfied to 5 very satisfied. As noted in chapter five the purpose of using quantitative measures in this study was to complement the qualitative findings not done as triangulation. (This was due to difference in participant numbers). The quantitative data regarding assignment success was compiled from forty of the volunteer questionnaires (86% of the total number of volunteers in the study) while the qualitative was from thirty –two (76%) interview scripts. The means for professional satisfaction and personal satisfaction were 3.8 and 4 respectively and the medians for professional and personal satisfaction were 4 and 4 respectively.

When these scores are compared with perceived assignment and personal success at mid point (**8.3**) there is similarity, compared with the deeper and more subtle differences with end point evaluation found in the transcripts.

These results, relating to satisfaction as way of describing success, show a lower level of satisfaction than might have been expected from the descriptive accounts but it is not possible to ascertain whether this is because the eight who chose not to be interviewed scored less or whether it is related to attitudes to numerical scoring of success.

Table 27

Volunteer professional and personal satisfaction with assignment (N=40)

Professional Satisfaction Value	Frequency
1	1
2	2
3	8
3.5	1
4	16
4.5	1
5	11
Total	40

Personal Satisfaction Value	Frequency
1	1
3	8
3.5	1
4	17
4.5	1
5	12
Total	40

Note: two early return volunteers completed the post assignment questionnaire

9.5.2 Assignment influence on career and life

The data in Table 28 also from the post assignment questionnaire (Appendix 7) shows a measure of the influence that the volunteers believed that the assignment experience would have on their careers and lives using a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not much and 5 very much.

The mean for the influence on career was 3.5 and for influence on life 4; the median for influence on career was 3.5 and for influence on life was 4. Again while noting that these figures represent 82% of the volunteers while the volunteers' descriptions of the impact of the VSA assignment were drawn from 76%, there is similarity in the qualitative findings (Figure 8) which show numbers of volunteers whose descriptions had "transformation" themes.

Table 28**Volunteer belief of influence of assignment on career and life(N=40)**

Influence on career Value	Frequency
1	2
3	18
3.5	2
4	11
4.5	1
5	6
Total	40
Influence on life Value	
	1
2	
3	11
4	19
5	9
Total	40

Note: two early return volunteers completed the post assignment questionnaire

9.5.3 Pre and post assignment comparison of the NEO PI-R

The NEO PI-R means and standard deviations for the NEO PI-R domains and sub facets were computed for the post assignment results and are compared with the means and standard deviations obtained from the same volunteers pre assignment (Table 29.)

Overall, the scores are very similar with a slight increase in *neuroticism* and *agreeableness*, a slight decrease in *extraversion* and *conscientiousness* and *openness* staying the same. However, independent *t* tests were conducted to see whether there were any significant differences. No significant results were found.

The post assignment NEO PI-R domains and sub facets scores were also compared with the pre assignment results using the Pearson Product Moment correlation co-efficient. Table 29 shows the significant relationships of the five domains between pre and post results and the five NEO PI-R dimensions of *neuroticism*, *extraversion*, *openness*, *agreeableness* and *conscientiousness*

There were significant positive correlations ($p > .01$) between all five of the dimensions pre assignment with all five post assignment (Table 30). These results indicate that the personality traits of the volunteers were not affected by the VSA assignment experience, supporting Hypothesis 2a. Thus although the volunteers stories described learning, self discovery and what was coded “transformation” in terms of the hero on a journey of adventure (Campbell, 1968; Osland 1990, 1995) the quantitative data suggests no statistically significant changes to personality traits. However, as noted in chapter five these perceived learnings and changes may be understood as the characteristic adaptations described by McCrae (1993).

Table 29 NEO-PI-R comparison of means pre and post assignment (N=38)

Mean and Standard Deviations

NEO PI-R Scale	VSA Volunteers before assignment N=47		VSA Volunteers after assignment N=38	
	M	SD	M	SD
Neuroticism N	78.0	19.7	81.1	22.6
Anxiety N1	14.3	4.7	15.1	5.4
Angry hostility N2	11.4	4.9	12.1	4.8
Depression N3	12.3	4.9	12.8	5.2
Self-consciousness N4	14.6	4.3	14.9	4.3
Impulsiveness N5	16.0	4.1	16.5	5.2
Vulnerability N6	9.4	3.6	9.9	3.5
Extraversion E	110.1	20.0	108.0	21.1
Warmth E1	23.2	4.8	23.4	4.1
Gregariousness E2	16.4	5.3	15.9	4.5
Assertiveness E3	16.9	5.0	16.3	4.0
Activity E4	18.2	4.4	16.6	4.3
Excitement seeking E5	14.9	3.9	14.2	4.0
Positive emotions E6	21.5	5.4	21.1	5.4
Openness O	124.2	22.0	124.6	21.1
Fantasy O1	18.9	5.2	18.9	4.6
Aesthetics O2	19.4	5.6	19.2	5.9
Feelings O3	22.3	4.3	21.5	4.5
Actions O4	20.0	3.7	20.0	4.0
Ideas O5	20.4	6.2	20.5	5.7
Values O6	23.7	4.0	24.1	4.3
Agreeableness A	130.0	13.8	132.0	16.6
Trust A1	22.2	3.5	22.7	3.6
Straightforwardness A2	22.0	4.2	21.7	5.3
Altruism A3	24.0	3.2	24.3	3.7
Compliance A4	20.0	4.2	20.4	4.0
Modesty A5	19.8	4.6	21.0	5.0
Tender-mindedness A6	21.9	3.2	22.4	3.5
Conscientiousness C	123.2	16.1	121.3	16.5
Competence C1	22.3	3.3	21.9	4.0
Order C2	18.0	4.5	18.4	5.4
Dutifulness C3	23.7	4.1	23.4	3.6
Achievementstriving C4	19.5	3.7	19.1	3.8
Self-discipline C5	21.3	4.2	21.1	4.4
Deliberation C6	17.7	4.4	17.5	4.4

Note N=38 because of non-responding.

Table 30**Significant Relationships between NEO PI-R domains pre and post assignment results (N=38)**

Pre assignment results	Post assignment results				
	Neuroticism N	Extraversion E	Openness O	Agreeableness A	Conscientiousness C
Neuroticism N	.767**				
Extraversion E		.888**			
Openness O			.885**		
Agreeableness A				.774**	
Conscientiousness C					.744**

**p<.01 (2 tailed)

9.5.4 Pre and post assignment comparison of Career anchors (COI)

Table 31 shows comparisons of the frequency of occurrence of the volunteers' dominant career anchors from pre and post assignment inventories.

Table 31**Comparisons of the Frequency of Occurrence of Dominant Career Anchors pre and post assignment (N=38)**

Group	Dominant Career Anchor	Technical/Functional competence	General /manage comp	Autonomy Independ.	Security stability	Entrepreneurial creativity	Service/ Ded to a cause	Pure chall	Life-style
Before assignment		4	0	8	0	0	14	7	5
Post assignment		2	0	5	0	1	17	5	8

Note: Adapted from *Careers Anchors Training Manual*, (p9) by Edgar H. Schein, 1985, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer

The findings reported in Table 31 do not support Hypothesis 2b. In Table 31 the changes are noted in the frequency of occurrence of the dominant career anchors of volunteers from pre to post assignment. Hypothesis 2b posed that there would be no change. However, 14 of the 38 volunteers (37%) had changed their dominant career anchor or clarified their “perceived areas of competence, motive and values” (Schein, 1990, p.1). An investigation revealed that 10 of those who changed were in the under 40 age group suggesting the assignment experience was significant for them. This is a small sample and is not statistically significant but it is interesting to note that these findings of slightly over one third changing their dominant career anchor match with the qualitative data and the volunteers descriptions of changes in competence, motive and values. However the caveats regarding the psychometric robustness of the anchor instrument must be taken into account and further research with a larger sample and a more robust instrument to measure values is indicated.

9.6 Crossing the threshold, return

The return for volunteers meant the end of an assignment and a new phase or move in career or life and a new transition which may hold some of the same stress of adjustment and challenge as going on the VSA assignment, (Feldman, 1991).

9.6.1 Thoughts before departure

As the volunteers’ career is central to this study, understanding the place of the VSA assignment in the career or life of the volunteer seemed to be usefully appraised at the three points of contact with volunteers. A decision was made to evaluate all three responses at this point in the study.

The volunteers were asked at the pre-departure interview and then again at mid assignment what they thought they would do after the assignment. Table 32 shows the coding based on their replies at the pre-departure point, noting that only five volunteers were slightly worried or unsettled about what they would do on their return.

Table 32

Themes related to return at pre-departure interview n=42

Theme	No. of volunteers
Positive about options on return	37
Unsettled about return	5

The majority of volunteers (37) described themselves as having various options and they seemed quite excited by the possibilities. Some of these options were even “something new” (29). This may again be seen to be demonstrating the *openness* in their personalities in which they scored higher than the norm in the NEO. They could be seen to be demonstrating confidence in themselves in their career mobility, across boundaries of organisation, country, profession or type of job. They appear to be exhibiting the attributes of a protean orientation “the ability to shape oneself independently” (Briscoe & Hall, 2002), and they appear to have the ability to imagine themselves as ready to move into a new episode wherever or whatever it brings. These descriptions were across genders and age bands. Typical comments made by the volunteers were:

The more I get to know the more the world becomes my oyster. I don't know. I think I'll just play it by ear, see what happens.

So, yeh, I am not sure if I'll be coming back to NZ, short term anyway. Hopefully I'd like to make some contacts over there anyway with other aid organizations, agencies so it would be good to move into something different. And hopefully some of them might pay me too. Yeh, I think that is probably the direction but it all depends on how this job goes and whether I am right.

9.6.2 Thoughts mid assignment

A specific question relating to what they might do on return was also posed in the mid assignment questionnaire and when the responses were analysed, five themes were identified and are shown in Table 33. At this point none of the volunteers suggested something completely new.

At mid point over a third of the volunteers who replied stated they thought they might do similar work to that which they had been doing before the assignment. It is possible the challenges of the assignment which dominated volunteers' descriptions of their lives at mid point did not allow for much forward thinking. It is also important to note that this was a reduced sample size.

Table 33

Themes related to next career move at mid assignment n=29

Theme	No. of volunteers	% of volunteers
Similar type of work to what they were doing before VSA	10	34.5
Paid development work	7	24.1
Voluntary work either overseas or in New Zealand	4	13.8
Study either development studies or own subject	5	17.3
Unsure about what they will do	3	10.3

9.6.3 Next career move after the assignment

The volunteers had been back about four weeks when the post assignment interview was done. Most had taken some leave and either on the way back or upon return to New Zealand. Some had extended their assignment, some already started in a new job, others had what they described as temporary jobs to pay the bills and some were taking time out to look for jobs. Many were very much in a state of transition and the next sections relate to what the volunteers saw themselves doing in the near and longer term future. Table 34 shows how the volunteers saw their next career move as they reported on the post assignment questionnaire (Appendix 7).

Age seemed to influence the volunteers' thoughts regarding their return career direction. Six volunteers at mid point and eleven at the end of the assignment, all

less than 50 years of age thought they might take up paid development work. One had actually got his first paid development job while on his VSA assignment

Table 34

Themes related to next career move post assignment n=40

	Number	Percentage
Career location		
New Zealand	25	62
Overseas	9	23
Not sure	6	15
Career direction, type of work		
Previous type of work	18	44
Different type of work altogether	7	18
Paid development work	11	28
Voluntary development work	4	10

Note: two early return volunteers completed the post assignment questionnaire

They saw the VSA assignment as an important practical experience which could be described as an important task for the self managing, protean, careerist. One of this group stated that this had been an idea she had from the outset and the VSA experience was confirming the idea as a career move she wished to make:

I do remember that in part it was to see if I would want to work in development work, and the answer to that is yes, I do. I think I am quite good at it, and would like to continue doing this sort of work ... but I need a paid job next...I want to get similar work (maternal child health development work) in this or another Asian country, in a paid job.

In chapter three it was noted that 15% of VSO (United Kingdom) returned volunteers and 5% of Australian returned volunteers took up paid development work. A figure of 28% of this group of volunteers from the younger or middle aged group planned to do this.

While 5% of returned volunteers in the VSO survey and 34% in the Australian results took up similar career positions, 44% of the study cohort stated they would do something similar. These were the older volunteers who from the motivational findings looked upon the VSA assignment as more of a dream accomplished, altruistic episode or time for personal reflection.

At the mid assignment point five of the volunteers thought they might study again when they returned while at the end interview two indicated that either they had already enrolled on were planning study. It was noted in chapter two that of return volunteers in UK 12% take up study while the percentage of Australian volunteers taking up study is only 1%.

The six “unsure” participants appeared to be quite relaxed with their uncertainty, modeling their high “openness” NEO scores:

I don't have any plans work-wise but feel less worried about this. I continue to clarify the types of skills, environment, people etc that I want as part of a job in the future and I feel sure I will be able to recognise what is right for me next when I see it. I am less worried about trying to discover what the job will be and more relaxed about just taking little steps and seeing where it leads me. It could be anything - I don't want to limit my options! (educational administrator, Cambodia).

Well I am hoping ...I'd like to be in a job where all the travel I have done and experiences and cultures I can use that in a job....no idea what kind of job. I have even thought of doing a one year polytech course. I have just got no ideas... will get some career counselling...find out what my options are, get my CV sorted out (educator ,Tokelau).

Thirty-eight percent of the volunteers stated they would chose to continue to be involved in development work either paid or voluntary. Such a proportion suggests the a greater significance of the impact of the VSA experience compared to VSO where 21% continued in development work (1998) and AVI (1998) where only 5% reported going overseas again. However 74% of the volunteers identified altruism as a motivator to do a VSA assignment so a drop to 38% is significant. It is possible that the mid life group who were going to fulfil a long held dream affect this figure. The finding also mitigates against the proposed idea of VSA volunteers having an “altruistic personality”.

9.6.3.1 Who would influence their next career move?

The volunteers were also asked what kind of people they had got to know on their assignment and who might influence them in their next career move on their return. This was to assess the career competency of “knowing whom”.

Most of the volunteers described friendships with other volunteers, expatriates involved in aid projects and occasionally in business and, depending on language, with locals with whom they worked alongside. Very few of the new friends described appeared to be influential in their future career thoughts but the stated significance of family including partners, aging parents and children in their career decision-making was more pronounced. However if the career values in the COI were considered then the high number of *lifestyle* anchor scores would correlate with such comments. In addition the study has approximately half female participants whose ability to balance agency and communion involves consideration of family first. (Pringle & Dixon, 2000). In addition, there may appear to be some commonality with the dominance of the theme of “family” in the experience of expatriate academics (Richardson, 2002). However Richardson’s expatriates were concerned with the effect of the expatriate experience on their families rather than the effect of family on future expatriation.

9.6.4 Projection of one year from the assignment completion date

The last question, which the volunteers were asked as part of the qualitative interview process, was to indicate what they thought their working life would be like a year into the future. This gave fuller, more descriptive answers to a similar question asked on the quantitative questionnaire to the larger number of volunteers in the quantitative sample. The results are shown in Table 35.

Table 35**Themes related to career one year post assignment n=36**

Theme	No. of volunteers	% of total volunteers
Unsure of type of work or where and feeling good about that	16	44
Paid development work	10	28
Voluntary work overseas for VSA	5	14
Study either development studies or own subject.	2	5.5
Similar type of work as before VSA	2	5.5
Spending time with family/study	1	3

Some of the figures are similar to the end of assignment information but the sixteen volunteers who described with delight the fact that they had no idea what they would be doing was more unusual. Again they demonstrated *openness* to options, new ideas or whatever might be available. Examples of these comments are:

I will either be back in Laos or...I don't know...but it will be something good!!...If I am still in D still in the same job it will be because I really want to be there ...and maybe in D doing some varsity papers... (desktop publisher).

I have no idea... not sailing, and living in a house somewhere. Yes and doing plumbing. I have to make some money...but maybe with possibilities with the alternative power ideas...yeh I'd like to do that...like composting toilets (plumber/sailor).

I haven't a clue and the best thing about that is it is not a worry or big deal and before I went away it would have been ...now I don't need to know ...because getting there is what it is about (educational administrator).

Oh there are so many things to do. They are crying out for people in Q we won't go back to the motels but there are lots of jobs around and we have a house there (ex farmer).

I'll be writing one of those books, gardening, or doing work in one or two local organizations (local economic advisor).

At the time of this interview the participants were in either a new preparation/anticipation phase or entering a new encounter/reality stage. Those who chose to extend their assignments continued to remain in the stabilisation phase (Nicholson & West, 1988). What is unusual is the extreme optimism of those in that encounter stage who were open, confident and relaxed about finding new work or a way of life which suits them. These participants fit the description of protean careerists (Hall & Briscoe, 2002) who are comfortable enacting their careers (Weick, 2001) in the world of the boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994). It is also worth noting at this stage the relevance of the metaphor of the hero's adventure (Campbell, 1968; Osland, 1990, 1995). The volunteers who negotiated and chose to extend their assignments in Campbell's terms could be described as "refusing to return" while the others, some albeit reluctant but completing their agreed contract have the "rescue from without". They could also be simply described as "following their bliss" (Campbell, 1988).

9.7 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on evaluation of the VSA assignment experience, addressing objectives 2 and 3 and hypotheses 2a and 2b. Results from both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were presented helping to build as full picture as possible each methodology enhancing results of the other (Green et al, 1989). The volunteers' evaluations of their assignments were presented by exploration of the themes from post assignment interview: themes such as assignment and cultural challenges, self perceived learned skills and attributes, awareness of self, and changes in values. Differences in emphases from mid point experiences and end of assignment experiences were noted and in particular how challenges had been handled and overcome and the hero's "boon" been realised.

The findings continued to support the suggestion that the volunteers exhibit personality characteristics and attributes of a protean career orientation. They

were open to all the challenges and adapted where necessary and they were reflective about their own process and values.

The findings from the comparison of the pre and post results of the NEO-PR supported hypothesis 2a in that there were no significant changes to personality domains or facets suggesting that even after an experience which was described as powerful and could be interpreted as “transformational” the volunteers personalities were not affected. This supports psychological theories which suggest that personalities are stable and unlikely to change upon adulthood apart from possible characteristic adaptations (McCrae, 1993). The findings from the comparison of the pre and post results of the COI did not fully support hypothesis 2b as results indicated that fourteen volunteers had different scores for their dominant anchor. However the majority did not change their dominant career anchor and this would support the hypothesis.

The chapter also presented volunteers’ evaluations of perceived professional and personal success related to the assignment and the influence that it might have on their lives and careers. The mean results of these findings were lower than the descriptive findings and previous anecdotal accounts might have suggested. The value of using both methodologies is that such anomalies or differences are brought to light and can be further questioned. In this case, there are various possibilities: additional volunteers giving the quantitative results may have made a difference, human reluctance to give high scores or human bias in the theme analysis.

The final section of the chapter presented results from three stages of the study related to what the volunteers believed they would do with their careers and lives after the assignment. With the caveat that these are projections only, the significant number who are optimistically open about their future direction is of note and fits well with personality predictions and the use of a protean career orientation as a possible model for these volunteers.

The next and final chapter reviews and discusses the thesis and its findings in relation to the research objectives.

Chapter Ten Discussion and conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This final chapter contains an overview of the study and a review of the significant research findings from chapters six, seven, eight and nine in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses. It presents the theoretical implications of the data, the limitations and weaknesses of the investigation and suggestions for future research. The chapter starts with the overview and then each of the research objectives is addressed considering the extent to which they have been met and the hypotheses have been supported.

10.2 Overview

This was an exploratory study where the aim was to deepen our understanding of the VSA experience, contribute new data regarding the experience of overseas development workers and to contribute to career theory. The literature on overseas volunteering has not been well developed empirically, has seldom focussed on the volunteers' subjective experience and does not include many longitudinal studies. This study attempts to fill that gap by being a longitudinal study which analysed the careers, personalities and volunteer experiences of forty-seven of the 2001 cohort of selected VSA volunteers who provided information on three occasions – before, during, and immediately after their assignment. The study made use of the metaphor of the mythical hero's journey (Campbell, 1968) to understand the assignment and its stages. It also used concepts derived from recent literature on new, less structured forms of career to understand what the volunteer makes of his/her life/career (Defillipi & Arthur, 1996) and in particular the effect of the assignment in their career. Specifically, the study also used the construct of the protean career as a theoretical template against which to study the volunteers, their careers and the assignment experience as a career episode.

The qualitative aspect of the study focussed on thematic analyses of the characteristics of the lives and careers of the volunteers' before the VSA

experience, during, and on completion of the assignment and identified potential future career move.

The quantitative portion of the study examined the personalities and career values of the volunteers using the NEO PI-R personality inventory, and Schein's Career Orientation Inventory, before and after the assignment.

10.3 Research objective one

The first research objective and related hypotheses centred on the expected value of the study's empirical data.

Objective 1. To contribute new empirical data about the backgrounds, motivations, personalities, values of overseas volunteer development workers and their attitudes to their careers and working lives.

10.3.1 Qualitative findings

Chapter three noted that much of the expatriate literature focuses on managers and corporate executives who have been sent overseas by their employer as part of an expatriate assignment (Inkson et al., 1997). This study contributes by providing empirical data on expatriate volunteer development workers as a relatively under researched group. Given that the volunteer expatriates in this study have chosen to expatriate and as volunteers, it also contributes by extending understanding of expatriation by others than those people who are paid for their work and sent overseas by their organisations. Chapter three also noted the paucity of research exploring individual experiences of expatriation and of volunteering overseas. This study has, therefore, contributed by providing empirical data about individual experiences of expatriation and volunteering. The use of a qualitative methodology has allowed the motivations, values, experiences of careers and lives of the volunteers and the VSA experience to be captured.

10.3.1.1 Volunteers' career stories before VSA

Chapter six reported the dominant attitudes and values relating to their careers that the volunteers described as they told their work histories. The work histories were full of variety and volunteers described different types of training experiences including university, polytechnic and trade training. Many also changed career plans and directions throughout their lives. A considerable number had also retrained or upskilled as they changed career direction. Some of the changes were through choice and some because of redundancy or other more personal reasons. Only one, older volunteer had worked for one employer for most of his life and another, older volunteer had done very similar jobs for two employers but the rest of volunteers had many employers or were self employed. Some had extraordinary career experiences: one young woman, trained in psychology, had worked for many years as a gold miner and then a collector of mosses. Another had trained as a nurse and worked in the outback of Australia with the flying doctor service before setting up a vegetable commune in Queensland. A third had been the campaign manager for a prominent politician before working for the anti gun lobby and a fourth was a chief executive insurance underwriter who after an overland camping trip through Africa became an academic administrator and a volunteer with refugees. Many had had less exotic but still diverse careers: the professional rugby player who took up a degree in forestry after he had an injury, the plumber who worked his way round the world for twenty years on his yacht, the executive level banking couple who changed into IT consulting and a mixture of desktop publishing and craft work. Straightforward organisational careers or occupational careers were largely absent.

Few of the volunteers had kept to any kind of linear, upwardly mobile career path. Even those who started out that way seemed to move sideways by filling their non paid work time with hobbies which they turned into paid work such as the artist who took up calligraphy and bookbinding as a hobby and became an expert bookbinder and publisher in London.

Some of the older female volunteers who had children had been involved fully in mothering had later taken up new careers or built on the earlier one: the farmer's wife who had been a local politician took a degree in mathematics and became a secondary teacher. Another had been a secretary and became the manager of a large family apple orchard and a third had been a primary teacher, then completed an English as a second language diploma after her children had left home and spent six months of every year working overseas.

The dominant themes in these work histories as indicated by content analyses were enactment, challenge and resilience. Enactment, a term suggested by Weick (1996) was evident in both the sub themes of agency, in the form of taking initiative and making choices and in communion in the form of improvising and adaptability with the environment. The volunteers' stories were permeated with examples of being proactive and taking charge of their careers and at the same time making good use of their previous experience and fitting in with environments which suited them.

The theme of challenge was prominent throughout the stories. The challenge could come from the actual work tasks themselves, from other people alongside them or self- set challenges to prevent boredom and provide a feeling of success or achievement. The volunteers never described themselves as being depressed or "down" when jobs ended or they missed out on opportunities. They looked for the next challenge. This also indicated the theme of resilience. Nothing, whether it was redundancy, relationship break-ups, businesses folding or personal illness seemed to hinder them in moving to a new career episode.

Less dominant themes in the work stories were self development, autonomy, self esteem and relationships. These were interlinked to the dominant themes. Their apparent willingness to adapt and make choices led to further self development and higher self esteem. For some their challenges were related to their pleasure at building up their own business and having autonomy while for others the challenges were more from working with others who thought in different ways.

It seems important to question whether such career stories are characteristically more varied than others. Were these characteristics specific to the volunteers in the study or were they simply representative of wider 21st century career patterns? Due to lack of resources this study did not attempt to compare volunteers with other groups in these terms. Data gathered by Arthur et al. in 1999 show such patterns in many recent career histories. However it appeared to me that a remarkably high proportion of the careers studied in this sample were even more improvisational than careers in general as reported in the literature. This raises the possibility that the “adventure” of VSA is as much an extension of a prevailing pattern among volunteers, as a “different” episode within their careers.

10.3.1.2 Motivation to do VSA

The “knowing why” of the career competency model was a useful framework for understanding motivation (Defillipi & Arthur, 1996). Chapter seven reported a constellation of themes identified as reasons to volunteer, with some more dominant than others. Timing, altruism, a search for meaning, challenge, an alternative life or culture and adventure were the dominant themes. Themes related to paid career work and a life’s dream were subsidiary reasons. It was also evident that each volunteer had more than one reason behind their decision to volunteer. The significance of timing as a dominant theme substantiated the relevance for some volunteers of their life stage and the choice to expatriate as a volunteer career episode (Feldman, 2001). For these volunteers, this expatriate move appeared to have much more an element of planning, not as a company expatriate, but more as an individual “planned happenstance” (Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999) which fitted with the types of career/life histories described in chapter six. For many volunteers the timing had the essence of the hero’s “call to adventure” (Campbell, 1968). For others, in mid life, the reality that life was half over in the “dead-line decade” (Seligman, 1994) made them re-look at what they wanted from their lives and attempt to live out a dream.

The dominance of altruism as a reason to volunteer was expected but the subtleties and sub themes within this main theme exemplify the nuances provided

by the qualitative approach. Some volunteers wanted to “do the right thing” from a deeply held moral viewpoint, others wanted to “share their skills” purely selflessly and yet another group wanted to “give something back” and believed they might also gain something in return. Such reasons for volunteering tended to support the subjective approach to volunteering. Even those who thought they might gain something in return did not describe their decision process as the type of pragmatic cost benefit analysis characteristic of the behaviourist approach (Wilson, 2000). Theoretically these altruistic reasons appear to relate more to the motive of altruism rather than that of social activism, and the quantitative findings tend to support this. However as noted in chapter three the line between the two is not firm and as noted later in this chapter some of the challenges faced by the volunteers questioned their altruistic motivation. However the call for the hero to sacrifice, by volunteering, adds to Osland’s (1990; 1995) and Richardson’s (2002) substantiation of the usefulness of the hero’s adventure as a metaphor to describe expatriation.

The dominant themes of search for meaning, challenge, alternative life/culture and adventure substantiated Osland’s (1990; 1995) notion of expatriation as a hero’s adventure not only as a metaphor but a real adventure. It was evident throughout their accounts that the volunteers understood expatriation as volunteer development workers not only as an altruistic endeavour but as an opportunity for a challenge, adventure and life change. Those who wanted challenge and adventure tended to be from the younger age group and these perhaps more than those characterised by other motives are similar to those studied in other expatriate studies (Osland, 1990; 1995) and studies of expatriates who self manage their careers (Inkson et al., 1997; Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Richardson, 2002). These are significant findings for VSA as it does not advertise or promise any of these outcomes, nor does it select for individuals so motivated.

One of the subsidiary themes of motivations expressed was choosing to do volunteer development work in order to gain experience to apply for a paid development position. Such a reason verges on the behaviourist but those who did suggest this as a reason also had others. The other lesser theme was the timing theme of a life’s dream. This theme identified volunteers who had seen

the VSA assignment as way of achieving a life's dream to volunteer, to live out the hero's adventure and they saw it as a once off career episode.

The "knowing whom" aspect of the career competency model (Defillipi & Athur, 1996) was useful in identifying other influences in the volunteers' motivation. The historical connections related to school, university or old family friends in particular underpinned the timing theme of life's dream.

A significant finding was that many of the themes in the work histories correlated with the motivational themes confirming consistency of the volunteers' attitudes to life and career and suggesting that the VSA assignment was in keeping with their career story.

To summarise, the volunteers' motives were multiple and varied. In addition their motives were underpinned by many individual values and not only by the organisational goals of VSA.

10.3.2 Quantitative findings

10.3.2.1 Hypotheses 1a, 1c and 1d

Hypothesis 1a. The selected volunteers have a higher level of the personality factor of *agreeableness* than the general population

Hypothesis 1c. The selected volunteers have a higher level of the personality factor of *openness* than the general population

Hypothesis 1d. The selected volunteers have a lower level of the personality factor of *neuroticism* than the general population

Given that the norms were for the US, Hypotheses 1a and 1c were supported by the data. When the **mean** scores of the volunteers for the domains of *openness* and *agreeableness* in the NEO PR were compared with the US norm scores, the volunteers' scores were significantly higher. In particular, the mean scores for

the facets of *altruism* and *tendermindedness* (in the domain of *agreeableness*) were significantly higher than the US norm scores. When the scores are compared by profile, the data indicated that 64% of the volunteers scored high or very high on *openness* compared to 31% of the general population and 45% scored high or very high on *agreeableness* compared to 31% of the general population.

The high openness score correlates with Ones and Viswesvaran's research (1997) in which they predict candidates who apply for overseas assignments will have scores higher than the norm for *openness* and average or lower for *neuroticism*.

Given that the norms were for the US, Hypothesis 1d was not fully supported by the data. When the mean scores of the volunteers for the domains of *neuroticism* in the NEO PR were compared with the US norm scores, the volunteers' scores were lower but not statistically significant. However when the scores are compared by profile, the data suggest that 76% of the volunteers score average or lower on *neuroticism* compared to 69% of the general population.

These data are useful empirically as they confirm that VSA's selection process by interview, activity and referee's reports has selected volunteers with the VSA's evolved desirable volunteer attributes. It is not known from this study whether those who seek to volunteer tend to vary from the general population in these ways, whether the selection process tends to select such people or both..

When this quantitative data is compared with the qualitative data on work histories the themes of agency and challenge both appear to require openness: to accept challenges of new career directions, relearning or upskilling and to be willing to adapt and make choices. The average or low score on *neuroticism* fits with the themes of resilience and self esteem and ability to reflect and allow self development.

When the quantitative data is compared with the qualitative data relating to motivation to do VSA, again the high scores in *openness* relate well with the themes of search for meaning, challenge, alternative life/culture and adventure.

The high score in *agreeableness* and in particular the facets of *altruism* and *tender mindedness* match the dominant theme of altruism.

Costa and McCrae noted that high scores in *openness* in the NEO PI-R were linked to potential change of careers at mid life (1992) although other theorists are clear that age/lifespan theories need to take into account all kinds of other environmental conditions and circumstances (Lachman & James, 1997). The large number of volunteers in the sample at mid life may make *openness* an important variable (Whitbourne, 1986). However when the mid life age volunteers' stories are analysed they are full of changes of career direction, so the mid life change does not appear to be specific to that particular time in their lives.

In short the NEO PR analyses confirmed two out of three hypotheses relating to volunteers' personalities, in ways that suggested that VSA volunteers possessed at least some characteristics rendering them more suitable than general population members for the VSA experience.

10.3.2.2 Hypotheses 1b, 1e and 1f

Hypothesis 1b. The selected volunteers have a higher incidence of the career anchor of *service/dedication to a cause* than other career anchors.

Hypothesis 1e. . The selected volunteers have a high incidence of the career anchor of *lifestyle* than other career anchors.

Hypothesis 1f. . The selected volunteers have a high incidence of the career anchor of *pure challenge* than other career anchors.

Hypotheses 1b, 1e and 1f were supported by the data. Although this instrument does not have the validity of the NEO PR, used as a heuristic device, the results provide another useful addition to the "bricolage" of the volunteers' career stories and values. The findings show that the anchor of *service/dedication to a cause* was, as expected, the most dominant anchor. This result corresponds with the qualitative findings which found that after timing altruism was the most commonly stated motivational theme. The next two most commonly scored

anchors were *lifestyle* and *pure challenge*. The *pure challenge* anchor resonates with the NEO domain of *openness* and with the themes in the career histories of challenge and motivations for VSA of challenge and adventure. The *lifestyle* anchor theme is difficult to connect with the NEO but strikes a chord with many of the work histories when enactment or taking charge of their own career took place for outcomes which were personally rather than company or workplace driven. It also has synergy with the motivation themes of alternative life/culture and even search for meaning.

To summarise the COI analyses confirmed the three hypotheses relating to volunteers' career anchors suggesting that VSA volunteers possessed career values in keeping with their personalities and career stories.

10.4 Objective two

Objective 2. To explore the nature of individuals' experiences of volunteering overseas as a previously unresearched theme: in particular, salient experiences, positive and negative features, self-perceived adjustment and effects perceived retrospectively.

10.4.1 Qualitative findings

Chapter eight reported themes of the volunteers experience while they were on their assignment while chapter nine reported retrospective evaluations of the volunteers' time overseas.

10.4.1.1 Experiencing the assignment

The findings in chapter eight suggested that the expatriate experiences of volunteers are challenging and dynamic experiences. Themes related to challenge dominated the accounts while beginnings of some elements of success were also reported. These findings provided further support for Osland's (1990; 1995) notion of expatriation as a hero's adventure. The presence of "hero talk" supports the contention that expatriates often "enact heroism" (Becker, 1973). Hero talk

was identified in terms of discourse concerning the difficult work assignments with challenging physical conditions, pride in their ability to acculturate and adapt to changes and the beginning of a sense of mastery and transformation.

The dominant themes “in the belly of the whale” (Campbell, 1968) were challenges related to physical difficulties, cultural attitudes and psychological questioning of themselves and the assignment and even their purpose as volunteers. This led some to question their motivation and as noted previously in this chapter some volunteers were tempted to become or think of themselves as social activists questioning the whole issue of the assumption of “first world” superiority.

Dominant themes of the hero’s mastery or “knowing how” (Defillipi & Arthur, 1996) were personal skills, technical skills and people skills. Themes of the hero’s transformation were self discovery which involved awareness of self, identity and values. When asked to evaluate at the mid point, 79% of the volunteers believed both that the assignment was successful personally and professionally. The 21% who believed at this point that it was not successful did not believe they had achieved their objectives in going and this involved the job description not fitting reality, some expectations being too high, and being unable to experience the local culture as they had anticipated. Nevertheless they did not return early, they completed the assignment.

A key finding in this chapter was the importance of individual action or enactment, similar to the career stories pre assignment (Weick, 1996). The volunteers were actively engaged in the process of volunteering and expatriation. That engagement included managing problems they encountered and constructing their own experiences of expatriation and of a volunteer development worker, particularly in becoming involved in their local communities at a level comfortable to them and their new colleagues. In that respect they were more “active” and less “fragile” than some of those described in the expatriate literature (Black & Gregerson, 1991; Mendenhall & Oudou, 1991).

The narrative analysis conducted at the mid point of the assignment provided a full description of what was immediate to the volunteer at the time: learning new skills, overcoming physical, cultural and psychological challenges, and noticing changes in attitudes and values. The volunteers' retrospective sense-making narratives at the post assignment interview appeared to allow a fuller evaluation of the skills learned and changes which they perceived of self and values.

At the mid point the volunteers showed an overall positive evaluation which had a strong heroism theme and indications of new learning and personal change in some volunteers.

10.4.1.2 Evaluating the VSA experience

The findings in chapter nine suggest that the "hero's adventure" did in fact serve as a useful metaphor for understanding the volunteer expatriate experience. The two dominant themes were challenges and transformation and the "hero talk" which had started in the descriptions mid assignment continued. As Osland (1990; 1995) notes, hero's adventure myths from all over the world have the same basic plot. The hero is separated from his or her country and enters unknown territory, overcomes trials and tribulations with the help of a magical friend, becomes transformed in the process and returns with a boon. The hero may or may not be treated like a hero when he or she returns.

The findings suggest that retrospective review, although not necessarily involving hero talk, is still dominated by the volunteers' experience of challenges followed by transformation. The volunteers at this stage described major challenges of the assignment task itself, and cultural challenges which included both ambivalences about the local culture and the expatriate culture. Such evaluative descriptions are similar to the expatriate paradoxical experiences described by expatriates in Osland's study (1990; 1995). However as the volunteers described the challenges at this point they were as challenges mostly overcome successfully; some with the help of a "magical friend", a local colleague, interpreter or other expatriate.

The other important findings were of themes which were a manifestation of the mastery of skills, boon or transformation metaphor. The dominant themes in this regard were learned technical and personal skills, awareness of self and change in values.

These findings substantiate survey research by other voluntary overseas agencies and further extend the qualitative findings of Osland (1990; 1995) and Richardson (2002) of paid expatriates, by pointing to volunteer development work as having some of the themes associated with the hero's adventure.

The metaphor suggests that the hero can expect to be changed and the qualitative findings suggest that all of the volunteers believed they had changed in some way either by having new skills or by personal changes in their self or values. The volunteers believed they had gained a great deal from their assignment in terms of skills. This was an important outcome of the VSA experience which was not fully expected by the volunteers themselves and which may not be fully understood by VSA recruitment and future employers. On return from their assignment, 61% of the volunteers identified new technical skills and 56% new personal skills which they had learned.

The findings relating to volunteers' personal change showed that 62% of the volunteers said they had a much fuller understanding of themselves and 65% more awareness of their values and their role in life. This is in keeping with the AVA (Australia) (1998) retrospective study into return volunteers which showed that 68% of respondents thought that the experience had a major impact on personal development and values. In applying to volunteer, the VSA volunteers had had to show "agency" yet they had also been open and willing for "transformation" showing "communion". Both agency and communion are aspects of enactment described by Weick (1996) as necessary for transformation.

Findings also suggest that volunteers also felt changes in values related to their future lives and careers, a potentially useful aspect of career development. Some of the value changes related to aid work, and the philosophy and ethics involved in it, others were concerned with cultures, both others and their own. For some

volunteers the value changes towards development or aid work affected their future careers in that they said they would investigate the ethics of development agencies before committing to work for them.

An interesting finding was that this new learning and change described by the volunteers does not appear to show in the quantitative findings relating to personality traits but may show in some changes of dominant career anchor. However when the volunteers were asked specifically to quantify changes or the influence of the assignment these findings discussed in the next section showed that the majority did believe the assignment had influenced their lives and career.

In conclusion, volunteers' evaluations of their assignment was full of the theme of heroism where challenges had been overcome and mastery in the form of new learning or personal insight had been realised. The volunteers had completed a career episode and were looking towards the next one.

10.4.2 Quantitative findings

Hypothesis 2a. The VSA experience does not affect the personality traits of volunteers.

Hypothesis 2b. The VSA experience does not affect the dominant career anchors of volunteers

Again, given that the norms were US, hypothesis 2a was supported by the data. Literature and research into personality has suggested that apart from major trauma and exceptional life events, aspects of personality remain stable from early adulthood (McCrae, 1993). The findings in this study support this. Even after a very challenging physical and, for most, emotional experience there was no significant change in the mean scores of personality traits of the volunteers.

Hypothesis 2b was not fully supported by the data. Twenty-four of the thirty-eight volunteers tested did not change their dominant career anchor but 14 volunteers did. The fact that 10 of those 14 were younger (under 40) may mean that the VSA experience did influence their career values significantly enough to

show a dominant career anchor change. However as noted in chapter nine the lack of validity studies or norms for the career anchor instrument does limit the statistical usefulness of this result. When considered as a heuristic device to gain career value details, then it provides the useful information that the majority of the volunteers did not change their dominant career anchor, supporting the belief that career anchors are stable after young adulthood and that even an experience such as VSA does not have that kind of influence.

However, when the volunteers were asked to quantify the influence of the volunteer experience on their career and life, findings suggest that some volunteers perceived the experience to have a much greater influence than others. Out of the forty who completed this section, 38 thought it had influenced their *career* more than somewhat, 2 did not. Thirty-nine believed it had influenced their *life* more than somewhat, only 1 did not. This is a small sample compared to the large surveys done by other volunteer development agencies but these figures show a much higher rate of perceived influence. This may be because of the short time since the end of the assignment and a further follow-up study would have been useful.

The findings in chapter nine also suggested that from an individual perspective, there is no such thing as failed or successful volunteer development work unless the assignment collapses and the volunteer returns early and even when that happened some of the volunteers stated that it was not a complete failure. Hence the failure/success dichotomy that dominates the expatriate management literature seems to be oversimplified when individuals evaluate their own experiences of expatriation and in particular volunteering development workers. When the 40 were asked to quantify satisfaction/success of the VSA assignment experience professionally, 37 (93%) were reasonably or more satisfied and 11 (28%) were very satisfied. When asked about personal satisfaction 39 (98%) were reasonably or more satisfied and 12 (30%) were very satisfied. These figures match the stories where there were many descriptions of “roller coaster” experiences and “absolutely brilliant and also appalling” ones.

The final set of findings in chapter nine relate to volunteer projections regarding their future career plans. Data was collected pre, mid and post assignment. Before departure, only 5 out of the 42 indicated that they were unsettled, and the rest were positive about options on their return. These selected volunteers for VSA had self initiated the change so it is perhaps not surprising that most of them felt confident. At mid assignment, of the 29 who replied only 3 were unsure about what they thought they would do, the rest again thought they had various options. At the post assignment interview with the larger number 40, some of the volunteers already had new jobs and others were about to start them. Some of the findings at this point give a better indication of the effect of the assignment on the volunteers' career and when linked back to qualitative themes of motivation provide useful information about this group and the VSA experience. These effects can be grouped into three: VSA provided a career vehicle, gave time out to reflect or was used as a way to accomplish a dream.

Fifteen of the volunteers (38%) planned to continue with development work. Of that group, 11 wanted to become paid development workers while 4 planned to continue as a volunteer. This suggests that these volunteers may have used their VSA career experience as a vehicle in their own self directed altruistic career. Before the assignment 18 of the 42 volunteers interviewed made statements regarding motivation which were coded in the theme of "career move". Many of these statements were about moving into development work. This group tended to be in the 50 years and under age group showing some consistency with volunteering research (Omoto et al., 2000) which suggests that there are differing meanings to volunteer roles depending on age.

Seven of the volunteers (18%) planned to do completely different work altogether. For them the VSA experience appeared to open up new horizons or give them the "time out" to reflect on possible new career directions. Some of those who were motivated by a "search for meaning" or "career challenge" may also have found it in a new career direction.

The remaining 18 (45%) planned to do the type of work they did before the assignment. This group may have had the motivations to live their "life's dream",

to “do some good”, to experience living in another culture or simply to experience another challenge or adventure in their lives. For them VSA was an interesting and challenging career or life episode.

It appears that for the various volunteers in this study the VSA assignment serves different purposes in their careers. This was made clear in the motivations described and also in the volunteers’ next career move. These next steps were varied and fitted the individual’s career story with the common factor being a willingness to be open to new experiences.

10.5 Research objective three

The third research objective focussed on the theoretical contribution to career theory:

Objective 3. To contribute to career theory by adding data from and interpretation of the careers of, a specific group whose career transitions could now be viewed in different ways given the dominance of the “new” career discourse; and to specifically investigate the degree of fit of VSA volunteer development workers to the protean career ideal.

Chapter four introduced the debate relating to the “new” career discourse. In a changing world the emphases and direction of individuals’ lives and careers change. It is the task of career theorists to provide models or frameworks to understand the process of change. The use of the word “new” appears to have been the most contentious issue regarding career but there is little debate that there is a changing world of work and it may be useful to consider new ways or new metaphors to understand it.

VSA has been an organisation involved in development work for 40 years so it is not “new”. However it is changing. As noted in chapter two the main issues related to the understanding and focus of development work have changed and this in turn affects VSA and the jobs and skills of the volunteer development workers. Volunteering as development workers is not new but it is being done

in a changing world with changing views on development. Moreover, the “temporary project” and international nature of VSA work means that it is in some respects typical of the new roles being created by contemporary changes in economic life.

The findings of the group of volunteers in this study have been studied in relation to the new career metaphor, the protean career. As noted in chapter four the development of the metaphor by the theorists concerned has led further to the idea of a protean orientation which is conducive to individuals having a protean career (Hall, 2002; Briscoe & Hall, 2003). The following sections will identify how the lens of the protean career and orientation can be used to view the volunteers’ VSA career experience

10.5.1 The protean career/orientation.

The findings of the volunteers’ career stories, motivations to do VSA and the manner in which they managed their VSA experience did not fit well with a career models or metaphors of progression or a linear pathway. They fitted more with the career metaphor of the protean career, where their careers appeared to be self initiated, based on volunteers’ own defined goals, where success was internally measured and where a wider “life space” was taken into consideration at career decision-making times. Even the older volunteers’ career stories had these characteristics shape.

The findings in chapter six described protean themes in the volunteers’ work histories such as **enactment, challenge, resilience, self development, autonomy, self esteem** and **importance of work relationships**. Chapter seven described the dominance of such as themes as **altruism, search for meaning, challenge, alternative life/culture** and **adventure** which also resonate with a protean career metaphor. Finally the dominant themes of the successful aspects of the VSA experience reported were new **personal** and **personal skills** and **deeper understanding of themselves**.

For the volunteers in this study the VSA assignment was another career episode in the series of career episodes which made up their self initiated careers. As a group they present as examples of individuals whose careers are self directed and independent. They also show themselves to rely primarily upon themselves as a foundation for, and continuing guide as to which standards will be used to evaluate career success. Such findings fit the protean career description.

It could be argued that in this changing world of work every career nowadays fits the protean description. Perhaps more are doing so. I believe this study confirms that the VSA volunteers in the 2001 cohort fit it more than the norm. Their common personality profiles and career anchor profiles add weight to their common career and VSA stories and these measure well against the protean career descriptors.

Briscoe and Hall (2003) state that they have become more concerned with the posture or “orientation” a person takes toward career rather than the career structure itself and to this end they argue that a sense of identity and value can guide one’s career and that a protean career orientation is a mindset or attitude toward career that reflects freedom, self direction and making choices based on personal values.

In the previous section I suggested that the volunteers in the study appeared to act out careers which could be defined as protean. In this section I will investigate how the findings in the study suggest measurements as well as descriptions which help to give further precision to defining a protean career orientation.

The suggestion is that people with a protean career orientation are driven by internal values, have a strong identity and are self-directed yet also adaptable. Briscoe & Hall (2003) suggest that openness to experience and emotional stability are personality traits which might predict a protean orientation. The high scores in *openness* presented in chapter six together with the accompanying thematic descriptions of their career histories and motivation to do VSA confirm

such a description of the volunteers' personalities and define their careers as protean (Briscoe & Hall, 2002).

Openness to experience facilitates identity exploration which in turn may lead to greater self awareness and further openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1985; Tesch & Cameron, 1994). Openness also suggests qualities of personal flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, key factors in the ability to manage change. Furthermore openness to change has shown positive correlation with the ability to succeed and prosper from training (Barrick & Mount, 1991). The volunteers' work histories were permeated with retraining and relearning events and the descriptive themes of their VSA experience were full of examples of a willingness to be flexible, tolerant and explore their own "other" selves. Throughout the middle and end of assignment themes the volunteers demonstrated the protean attribute of being able to "take stock and self reflect" (Briscoe & Hall, 2002).

Emotional stability or adjustment which is at the mid and one end of the neuroticism scale is believed to be especially critical to a protean orientation since personal hardiness helps manage stress and is aligned to a more proactive attitude to life (Briscoe & Hall, 2003). The thematic descriptions of the assignment challenges and them being overcome provide clear examples of the ability to adjust.

The expression and fulfillment of values are key to a protean career orientation and since such individuals choose employment in keeping with their values they will have greater career satisfaction (Briscoe & Hall, 2002). The dominant work history themes show individuals who choose their challenges, make their own career decisions and goals. The motivational themes to do VSA demonstrate individuals who are driven by their own values such as altruism, search for meaning, experiential career experience and other life style experiences. A clear set of individual values underpins an individual's identity and I believe this sense of identity is relation to volunteering for VSA is a significant factor in how this group appears to demonstrate a protean career orientation.

This study has contributed to career theory by providing longitudinal findings of psychological components and contextual and experiential influences which have supported previously explicated attributes of a protean career orientation.

10.6 Limitations of the study

This study was exploratory in nature and the general purpose was descriptive rather than prescriptive. The small sample size did not allow for prediction. The decision to choose a single year cohort of volunteers, (and as it turned out a lower than usual number) limited the size of the sample and therefore limited the number of subjects in different categories. However the choice of a longitudinal study gave additional data and enabled consideration of VSA effects over time.

The sample size (n=48) was small for a quantitative study and therefore limits any generalisability of results to other populations but may be useful to indicate trends. Also given that the study focused on New Zealand volunteer development workers, caution must be used when applying the findings to other countries' volunteers.

The use of the Career Orientation Inventory as measure of career values limited comparison with any norm sample as there are none available and this resulted in data which could be used only tentatively. There are also limitations related to single researcher bias. All the interviews and transcriptions and coding was done by myself and although inter-coder agreement was done as described in chapter five it was with a limited sample of responses. Although my previous experience as a selector of volunteers for VSA was useful in having some knowledge of the subject area and VSA processes, the extent to which this may have affected the research interview process is unknown. I believe that through the years my involvement with VSA has meant that although enthusiastic I am realistic in my expectations for VSA and I hope I also am aware of its flaws and the ongoing debate regarding the ethics of development.

10.7 Suggestions for future research

Exploratory studies such as this often point into new areas for study. The globalisation of work and mobilisation of workers across national boundaries has led to some research in this area both from an HR and company perspective (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Aycan, 1997; Porter & Tansky, 1999) and more recently from that of self directed career management (Inkson et al., 1997; Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Richardson, 2002; Vance, 2002). The field of multinational NGO's involved in development and aid provision is large and this means there are likely to be many paid and voluntary international development and aid workers. This is an area of career which has not yet been studied. Further exploratory studies into careers of paid and voluntary development workers across nationalities and the effect of that type of work has on their career could lead to more quantitative testing of hypotheses and propositions and thus move towards more generalisable ideas related to of the careers of internationally mobile paid and voluntary development and aid workers.

Further retrospective research, with greater numbers, on the impact of the VSA assignment on the careers of volunteers would also be useful to VSA and prospective volunteers. A comparison of the continuing careers of those applicants for VSA who were not selected would also provide further data regarding volunteering and careers.

10.8 Implications for individuals thinking of volunteering for VSA

This study suggests that individuals who choose to volunteer for VSA may expect to experience possible change or "transformation". They will be challenged physically, emotionally, ethically and morally and they may change their attitudes to life, to their career and to other people in both other cultures and their own. They will frequently need to improvise and they will be likely to learn new technical and personal skills. Any individual who was not open to any of these possibilities would be unlikely to enjoy the VSA experience. The study report

could serve as a basis for orientation material advising prospective volunteers what to expect.

10.9 Implications for selection, organisation and management of VSA

At present VSA relies on the selection of its volunteers by a combined method of individual and panel interviews, group activity and references. This study suggests that on the whole that selection process provided volunteers with a common personality profile and career values which were appropriate for the tasks of temporary, volunteer development workers. The information gathered relating to motivation and the effect of the assignment may be useful in VSA recruitment techniques and selection. VSA could consider the use of the NEO PR instrument as part of its selection process. However their present system seems sufficient and the cost of the NEO PR for such a not for profit organisation is prohibitive.

The study also shows the volunteers to be self managing, self reflective, with good communication skills and as such they are valuable contract workers for an organisation such as VSA. All that such workers require from the organisation is regular brief contact and more support when there are problems and when the contract ends.

An interesting challenge for VSA is the measurement of assignment success. Volunteers' perception of success may be different from VSA management and from VSA's funders. This may be a useful area for further research within VSA. Also correlation of NEO P-R scores with assignment success has the potential to be used to inform the selection processes.

10.10 Conclusion

This study has suggested that the VSA organisation appears to select volunteers with a certain personality profile and career values which are consistent with those presented in other expatriate selection research. The study also suggests that these volunteers appear to gain much from such a career episode and on completion are positively open to the next one. The volunteers' mobility may be related to their

history, personality, the environment or a combination of all three but VSA provides a vehicle for that mobility.

This study has explored in some depth the careers of a group of VSA volunteers. The volunteers both men and women, of varying age groups have exhibited some common personality traits, career values and attitudes to life. The purpose of the study was to find out how why they chose to take up the VSA assignment and how it affected them. The participants chose to go for a variety of reasons and on the whole they had their expectations and desired outcomes fulfilled.

For some, mostly under 40, the VSA experience was a career step or episode which helped them decide on a future career in development or aid work. For others, mostly over 50, it was the realisation of a dream to do voluntary aid work for VSA. And for a third group it was time out or adventure in another culture. All of the participants wanted some kind of challenge.

The experience did not appear to affect their basic tendencies or personality traits but for some it did affect their career values. It also affected the participants' lives in varying ways. Some sought to extend their voluntary aid work, some went on to take up paid development work and others planned to do so. Some went back to similar employment but with different expectations and others chose to do something completely different. For all, the assignment appeared to enhance their protean orientation

As in Osland's (1990) and Richardson's (2002) studies, the participants did not see themselves as heroes but they talked "hero talk" and the framework of the hero's journey proved useful. The participants became masters of two worlds and brought back many new skills and insights of self. The use of a narrative approach allowed them to make sense of their experience through the longitudinal process and they were able to articulate what was happening to them and what that might mean. This also gave a fuller picture of their personalities and values.

It also allowed the participants to reflect on their experience and how they measured success both professionally and personally, even when by VSA's terms it may not have been deemed a successful assignment.

10.11 Personal reflection

With the exception of the cohort year in this study, I have continued to be involved in the VSA volunteer selection process. The numbers of volunteers going have increased; there has been even more variety of job positions particularly within health and the environment. It seems that as I perform my selection task I cannot but be influenced by this study and I am also interested to note again and again in those who apply to be volunteers, the same type of personality attributes as those in this study.

As noted in chapter one, the idea of doing this study came from my work as a selection advisor for VSA volunteers, whom for many years thought what an interesting group of people I met to interview. Through being involved more closely with forty-eight of them over a period of four and half years while doing the study, I have learned a great deal, been inspired to do some overseas volunteering myself and changed my own career.

The volunteers in the study have all told amazing stories of challenge, adventure, hardship and resilience, compassion filled with both humour and sadness. I have heard their life stories and their VSA stories and I am aware of the impact that their VSA assignment experience has had on their own lives and careers and on the people with whom they worked alongside in so many countries. They continue to inspire me

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Massey letterhead

Dear ,

Your name has been given to me by Carolyn Mark, Recruitment Manager at VSA. You may remember her advising you that I would get in touch with you. I have been involved as a selection advisor with VSA for some years.

I am inviting you to take part in a research project, which I am undertaking as part of my Doctoral studies at Massey University.

I enclose an Information Sheet about the project, which you will see has two parts.

If you are interested, I would be grateful if you would complete the details below and return them to me in the Stamped Addressed Envelope provided.

Please note that VSA has approved this research project but that the information collected will be used ONLY for research purposes.

Yours sincerely

Sheena Hudson

Cut or tear off slip

I am interested and willing to be involved in PART A and PART B of the research project
(please delete Part B if not willing)

Name:

Address:

Phone No:

APPENDIX 2

Massey University Letterhead

The effects of Volunteer Service abroad assignments on the careers of volunteers

Information Sheet

1. My name is Sheena Hudson and I wish to invite you to participate in a research project involving VSA volunteers over a two- year time span. I have been a volunteer selection advisor for VSA for six years and have become interested in the careers of volunteers, particularly after they complete their assignment. I lecture part time in counselling and career development at Wellington Institute of Technology and am a part time doctorate student at Massey University (Albany).. My chief supervisor for this Ph.D. is Prof. Kerr Inkson and my second supervisor in Dr Hillary Bennett.
During the year that I shall be doing the initial interviewing and collection of volunteer data I shall not take on the role of selection advisor except for shorter than two-year assignments. (as these volunteers will not be part of the research project). This is to avoid it being the case or seeming to be the case that selection decisions are affected by research processes.
2. I can be contacted at 04 914 2187
Prof. Inkson at 09 4439799
And Dr Bennett at 04 4146030
3. The purpose of the study is to explore and document the effects of two- year VSA assignments on the careers of volunteers. From anecdotal evidence, the VSA experience appears to have significant effects on the careers of volunteers but there has been no research done in this area.
4. There are two parts to the study. Some volunteers may choose to do part A only others may choose to do both part A and B.

Part A: Volunteers will complete two inventories and a short questionnaire related to personality and careers before the assignment and at the end of the assignment. This will take about one hour at the start and end of the assignment and can be done by the volunteers at home.

Part B: This will be done by interviewing volunteers for about 40 minutes before the assignment, asking them to complete a mid- assignment questionnaire related to the interview and then a further 40 minute interview at the end of the assignment. The interviews will be conducted in Wellington when the volunteers come to their VSA assignment briefing and debriefing sessions or at times convenient. They will be audio-taped and transcribed. The mid assignment questionnaire will be airmailed to the volunteers with return envelope (and if necessary VSA assistance with collective mailing where mailing is difficult) or emailed if the volunteer has access to email.
5. VSA is supportive of this research project and has provided your name as a volunteer that I might invite you to participate in the research.
6. By participating in this research project, you will be help us gain understanding of the effects of volunteering on volunteers careers; such areas might be: transferable skills developed; networking skills enhanced; cross-cultural skills developed; values clarification; the potential future directions of careers. These

findings will be helpful to VSA, to you and to other volunteers who may wish to promote the experience to future employers.

- 7 If you are interested in the findings of the research an executive summary of the findings will be available to participants.
The results will form part of the thesis, which is requirement for doctoral study. They may also be published as part of a paper in a relevant Career Journal.
- 8 The information collected both in written form and in taped form will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office at Weltec. I will transcribe the tapes. Only I will know the names of the volunteers. I am bound by the Code of Ethics of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists and of Counsellors which states that clients' confidentiality shall be kept, except in the case of harm to self or others. The inventories, questionnaires and verbatim of the tapes will be coded and only I will have access to these. These will also be kept in a locked cabinet in my office at Weltec in Wellington.
- 9 On completion of the thesis the data and taped material will be destroyed.
- 10 Your rights as a participant are:
 - To decline to participate
 - To refuse to answer any particular questions
 - To withdraw from the study at any time
 - To ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
 - To provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher
 - To be given access to a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded.

Appendix 3

Massey University letterhead

The effects of Volunteer Service Abroad assignments on the careers of volunteers

Consent Form Part B

I have read the Information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

(The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project)

I agree/do not agree (please delete one) to the interview being audio-taped

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed:

Name:

APPENDIX 4 The effects of VSA assignments on volunteers' careers

Questionnaire to be completed with NEO and Schein's career orientation inventory, before departure.

Please put a tick in any boxes which fit your answer or situation

1. I found out about VSA from
- | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | A previous volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A friend | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A work colleague | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Some other person | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment if necessary.....

2. I found out about **this assignment** from Newspaper advertisement
-
- | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | A friend | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A work colleague | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A previous volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | VSA contacted me | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment if necessary.....

3. My reasons for choosing to do this Assignment are
- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | A personal challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A career step | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A lifestyle change | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | An interest in development work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A wish to help people | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment if necessary.....

4. The particular skills/attributes I have which I believe will be helpful in this assignment are
-
- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Social skills | |
| | Interpersonal skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Practical skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Cross cultural skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Self reliance skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | A sense of humour | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Physical fitness | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Professional/technical skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Leadership skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Training skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Other skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment if necessary.....

5. I am aged
- | | |
|-------|--------------------------|
| 20-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 50-59 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 60-69 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. I am female I am male

7. My partner is going with me
 My partner is staying in NZ

Partner question not relevant

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please bring it together with the NEO and Schein's inventory to the briefing workshop and I will collect it from you then.

APPENDIX 5 The effects of VSA assignments on volunteers' careers

Questions to facilitate Part B of the study; the interview before the volunteer takes up the assignment.

1. How did you know about VSA?
2. Who influenced you in deciding to apply for this position? Family?
Friends? Teachers?
3. Will you tell me about your work up till now, paid and unpaid
(Ask about changes of direction, likes and dislikes, voluntary work, beliefs
about work.
4. What are your goals for life? What is important to you?
5. How does doing this assignment fit in with them?
6. What do you bring to this assignment? Skills? Attributes?
7. How do you think you will know if the assignment has been successful?
8. What do you think you will do after the assignment?

APPENDIX 6 The effects of VSA assignments on volunteers' careers

Mid assignment diaried response

Thank you again for being willing to be involved in this research project

Will you answer the following questions? Please take as much space as you like.

1. How is your experience as a volunteer working out, in general ?
2. What is your assignment work like? A typical day? A good day? a less good day?
3. Thinking back to the reasons why you wanted to do VSA.....Is the experience fulfilling your expectations? Yes? No?
4. Will you say more about your answer to question 3
5. What has surprised you about the assignment?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest) How would you rate your "success" so far assignment- wise? Personally?
7. What have you learned? About yourself? About your work? About people? About life? your skills? Anything else?
8. Have you made friends? What work do they do?
9. At this point, what do you think you will do workwise when you finish the assignment?
10. Who might influence what you will do when you finish? How could they do that?
11. What advice would you give someone who was thinking about applying to become a volunteer?
12. Please write here anything else you think is important for you to write!!!

Again thank you ..and I look forward to meeting you again when you come back

Sheena Hudson

APPENDIX 8 The effects of VSA assignments on volunteers' careers

Questions to facilitate Part B of the study; the interview at the completion of the volunteer's assignment.

1. How did it all go?
2. How successful do you think you have been?
3. What have you learned about yourself, skills/work, life?
4. Have you changed? Your beliefs? Attitudes? Your goals for life?
5. What do you think you will do next? What/who will influence that?
6. What do you think you might be doing in a year's time?

APPENDIX 9

Pearson product-moment Correlation between the NEO domains and the COI anchors

CO Anchors	NEO Domains				
	<i>Neuroticism</i>	<i>Extraversion</i>	<i>Openness</i>	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Tech/functional	.122	.062	.008	.036	.193
Gen.managerial	-.238	.282	-.150	.046	.361*
Autonomy/indep	.087	.161	.110	-.202	-.097
Security/stability	.154	-.036	-.441**	.087	.329*
Entrep/creativity	-.183	.197	-.069	-.245	.150
Service to cause	-.147	.024	-.168	.341*	.189
Pure challenge	-.261	.341*	.006	.170	.159
Lifestyle	.089	.021	.113	.203	.057

* p > .05 (2-tailed) ** p > .001 (2-tailed)

Career Orientation anchors and the facets of Neuroticism

Career orientation /anchors	Neuroticism Facets					
	Anxiety	Angry	Depression	Self-cons	Impuls	Vulner
Tech/functional	.130	.081	.076	.106	-.111	.210
Gen.managerial	-.149	-.155	-.145	-.017	-.141	-.414**
Autonomy/indep	.077	.114	.082	.008	.243	-.058
Security/stability	.020	.260	.014	.146	-.053	.207
Entrepreneur creat	-.184	-.108	-.102	-.133	.031	-.230
Service	-.179	.068	-.179	-.171	-.197	-.122
Challenge	-.109	-.202	-.117	-.132	-.149	-.397**
Lifestyle	-.049	.047	.020	.025	..101	.083

* p .05 (2-tailed) ** p > .001 (2-tailed)

Career Orientation anchors and the facets of Extraversion

Career orientation /anchors	Extraversion Facets					
	Warm	Gregar	Assertive	Activity	Excitem	Posemot
Tech/functional	.133	.104	-.026	.113	.070	-.001
Gen.managerial	.107	.140	.107	.204	.356*	.219
Autonomy/indep	.206	-.031	.066	.090	.304*	.079
Security/stability	.013	.154	-.119	-.016	.040	-.096
Entrepreneur.creat	.096	-.023	.036	.162	.398**	.141
Service	.096	-.019	.006	.137	.084	.090
Challenge	.284	.213	.107	.195	.294*	.327**
Lifestyle	.168	.056	-.026	-.192	-.228	.034

* p > .05 (2-tailed) ** p > .001 (2-tailed)

Career Orientation anchors and the facets of Openness

Career orientation /anchors	Openness Facets					
	Fantasy	Aesthetics	Feelings	Actions	Ideas	Values
Tech/functional	.072	.166	.194	-.067	-.211	-.013
Gen.managerial	-.184	-.185	-.300*	-.206	.100	.016
Autonomy/indep	.206	-.052	.129	.042	.018	.122
Security/stability	-.454**	-.136	-.089	-.435**	-.447**	-.248
Entrepreneur creat	.051	.012	-.103	-.112	-.099	-.074
Service	-.289*	-.001	-.046	-.125	-.032	-.221
Challenge	-.018	.064	-.118	.006	.127	.045
Lifestyle	.073	.059	.062	.139	.039	.020

* p > .05 (2-tailed) ** p > .001 (2-tailed)

Career Orientation anchors and the facets of Agreeableness

Career orientation /anchors	Agreeableness Facets					
	Trust	Straight	Altru	Complian	Modest	Tender-
Tech/functional	.089	.020	.242	.117	-.027	-.148
Gen.managerial	-.044	-.053	.247	.160	.046	-.136
Autonomy/indep	.076	-.278	.204	-.319*	-.114	-.171
Security/stability	-.193	-.030	.222	.138	.070	.073
Entrepreneur creat	-.036	-.277	.067	-.110	-.273	-.184
Service	.056	.415**	.180	.180	.283	-.019
Challenge	.093	.065	.298*	.139	.256	-.290
Lifestyle	.208	.318*	-.217	.120	.092	.260

* p > .05 (2-tailed) ** p > .001 (2-tailed)

COI Anchors and the facets of Conscientiousness

Career orientation /anchors	Conscientiousness Facets					
	Competence	Order	Dutiful	Achieve	Self-disc	Delib
<i>Tech/functional</i>	.222	.091	.107	.337*	.111	-.007
Gen/managerial	.314*	.272	.158	.341*	.388**	.122
Autonomy/indep	.134	.045	-.099	.059	-.141	-.206
Security/stability	.177	.331*	.127	.326*	.127	.149
Entrepreneur/creat	.084	.211	-.049	.358*	.106	-.069
Service	.113	.007	.182	.044	.150	.149
Challenge	.085	-.016	.077	.330*	.202	.045
<i>Lifestyle</i>	-.033	.129	.187	-.276	-.024	.016

* p > .05 (2-tailed) ** p > .001 (2-tailed)

Appendix 10

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