ABSTRACT

THE COMMUNITY-BASED HOMESTAY PROJECT: A CASE STUDY IN SMALL-SCALE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

by Christopher Ryals Thompson

This thesis is informed by the literatures on sustainable tourism development and homestay projects in various countries worldwide. The research problem in Dominica is that remote portions of the island that are far from the island’s cruise ship ports are not receiving significant tourism income. This thesis examines the establishment, operation and successes to date of a community-based homestay project of which I was a key organizer in the remote village of Grand Fond. This homestay project acts to counter the inaccessibility to cruise tourism money while offering tourists a culturally authentic experience. The research is informed by an analysis of participant feedback from both hosts and visitors. Results show that the Grand Fond homestay project, while still in its infancy and fragile, is resilient, culturally positive, and brings tourism money into the village. It has also inspired homestay projects elsewhere on the island, and therefore helps to contribute much-needed funds to remote portions of Dominica.
THE COMMUNITY-BASED HOMESTAY PROJECT: A CASE STUDY IN SMALL-SCALE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

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Christopher Ryals Thompson

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

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Advisor: Dr. Thomas C.H. Klak
Reader: Dr. Charles John Stevens
Reader: Ms. Robbyn J.F. Abbitt
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Grand Fond, Dominica Homestay Project

The Commonwealth of Dominica has been experiencing major economic and social changes over the last decade or so. Many of these changes link to global forces, such as trade liberalization and competition in the global market. This has effectively stifled any large-scale export of goods, such as bananas, which were the major income source on the island up until very recently. In search of alternate sources of income, Dominica has chosen to pursue an approach similar to many of the other Caribbean islands, focusing on tourism. In this respect, Dominica is both fortunate and unfortunate. The island’s shoreline does not include large white sand beaches, as desired in mass tourism, and the rugged terrain hinders movement and large-scale development considerably. Thus, there are fewer tourists, which lessen some of the negative effects often associated with mass tourism (e.g. environmental degradation). This also means that there is limited opportunity for economic growth from the tourism sector. Because of these constraints on mass tourism, alternative forms of tourism arise with the goals of increasing tourism money into the country and its communities while maintaining the environmental and ecological integrity of the island. These alternative forms of tourism include ecotourism and community-based tourism. While ecotourism in particular is growing in popularity globally, community tourism seems to be tacked on as a smaller component of already existing ecological attractions (e.g. rainforest hikes) or as an alternative or complement to the nature excursion.

This research sets out to investigate sustainable development in tourism by focusing on a specific community-based tourism attraction in Dominica, the community home-stay that I assisted in establishing in the southeastern region of the island. The goal is to understand how,
and the extent to which, small-scale tourism projects contribute to sustainable development. To accomplish this objective, this work compares the results of the Dominica homestay program to similar programs found in the literature available on comparable countries.

1.1 Dominica: The Island and the Economy

The island of Dominica (15º N; 61º W) is located in the Lesser Antilles island chain, part of the Windward Islands of the Eastern Caribbean (i.e. West Indies) (Figures 1&2). The island is volcanic in origin, formed by the movement of the earth’s plates under the ocean, beginning millions of years ago and continuing until today. The resultant form of Dominica’s landscape is one of mountainous rainforest surrounded by a mostly rugged and rocky coastline comprising a total area of roughly 290 square miles. The population of approximately 70,000 comprises numerous communities of varying size spread throughout the island but predominantly in the flatter coastal areas.

The island’s economy, until recently, was dependent on banana exports that began in the 1950s and became most lucrative through a trade deal made with the U.K guaranteeing the purchase of Eastern Caribbean bananas. In 1996 the World Trade Organization deemed this agreement illegal and a tariffication system, that is considered “insufficient” to preserve the industry, was established in its place (Klak 2007:3). In response, the island has been actively expanding its tourism sector while attempting to maintain a commitment to sustainable development. According to the Medium-Term Growth and Social Production Strategy, released by Dominica’s Ministry of Tourism in 2006, the country is “creating economic, social and cultural opportunities, protecting natural resources and scenic, heritage and cultural features of
the country, nurturing community involvement in tourism at sustainable levels, and by creating career paths for the young people of Dominica” (Commonwealth of Dominica 2006:48). Ecotourism, which focuses on the natural environment, has become the primary focus of the island while other, alternative forms of tourism, such as community-based heritage and historic tourism, are being included in tour packages, but thus far only in a marginal way.

To contextualize Dominica’s tourism industry it is helpful to look at McElroy and De Albuquerque’s 1998 work which formulates a Tourism Penetration Index (TPI). The index is a compilation of three other indices that measure economic, sociocultural and environmental penetration. The authors utilize vast amounts of data pertaining to these three aspects for various Caribbean islands. The results reveal that Dominica, as of 1998, ranks lowest in tourist penetration. In other words, it is a low-density destination with “limited infrastructure and international visibility and small-scale tourism facilities” (155). While newer data regarding Dominica’s ranking in the larger Caribbean scheme is unavailable, there are other indications that tourist penetration itself is on the rise. For example, in Dominica cruise ship tourism is most prevalent and from January to October of 2009 cruise passengers to the island numbered 381,587, which is a 51.7% upward change from the previous year (CTO 2010). The money they bring into the country comprised a great portion of the more than $66 million (US) generated from the tourism industry according to statistics released in 2007 (Invest Dominica 2007). Cruise ship passenger spending normally occurs in the business district near the docks or on participation in day length, usually 3-5 hours long, touring excursions to other areas on the island (Ministry of Tourism, 2006). The Medium-Term Growth and Social Protection Strategy (GSPS), in part lays out a plan for further advancing alternative types of tourism in an effort to spread economic benefits into the smaller communities on the island that lie outside of the port areas. The once thriving village and parish community of Grand Fond, located at the southeastern side of the island in the area known as Rosalie, is an example of one such community where a small tourism niche based mainly on ecotourism has recently started. The problem with spreading cruise passenger money to villages like Grand Fond is evident
from *figure 3*, which maps the location of the Rosalie region (red dot) in relationship to Dominica’s three large cruise ship ports (blue dots), two in the capital city of Roseau and one farther north in Portsmouth, on the west side of the island. The map uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to show buffer zones around the ports to indicate distance-decay, where fewer passengers will travel farther away from the ports. The blue lines on the map represent the major roadways that cross the island’s mountainous terrain. However, it is important to note that the most direct roadway from Roseau to Rosalie ends abruptly and later picks back up making it impossible to traverse the entire distance. Thus, it is necessary for passengers landing in Roseau to travel a much longer route in order to reach Rosalie.

Despite this problem Grand Fond has been able to reap some economic benefits in the past due in large part to its coordination and cooperation with a nearby ecolodge called Rosalie Forest Ecolodge (RFE), formerly 3 Rivers Ecolodge, that caters to those “alternative” tourists who visit the island to enjoy its natural beauty. These benefits come mainly in the form of money paid out to individual employees who act as local guides or drivers, or who work at the lodge itself. It is notable that facilities located around the island that are similar to RFE and that are involved in Dominica’s tourism sector, tend to focus on the natural aspects of the island. For instance, a perusal of internet websites shows that several lodges and tour businesses in Dominica are concerned with coastal activities such as dive attractions and whale watching (e.g. Dive Dominica Ltd., Anchorage Hotel Whale Watch & Dive Center). Other businesses involve local communities to some extent by hosting community tours and visitor participation in community events (e.g. Jungle Trekking Adventures and Safaris, Jungle Bay Resort and Spa). However, the effects of
certain activities promoted by these businesses, ATV tours and diving for example, on the natural surroundings are questionable.

According to Jem Winston, owner of RFE, there is a growing desire within the community of Grand Fond and others in the Rosalie region, to expand upon heritage and historic aspects in their tourism sector. It is from this desire within the community, in combination with the needs and desires of the country as a whole as laid out in Dominica’s GSPS, that justifies this research. Thus, a project of active community involvement seems most productive in trying to learn about and assist in the effort. This thesis project involves, first, helping Jem Winston (RFE) establish and organize a homestay program with residents of nearby villages such as Grand Fond. Second, documenting and analyzing the problems and successes of the program; and third, applying the lessons learned to the broader concerns of sustainable development and integrated regional development. The result will benefit all those who have an involvement, or interest, in sustainable tourism development both locally and globally.

This case study lies within the context of similar efforts in many countries of the Global South and particularly in the Caribbean. The Global South, a term put forward to replace older ones such as Third World, has historically bore the brunt of economic hardship in comparison to the Global North. An attempt to increase mass tourism in Caribbean countries such as Dominica, Montserrat, St. Lucia and others has been one response to the problem, but where its monetary effects for average citizens are often limited, community based tourism may be a more viable solution. The Grand Fond homestay analysis presented here gains insight through its comparison with relevant case studies from other Caribbean islands.
Chapter 2
Review of the Literature Regarding Homestay Tourism and Sustainable Development

The literature included here covers several topics that lay out the framework for analysis in this case study. The first section focuses on ideas about sustainable development in the wake of neoliberal policies and expanding mass and alternative tourism sectors. The next section examines how governments and other organizations are attempting to tackle the issues that arise from such expansion. The final section deals with literature on homestay programs already in place and their lessons so far.

2.1 Scholarly Sources

When asking, “What is sustainable development” many authors first refer to a work titled “Our Common Future” written in 1987 by Gro Harlem Brundtland et al. Brundtland was invited by the United Nations to chair a World Commission on Environment and Development. This precedent setting work defines, “sustainable development” as:

“[D]evelopment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs” (1987).

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories (2010) expand specifically upon Brundtland’s description stating:

“[W]hen people make decisions about how to use the Earth's resources such as forests, water, minerals, gems, wildlife, etc., they must take into account not only how much of these resources they are using, what processes they used to get these resources, and who has access to these resources. Are enough resources going
to be left for your grandchildren to use and will the environment be left as you know it today?

Since Brundtland’s report, there have been many definitions of sustainable development and they continue to change as research into the implementation of the concept delves deeper and deeper. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs now have a Division for Sustainable Development. Their website states, “The achievement of sustainable development requires the integration of its economic, environmental and social components at all levels. This is facilitated by continuous dialogue and action in global partnership, focusing on key sustainable development issues” (DSD 2010).

Some authors have gone so far as to say that sustainable development is impossible. Daly and Townsend’s work, “Sustainable Growth: An Impossibility Theorem” (1993), states that the term itself is an oxymoron. The authors write:

“[S]ustainable development is a cultural adaptation made by society as it becomes aware of the emerging necessity of non-growth. Even "green growth" is not sustainable. There is a limit to the population of trees the earth can support, just as there is a limit to the populations of humans and of automobiles. To delude ourselves into believing that growth is still possible and desirable if only we label it "sustainable" or colour it "green" will just delay the inevitable transition and make it more painful (1993:1).

Krueger and Agyeman (2005), focusing on sustainability in the United States, point out that there is a difference between “visions” or ideas of sustainability and “actually existing sustainabilities” (416). That is, the vision and its result may not match up. The authors write that sustainability is “a social process with the resultant tensions emerging from enormous differences in social, institutional, and discursive practices” (416).

Similarly, Kates et al (2005) discuss some of the problems with defining “sustainable development” and the common aspects found in many existing definitions. The authors show that emphasis on the social, environmental and ecological is, and has been, common to these definitions. They indicate that another way to define it would be in terms of what sustainable
development seeks to achieve. Above all, the authors warn that if the term continues to go through redefining and reapplication, pursuit of this idea may eventually end up being a meaningless endeavor or a “disguise” for destructive activities. This line of reasoning is cause to be very precise about what sustainable development means within the context of the Grand Fond homestay project.

These examples represent a small sampling of the debate about sustainable development that is occurring at present. In examining the meaning of sustainable development in the Dominica and Caribbean context, it is necessary to keep in mind these positive and negative aspects but it is important to remember that sustainable development is a complex concept and its potential has yet to be exhausted.

Putting sustainable development in Dominica, and that of the wider Caribbean, into context, Thomas Klak’s 2008 paper entitled “Neoliberal Exports and Regional Vulnerability: Overview and Critical Assessment,”, examines key events in the recent past that have resulted in a “neoliberal policy transition” (9). For example, recent World Trade Organization (WTO) rulings against the banana trade from Dominica and other Caribbean countries to the United Kingdom have caused a major downslide in that export market. As a result, the countries most affected, Dominica included, have had to shift their focus to other markets including tourism. Thus, as Klak states, these countries are facing new problems stemming from their “new economic realities” (9). The problem that some argue is that neoliberalism is “incompatible” with sustainable development, which “requires a strong and secure set of economic activities that do not degrade the environment” (9). In a separate work, Klak and Flynn (2008, see also Klak 2007) define sustainable development in the Eastern Caribbean in further detail, likening it to a three-legged stool. Each leg of the stool represents one of three complementary goals: social justice, economic viability and ecological integrity. These are more specific terms than society, economy and ecology, presented by other authors. Klak and Flynn’s three goals of sustainable development must balance out otherwise the “stool” topples and cannot be achieve and/or maintain sustainability. In a similar vein, Patterson et al (2004) talk of the interaction between the social, economic and ecological but specifically in terms of ecotourism in Dominica and they lay out a model for analyzing the interactions between the three (Figure 4). In this way, the authors are able to “focus on part of the system without losing sight of the complex interactions which make up the whole system” (135). The Patterson model below is helpful in visualizing the
intricacies of the interactions between the three goals in Klak and Flynn’s idea of sustainable development.

In another work, Klak (2007) presents one of the most valuable resources to this project in that it investigates sustainable development in the tourism sector in Central America, the Caribbean and Dominica specifically. Klak’s observations regarding the challenges of tourism research helps to set the stage for the investigation proposed herein. His four observations, briefly, are: 1) the prevailing view that the scholarly investigation of tourism is often seen as illegitimate or frivolous, which hinders advancement in the subject; 2) concepts of sustainable

Figure 4: Conceptual model of complex interactions between the social, economic and ecological aspects of ecotourism. Adapted from Patterson et al (2004).

In another work, Klak (2007) presents one of the most valuable resources to this project in that it investigates sustainable development in the tourism sector in Central America, the Caribbean and Dominica specifically. Klak’s observations regarding the challenges of tourism research helps to set the stage for the investigation proposed herein. His four observations, briefly, are: 1) the prevailing view that the scholarly investigation of tourism is often seen as illegitimate or frivolous, which hinders advancement in the subject; 2) concepts of sustainable
development, ecotourism, alternative tourism, etc. are often chaotic in their definitions and implications, thus, they often lack “analytical precision;” 3) evaluations of what is happening on the ground are often skewed by the biases involved, often bypassing negative aspects in order to highlight the positive; 4) marketing also skews what is truly taking place and, as a result, vested interests, leakages, etc. can be difficult to recognize. In addition, and tying in with Klak and Flynn’s aforementioned discussion of the three “legs” of sustainable development, Klak points out that if sustainability is to be achieved, a “multi-faceted form of alternative tourism” must be in place and integrated into regional development. From these ideas, Klak outlines his concept of CHOICE tourism (2007), or Community-Historical-Organic-Indigenous-Cultural-Ecological tourism - a combination of various types of alternative tourism. CHOICE tourism is “more inclusive, culturally-rich and sustainable than mass tourism,” and each of its aspects are important in sustainable local tourism (2007:26). Klak creates a two-part framework for the investigation of sustainable tourism that includes both the concept of CHOICE tourism and the three-legged stool of sustainable development. This framework acts as an excellent guideline in the context of the Grand Fond project. It will also be possible to point out, in the end, which aspects of it were most relevant in this case, which were lacking, and how useful Klak’s framework was in understanding the impacts of the community tourism activities in the Grand Fond area.

Sustainable development and the issues surrounding it are important to this research for several reasons, the most obvious of which is the fact that the government of Dominica espouses this terminology specifically and seeks to pursue such development, as set forth in the GSPS. This research represents an opportunity to examine how this idea plays out in real situations, that is, within the context of community-based tourism (i.e. the homestay project) in Grand Fond, Dominica. In addition, in helping to foster this type of tourism, this research may be of assistance in further balancing the three legs of the social, environmental and ecological.

In taking the ideas of sustainable development found above and applying them to alternative forms of tourism in the Caribbean and particularly in Dominica, new issues arise. In addition, several different forms of alternative tourism are present specifically in Dominica. These different forms include community-based tourism, heritage tourism and ecotourism, in addition to the mass tourism cruise ship sector, which is notably destructive in that it often necessitates the modification of natural environs to accommodate ships, it can pollute air and
water, affect marine ecosystems and add pressure to destinations to host larger-than-usual numbers of people (Johnson 2002:263).

This thesis focuses on community-based and heritage/historic tourism and lessons taken from resources on these provide valuable information because similar issues and linkages exist between the two and the ideas of sustainable development. Additionally, in a small island nation such as Dominica, it is impossible to separate completely one type of development initiative from others, because they inevitably have significant overlap.

Cooper (2004) describes community-based tourism as small-scale and involving local stakeholders in resource management, project administration, and development and marketing. In the Grand Fond context, Jem Winston, owner of RFE, represents one such stakeholder. Cooper argues that successful community-based tourism will have the support of adequate funding, marketing, institutional arrangements and enabling policies. In addition, prior to the establishment of such projects, extensive research on community tourism and the rural sector in which it takes place must occur in order to identify linkages and niche markets therein. Cooper’s work is especially important in this regard because it outlines current approaches to such obstacles, particularly on the island of St. Lucia, located south of Dominica in the Lesser Antilles island chain. The island already has as a community-based tourism project in place under the St. Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme and through the Ministry of Tourism. The author describes how the island is trying to empower local organizations, providing them active roles in the decision-making process. However, most importantly in the author’s opinion is that this particular Programme has the “commitment of the political directorate” (4). Cooper states that such aspects as product building, marketing and capacity building all play important roles at the local and community level while also echoing some of the concerns established in discussions of sustainable development including capacity issues and environmental concerns.

In a similar vein, Lydia Pulsipher’s 2003 work seeks to help empower local communities on the island of Montserrat through “knowledge-based” tourism. She states, “Montserratians are in charge of their own place and have much wisdom and rich experience to exchange with visitors, who themselves are often seeking humane ways of dealing with the modern world” (4). The goal for community tourism in Montserrat is multi-faceted. It seeks to encourage the maximum of tourism expenditures to the communities while creating intellectually and financially rewarding jobs for community members. At the same time, the desire is to use
Montserrat’s social and natural capital for social and physical sustainability and to create tourist attractions that are intellectually engaging thereby encouraging humanitarian responses from both host and visitor. In addition, Pulsipher lays out some of the ways in which these goals are attainable, including the creation of specific outings that include visits to natural, cultural, or similar sites on the island. Distance learning, for example internet study programs that familiarize potential tourists with island prior to arrival, is also important to Pulsipher and presumably to the communities as is residential tourism, which allows for extended stays within communities. These goals and the means to help achieve them are applicable in the Dominica context, particularly since the two islands experience unique tourism hindrances (e.g. natural occurrences) in general, such as the results of volcanic activity making a large portion of Montserrat inhospitable and Dominica’s extreme elevation and lack of coastal beaches. Reasons such as these increase the need for both to promote community tourism efforts, especially if the economic benefits are to spread into smaller communities.

Other authors who study community-based tourism expand upon concerns with empowerment, environmental/communal health, monetary flow into communities and local/visitor interactions and understanding of the tourism experience. Reed (1997) investigates the power struggles that can arise in the development and application of community-based tourism initiatives. These struggles crop up for several reasons including the varied interests of stakeholders, the lack of cooperation and collaboration among parties involved, the limited availability of jobs and the competition for them and, finally, the competing interests in attracting visitors to one site or area as opposed to another.

Reed’s case study looks at Squamish, British Columbia and the role of power relations there in order to lend insight into how, and if, they are balanced. In this case, struggles with power take on many forms and span from the individual level all the way up to the provincial. For instance, the committee in Squamish that oversees tourism planning and operation is “biased” in their membership, favoring “residents engaged in business and professional services” while excluding other residents (Reed 1997; 578-9). In addition, influence from local power holders acts to sway decisions in favor of their own interests and investments in what Reed calls a “cooptation of conventional power elites” (583). It is interesting to note that Reed’s case study takes place in the Global North yet circumstances and difficulties similar to those in the Global South arise.
Goodwin (2002) looks at some of the problems associated with community-based tourism in Zimbabwe, Indonesia, India, and Palawan. In these cases, protected resources, such as national forests and parks, drive this type of tourism. Aside from identifying the more obvious concerns, such as environmental degradation of these sites, this work pinpoints factors that affect the movement of tourist dollars to local communities. For instance, local employment is difficult and often the education and capital of individuals limits their involvement in the industry. In the case of locally owned hotels, linkages to the urban sector are higher than to the rural because the connection between local entrepreneurship and the “traditional elite” (344-5). Finally, tourists have little contact with local communities when they are spending time in hotels, cruise ships or at other attractions such as museums. One result of this is that individuals who wish to sell their goods to tourists end up “hawking” at entry and exit enclaves of such places in order to do so (345).

These issues are different, yet related, to those of Reed (1997). Although neither Goodwin’s nor Reed’s research involves the Caribbean, their topics are relevant to this project because they allow for a comparison of aspects such as stakeholder structures and relationships, protection of resources and flow of income into the communities and their potential problems in the Dominica context.

The concept of heritage tourism relates to the use of cultural, historic, and natural areas and sites that have past and present significance to local individuals and communities as tourist attractions. This is important to this research because there are several such areas and sites in and around Grand Fond that are part of the heritage, both modern and historical, of that community. Thus, it is probable that guests of the homestay project will become privy to information about these areas/sites and their meanings to individuals in Grand Fond. It is also possible that their hosts will take them to visit them. One example of a significant site in Grand Fond culture and history is the nearby Rosalie plantation. An establishment of the British in the late 18th century, the plantation extends roughly 2500 acres and over time has been a source of a wide variety of goods including sugarcane, limes and coconuts to name a few. Remnants of the plantation’s mill and main production houses lie along the Rosalie River, once allowing for transport to different areas of the island and beyond. The Rosalie plantation, now mostly in ruins, is not only an historic attraction in the area but many village residents can trace their ancestors’ employment to it, and in some cases their own, during its years in operation. Another attraction is the Rosalie
Bay beach where generations of area residents have come to fish in the rocky waters. The beach is now an area of conservation for the giant sea turtles that nest in its sands.

Research regarding heritage tourism tends to focus on the interactions between visitors and local communities. Timothy (1997) offers a broad description of “heritage” as it pertains to tourism as restoring a sense of time by preserving the past and its ideas. Heritage tourism supports a sense of identity in both the community and the visitor. For Timothy it is the emotions and experiences, and how they vary, for insiders and outsiders involved in heritage attractions that needs further study. Jamieson (2000), focuses on heritage tourism in Asia and expands upon it to include cultural aspects, identifying “cultural heritage tourism” as ideally being able to preserve, manage, sustain and provide economic development. Planning and management of cultural heritage tourism sites is imperative, and Jamieson points out several challenges in doing so. These include the need for impact assessments, cooperation and interpretation. Jamieson states, “The challenge is not to stop tourism but rather for all stakeholders to work together in achieving sustainable planning and management” (10).

Nuryanti’s (1996) is an examination of literature on heritage tourism and reiterates many points mentioned above. The author writes, “there is a need to understand interdependencies that exist between the community and the heritage structure or area” (256). The focus here falls on several different aspects of combined heritage and tourism including the uniqueness of areas, the economic implications for communities and, once again, the importance of interpretation regarding heritage areas. Interpretation, in this case, refers to the reconstruction of the past in the present. In the Grand Fond case, such interpretation would come from incorporating local knowledge of local history into such sites as the Rosalie plantation.

Similar to Nuryanti, Moscardo (1996) continues the examination of heritage tourism focusing on aspects of interpretation. In this case, the author adopts the terms “Ecologically Sustainable Tourism (EST)” and expands upon it to provide a framework to achieve successful interpretation (377-8). In EST, the general tendency, according to Moscardo, has been to focus on the biological and biophysical aspects of tourism rather than the social and cultural ones. In addition, the negative impacts of tourism often become the focus with little consideration of how to improve upon the situation. Moscardo looks toward two things in addressing these issues, mindfulness and interpretation. Here, effective interpretation of heritage sites and areas can help to make visitors mindful of what they are viewing, thereby fostering an appreciation of the
culture and history of a place. This brings out an important point for creating a sustainable tourist sector; it must consider the outsider as well as the insider, that is, the tourists and the community, in order to be successful. The interactions between outsiders and insiders and, in the case of the homestay, host and guest, act to foster respect for the natural environmental and ecology.

Other works further investigate the link between the tourist and the heritage site area. A 2003 paper by Poria, Butler and Airey draws upon research into heritage tourism from various other authors and offers insight into the relationships between perception and behavior of heritage site visitors in numerous locations around the world. There is a distinction made here between “heritage tourists,” those who consider what they are seeing to be part of their own heritage, and “tourists at heritage places,” who come to “gaze” upon an attraction (2003:248-9). According to the authors perceptions of attributes are more important than the attributes themselves and those who perceive a site as part of their personal heritage are “distinguished from others by their behavior” (2003:247 & 249). This concept is particularly useful in the planning phase of heritage attractions. In the Grand Fond case, and any other heritage tourism case, the goal becomes finding ways to maintain a balance of interest and integrity in order to satisfy both types of tourist.

Similarly, Uriely, Israeli and Reichel (2002), who draw their research from a case study of tourism in Nazareth, Israel talk about “heritage proximity,” or the “perceptual distance between residents and heritage promotion in a particular location” (859). These notions present an interesting problem in investigating community-based tourism. Essentially, in coordinating such efforts, a variety of perspectives come into consideration in order to ascertain exactly whose heritage is being promoted, whose is being ignored and the potential for conflict. In the context of Grand Fond, an example would be the Rosalie Plantation where it would be important to promote the site’s connection to the entire area, as well as the entire island, instead of just a few individuals who may be more prominent in its history.

Garrod and Fyall (2000, 2001) present a broader treatise on visitor impacts at heritage sites and on a host of other issues. This case study, which took place in the U.K., is helpful because it offers insight into how operators approach these issues at several heritage sites. The focus of Garrod & Fyall’s work turns largely toward funding of heritage sites, the problems and solutions. The authors conclude that there is “a close association between the fundamental elements of the heritage mission and the widely acknowledged principles of sustainable
development” (2000:702-3). However, they go on to state that this conclusion is open to debates. For instance, on one hand, conservation of heritage sites will maintain them for future generations. On the other, the future of sites cannot come at the expense of denying access to those whose heritage they belong. The result of the latter may be the eventual loss of that very heritage (2000:702-3). It is probable that this problem arises not only to heritage tourism but also in ecotourism in general. Finally, Garrod and Fyall’s findings point out that the heritage mission places more emphasis on conservation and education than contemporary recreational use and local community (2000:691, 701).

In Heuman’s work on “Hospitality and Reciprocity” (2005), the focus is on the relationship between host and guest. The research occurs in Dominica, specifically within the territory of the Carib Native Americans, and the study includes extensive research on visitor-host interaction. Heuman points to such things as protection (e.g. accommodation, security of guests, etc.) and reciprocity (e.g. gifts, exchange of work for accommodation, etc.) as being prominent in these interactions (412-13). The findings indicate that when fostering the relationship between guest (tourists) and host (community), even during shorter visitations, there is often a building of respect and friendships between the two as well as the tendency for the guest to become concerned about the community, particularly regarding the effects of tourism. This result is an example of protection carrying on even after the visitation is over. If similar relationships are possible in other tourism places and in other circumstances on the island, they may help offset some of the negative impacts of mass tourism such as degradation of the environment and the lack of knowledge regarding impacts on communities.

Finally, Weaver (1993) lays out a simple, yet helpful, diagram and provides an accompanying discussion of distance-decay of tourist spending around cruise ship ports such as those in the Caribbean and including Dominica. This diagram, similar to figure 3 shown earlier in this work, is important to this proposed research because the areas of interest, Grand Fond and Rosalie, lie on the opposite side of the island and therefore outside the port buffers zones as exemplified in Weaver’s work. It is important to note, however, that cruise ship tourists to Dominica do sometimes venture to other attractions on the other side of the island, which makes the possibility of their visiting Grand Fond and/or Rosalie a real possibility. For now, the distance makes shifting tourists money into the area problematic for obvious reasons including transportation costs, coordination, lack of marketing of sites, etc. Weaver does present two
exceptions to the distance-decay model for cruise and stopover visitors: First, historical structures and the like located within the central business district may draw tourists outside of the port zone. For Dominica, the main port city of Roseau happens to be its central business district. Second, small hotels/guesthouses owned by locals and that cater to stopovers may as well. Grand Fond, as it happens, falls into this latter category in the form of the locally owned and operated ecolodge called Rosalie Forest Ecolodge (RFE), a business that has been deeply involved in fostering the existing tourism sector there. A few other facilities and businesses do take tourists to the Rosalie area. Such operations run the gamut of scale. Some are smaller and locally based, like RFE, while others have an international base, such as “I-to-I” travel (i-to-i.com), a group that offers “meaningful tours” and volunteer opportunities in Grand Fond and other villages. The problem remains that cruise passengers are only on the island for a single day so while it may be possible to draw them to the other side of the island to visit certain attractions will not be possible for them to stay overnight. Stopover guests, however, may pursue such an option due to the combination of lodging and attractions.

2.2 Governmental and Non-Governmental Organization Resources

The 2006, the Commonwealth of Dominica, with assistance from the IMF and the World Bank, enacted a “Medium-Term Growth and Social Protection Strategy” (GSPS) seen earlier in this work. Once again, it outlines the country’s plan to reduce poverty over the next five years by focusing on economic and social policy. In addition, a large part of the plan is devoted to enhancing the tourism industry and, subsequently, to increasing community involvement in it. A few of the guiding principles proposed within the plan are:

1. Integration of tourism policy and development programs into national economic, social and cultural policy.
2. The tourism sector fosters a positive environment and meaningful local participation.
3. Local communities will play a meaningful role in the tourism sector, one that ensures economic, social and cultural benefits to each participating community.
4. Tourism activity will be designed to improve the
quality of life enjoyed by Dominica’s citizens.

5. Tourism activity will be private sector driven.

6. Policies and standards regarding tourism will be integrated with the principles and directions required of the tourism sector arising from Green Globe certification (GSPS 2006: 4).

The GSPS further states that the government supports the incorporation of heritage interpretive programs into their tourism sector as well as other cultural products. Simultaneously, there is a desire to promote sustainable tourism development, as has been the case in the past, in order to create jobs and opportunities for present and future generations while protecting the natural environment and resources of the island.

The GSPS is important to this thesis because it indicates a need for further research on community-based tourism projects in Dominica. This helps to justify a project such as the present one. The GSPS, particularly in its guidelines, contributes greatly to the direction of this research by providing a broad framework for its implementation. However, it is notable that despite the fact that the GSPS promotes such projects, the Grand Fond homestay project is going on independently, with no support from the government or its organizations. This does raise the question of whether government documents like this really matter. In the context of the Grand Fond homestay, the answer so far is no. At the same time, there is an issue here regarding what the government of Dominica says they will do, and what is actually taking place on the ground. By not implementing, or openly showing support for, community-based tourism projects and the like, the government’s concern seems insincere.

Of similar importance to the GSPS is the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States’ (OECS) “Review of the Policy, Legal and Institutional Frameworks for Protected Areas Management in Dominica” prepared by Lloyd Gardner (2006). The OECS is an organization comprised of seven Caribbean countries including Dominica that share the common pursuit of sustainable growth and development and that assist each other to achieve it. This document gives detailed information on Dominica’s area development processes, policies, legislative frameworks, issues and recommendations for the island. The review also summarizes the status of protected areas in Dominica, many of which are tourism areas, and offers a map of other potential areas for protection, some of which are cultural and historic features found in the
Rosalie region, which includes Grand Fond and other villages (*Figure 5*, next page). Like Dominica’s GSPS, the OECS report aims to promote “sustainable livelihoods for those communities traditionally dependent on protected areas resources” (21). The OECS report also lists some of the issues and concerns that surround Dominica’s GSPS program and particularly its implications for protected areas. For instance, while there are institutions in place in Dominica to assist in establishing and managing protected areas there is inadequate institutional coordination. Gardner writes that there “is no established institutional coordinating mechanism for protected areas management in Dominica” (7). Protected sites also lack adequate budgetary support from the government (9). These issues will affect any establishment of tourism attractions based on cultural or historic relevance in the area of Rosalie. At the same time, they may help to explain why small-scale tourism projects such as the Grand Fond homestay receive little support or enactment from the government or its organizations.

The GSPS and the OECS provide a guide by which to separate this research project into two broad topics: sustainable development and tourism. While published resources that discuss these two topics in their Dominica or Caribbean context will receive emphasis in this thesis, it will also include other relevant resources that are more general in their discussion or that take place in other parts of the world.
Figure 5: Places of cultural and historical significance in Dominica. The Rosalie region located midway down the eastern coast includes a church, battle site, watermill and others sites. Source: OECS 2006 Report; taken from Country Environmental Profile 1991.
Issues that prompted Dominica to enact its Medium-Term Growth and Social Protection Strategy are similar to those found on other islands in the Caribbean and include a financial dependency on such organizations as the IMF and the World Bank. Other issues relate to the island’s existing tourism sector, its level of sustainability and its economic benefits, particularly for the poor. In understanding these issues and their potential remedies, it is helpful to look to the nearby island of St. Lucia where circumstances are similar.

St. Lucia is like Dominica in several ways. The island is largely of volcanic origins, has steep coastlines, rainforest and a host of small and large communities spread throughout. Like several Caribbean islands including Dominica, St. Lucia (Figures 6 & 7) is experiencing major economic and social “disruptions” as a result of the loss of banana exports (Renard 2001:2). The decision to launch the Heritage Tourism Programme, discussed earlier in Cooper’s (2000) work, stems from past approaches to remedying such issues that have been unsuccessful at positively affecting communities.

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) held a workshop in 1999 in conjunction with the St. Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme, shortly after the program’s onset. The workshop focused on how heritage tourism on the island can boost the economic growth of smaller communities. Documentation of the event gives details on the enactment of these programs at that time and therefore provides valuable information for this project. For example,
in the village of Laborie on the South-West coast of the island (Figure 7), a 15-person organization assembled to do three things. They were to 1) identify, develop and conserve nature-heritage sites in the area in collaboration with local, state and government agencies, 2) disseminate information and organize activities that develop awareness within the community, and 3) promote activities associated with traditions and customs of the community. The community of Laborie, in this case, comes together to address issues relating to its tourism sector such as sanitation and waste disposal. Leaders point out that the biggest problem so far has been maintaining the village’s identity, culture and heritage while fostering its tourism sector. Drawing from opinions of members in this community and others on the island like it, CANARI formed an assessment for community-based tourism that include, among other things, enabling policies, community vision, marketing, funding and infrastructure. At the same time, participants define their goal as being “sustainable community development,” their strategy as “community-based tourism” and their products as “nature, heritage, culture and rural life” (CANARI 1999:4).

In a 2001 publication, Renard revisits the St. Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme and the Laborie heritage project. He points out that some of the results so far indicate that it has been able to influence national policies involving community participation, planning and policy formulation and the bringing together of a wide range of stakeholders. In addition, an important lesson comes from the Laborie heritage project. That is, tourism cannot exist outside of other aspects of development. Renard explains, “There cannot be a vision for tourism development; there can only be a vision for development, within which tourism finds its place” (11). The author also describes the impacts and lessons of other cases on St. Lucia. The village of Anse la Raye is on the mid-west coast and Fond Latisab is in the north. Source: Google Maps (2010).
Raye (Image 7) has several heritage sites incorporated into its tourism program. At the same time, village events such as seafood nights also foster participation and community identity within this tourism sector. Fond Latisab (Image 7) is a small heritage site that is located on a rural farm and it employs five people. In this case, community involvement has been minimal due to size constraints. However, the site has become a source of local pride and a resource for cultural heritage interpretation. As the program grows in popularity, more jobs for local people may come about directly or indirectly. Renard’s case studies clarify that the impacts and lessons from each case, while context specific, are dependent upon such things as the community, the area, and the goals they wish to achieve. Further information on the St. Lucia Project is available from the St. Lucia Small Enterprise Development Unit (SEDU), which is in charge of this, and several other programs (http://www.sedcostlucia.com/).

These lessons are applicable to the Grand Fond project. For example, ideally the home stay will contribute to the further development of the community and region while preserving the authentic heritage of the people who live there.

2.3 Homestay Literature

One way in which income from ecotourism or alternative tourism can infiltrate into communities and villages is by having tourists stay in the homes of individuals in those areas. This is the “homestay,” and it is unique in that it changes the atmosphere of tourism from what tend to be extravagant accommodations and settings to the more modest homes of actual community members. It also provides visitors a much more direct and authentic cultural experience than staying at hotels or ecolodges. There may still be intermediates that assist in promoting and filtering tourists into those communities (RFE in the Grand Fond case), but the overall goal is to benefit the communities and the involvement of such entities comes from necessity.

A simple and straightforward definition of “homestay” comes from Richardson’s 2003 paper that addresses the quality of such services in Australia. Richardson defines homestay as “the concept of sojourners residing with a family within a target culture.” Richardson goes on to identify two different forms of homestay, that is, bed and breakfast accommodations and international student accommodations (2003:2). The latter of these pertains in particular, but not exclusively, to those who are engaging in foreign language studies, which is a focus of
Richardson’s research. In addition, the author makes distinctions between the “homestay host,” who provides accommodations, the “homestay provider,” or the coordinator of the program, and the “homestay students,” international students both minors and adults (2). These terms are useful because they also apply to the three primary entities involved in the Grand Fond homestay program. These consist of host families residing in the Rosalie region of Dominica, the coordinator of the program in the form of Jem Winston (i.e. Rosalie Forest Eco Lodge) and the various guests, including students from Miami University, who have participated in the program.

Literature on homestay programs highlights some crucial features and concerns relevant to the Grand Fond experience. Lynch (2000) studies homestays in the English language sector, mainly the United Kingdom, and indicates that the family is the “key concept in attempting to understand the homestay sector” because they affect the guests by setting the norms and the behaviors in the home (2000:104). The family in this case is distinct from the host who, in Lynch’s area of study, is normally female and often has the support and consent of the partner (104). Even the development cycle of the family, for example their age range, can affect the level of interaction that will take place. For example, younger hosts tend to involve themselves in the program because of its monetary benefits while older hosts tend to be interested in the friendships that can develop as a result (104-105).

Other authors such as Gu and Wong (2006) examine homestays in China’s Dachangshan Dao province in order to understand host family perceptions of tourism impacts. Similar to Lynch’s research, Gu and Wong identify the importance of the age of the homestay operators but their findings differ. In this case, younger operators with higher educational levels are concerned with the general improvement in quality of life. Middle-aged operators tend to be concerned with the economic benefits of tourism. Senior operators more often show concern for the deterioration of the physical environment in which they grew up (268). Out of a listing of 21 items that homestay operators pinpoint as important impacts of tourism, almost half pertain to the potential negative environmental impacts such as air, land and sea pollution, erosion in and around beach areas and damage to vegetation. Some of the positive impacts of homestay listed were improved village appearance, improved quality of life, increased household income and an influx of new information (262). In the case of the Grand Fond homestay, improved quality of life and increased income for host families is evident while overall village appearance and information influx is difficult to determine.
Other issues arise in the investigations of homestay projects around the world. Wang’s 2007 research on the Naxi cultural group in the Lijiang province in China examines the ways in which “tradition” and “authenticity” are being used and constructed as marketing points for the burgeoning tourism industry across China (792). Since one of the main reasons tourists are interested in participating in a homestay is to experience the authentic culture of local inhabitants, constructing authenticity can, in some ways, be problematic. This stems in large part from the idea that tourists want both authenticity and comfort at the same time. In this particular case, the homestay idea among the Naxi people has caught on significantly and many of the villagers are now involved. However, as Wang points out, in an effort to draw tourists in, residents often make modifications to their homes such as installing flushing toilets, bathtubs, television sets and telephones. In Grand Fond, host homes may already contain some of these household components, however, in most cases making such modifications for the sole purpose of the homestay is not feasible due to, for the most part, lack of income. Wang also states that daily routines, cooking styles and manner of speech change as well and evidence drawn from guest feedback indicates that these changes may be occurring in the Grand Fond context. Finally, the Naxi peoples incorporate “traditional” architectural styles and clothing thereby creating a mixture of culture and comfort for guests, or “customized authenticity” (797). These factors according to Wang are what, at least in the minds of the Naxi, create an “ideal home for the guest” (793). The examples above indicate that tourist expectations are typically of a higher quality than the accommodations that villagers can offer. This is a cause for concern particularly for the Grand Fond homestay project, which emphasizes an authentic Dominican experience.

Other authors have been looking at the sustainable aspects of homestay projects. As seen earlier, Moscardo, et al (1996) coin the term “ecologically-sustainable tourism” (EST), asking the question “is specialist accommodation more likely to be sustainable than traditional accommodation?” (33). Remember, sustainability to Moscardo must consider the outsider and the insider and foster respect for the natural environment and ecology in order to be successful. Specialist accommodation, according to the authors, meets some or all of the following criteria:

1. Personal service or guest interaction with a small core of host personnel in a range of settings

2. Some special opportunity or advantage to guests through location, features of an establishment and/or activities offered to guests
3. Accommodation which is usually owner-operated and not part of any chain or consortium (32)

In this vein, several other questions regarding the differences between specialist accommodation (e.g. homestays) and traditional accommodations (e.g. hotels and the like) arise such as:

1. Is one more small-scale than the other is?
2. Is one or the other more likely to be locally owned?
3. Is one more likely to provide employment and economic opportunities to local residents than the other is?
4. Is the character of either more likely to reflect the nature of the region?
5. Which provides greater encouragement for the protection of heritage?
6. Does one have fewer adverse impacts?
7. Does one provide a better quality of experience?
8. Is one more likely to be successful? (33-49)

Overall, the authors found that common assumptions, such as the smaller the scale the greater the guest-host interactions, do not hold up to scrutiny. More importantly, there can be no broad conclusion regarding the sustainable nature of such accommodations. Instead, each instance requires assessment within the contexts of differing categories and regions. Issues of environmental impact, for example, are specific to their regions and the circumstances therein. In the end, Moscardo, et al, conclude that small-scale tourism ventures, like specialist accommodations, will not replace large-scale conventional tourism. However, it may provide a greater variety in tourism experiences as well as a path of tourism development in areas that lack such (50). It is in this way that small-scale tourism can effectively bring tourist income down to the local and village levels.

Finally, Mooney’s (1996) paper on homestays in Costa Rica examines feedback from both hosts and guests. The author talks about the effectiveness of word-of-mouth advertising in order to get families involved in the program (93). Interviews with host families showed that they did not consider themselves part of the tourist industry but as participants in cultural exchange. In this way, families vicariously experience other cultures without actually leaving their own. Guests, who in this case are students, act as mediums through which cultural
information is conveyed (94). This aspect is significant in the case of the Grand Fond homestay because it is one of the main goals of the project. In addition, informal interviews with Grand Fond host families are consistent with Mooney’s findings.

As for the students who participated in the Costa Rica program, many said that they did not feel like they were tourists. Students commented on the differences in such things as the standards of living of the host family in comparison to that of the students’ own culture, but also differences in food and language. Some of the problems expressed by the students were lack of privacy and a sense of one’s freedom and independence being restricted. Overall, most of the students were able to adapt to these differences within the first few days of their stay (Mooney 1996:96-7).

In the Mooney’s opinion, there is no more effective way for tourists to meet the people and understand their traditions than by staying in the same house. The author writes that cultural exchange of this sort “helps to elevate the dominant culture from imposing its standards, and the non-dominant culture from being a victim of acculturation” (1996:97-8).

The publications mentioned above are valuable to this case study. Many of the themes, methods and results of the preceding authors complement the data obtained over the course of the Grand Fond, Dominica investigation. The ideas of sustainable development set the stage for the questions of why this type of tourism and this research is relevant and how they can be successful. In addition, lessons taken from community-based tourism studies, particularly existing homestay projects, provide opportunities for helpful comparisons and increase the potential for viable solutions to common problems. The remainder of this thesis will relate this literature to the case study of homestay in Grand Fond.
Chapter 3
The Homestay Program in Grand Fond, Dominica

3.1 Homestay Program Overview

The Rosalie Forest Ecolodge (RFE) homestay program (http://www.3riversdominica.com/accommodation_homestay.php) was originally the idea of owner Jem Winston and it involves offering guests that are already staying at the ecolodge a chance to spend one or two nights with families living in the nearby village of Grand Fond. During June and July of 2007, I began working with Jem and Mr. Kemon Cuffy, an employee of RFE, on the initial stages of the program. My own involvement with the program lasted nearly three years and included five separate visits to the island.

The first step in the program was to set up guidelines for participation for both the host families and their guests. In this case, the safety and comfort of all parties involved was our main concern and cultural interaction between both parties was decidedly the overall goal for the program. After much discussion, and later with input from the participating host families, the following general guidelines were set up:

| Host Families and Guests | - Homestay durations are limited to one or two nights  
- Families are to be notified of guest(s) arrival at least one day in advance but with efforts to provide notice much further in advance  
- Guest transportation to and from the homes will be provided by RFE  
- Issues, concerns and suggestions are welcome and should be directed to RFE (Jem Winston) |

Table 3.1: Homestay Guidelines
Provided by Host Family
- Meals (dinner and breakfast)
- Clean and private (separate) bedrooms
- Clean sheets and towels
- Access to bathroom
- Inclusion and interaction in household activities and conversations

The guidelines include other information for the guests and the families that pertain to such things as meeting as the needs of vegetarian clients, guest cancellation information and suggestions for mutual participation in activities (e.g. farming, cooking, hiking, etc).

Pricing for the program and the distribution of payments to host families and to the lodge were also set up. Table 3.2 shows the homestay pay schedule at the time of this writing in April of 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Guests</th>
<th>Total cost in XCD*</th>
<th>Total cost in USD</th>
<th>Income for Host XCD/USD</th>
<th>Income for RFE XCD/USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$76.50</td>
<td>$125/ $46.55</td>
<td>$75/ $27.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$325</td>
<td>$124.31</td>
<td>$225/ $83.78</td>
<td>$100/ $37.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* XCD is Eastern Caribbean Dollars and the exchange rate is currently $2.7 to 1 U.S. dollar.

The prices above reflect single and double guest occupancy and two is so far the highest number allowable per host family. Accommodation for slightly larger groups may be possible providing special arrangements are made through RFE and the host agrees to them. These prices also include a 15% value added tax (VAT) as required by the government of Dominica on services and a surcharge to cover the expenses of RFE such as transportation for guests to and from the village homes, arranging guest stays and a small commission. The total amount of income earned by a single host family is $125 XCD for one guest and $225 XCD for two (i.e. $47.81 US and 86.06 US respectively).
Working together, Jem, Kemon and I created documents of terms and conditions for hosts and guests as well as a contract agreement, signed by the hosts and Mr. Winston, and a waiver of liability form signed by the guests. Each host and guest receives a copy of these forms to keep while a separate copy goes to RFE. Issues with liability also bring to light a major difference between the RFE Homestay Program and Mooney’s Costa Rica program mentioned earlier that hosts students. Educational institutions usually require that all students, particularly those involved in learning abroad, obtain insurance for the duration of their stays. Conversely, the RFE program, not set up exclusively for student guests, does not require guests to carry insurance. In addition, the variation of homestay guests in age, occupation, nationality, experience, etc., results in a host family knowing less of what to expect from any given guest. It is for these reasons that the host/guest agreement and liability forms are very specific in their details and stress the importance of safety to all participants. Detailed copies of the terms and conditions forms and the agreement/liability forms appear in appendices A-D at the end of this work.

The second step in the program was to identify and contact those families with an interest in participating. Both Jem and Kemon had ideas on who would be interested and Kemon was instrumental in setting up meetings between those families and me. Kemon was especially helpful as he is a resident in the village of Grand Fond where the majority of families are located and therefore had access to them at times that may have been inopportune for me because I was either working at RFE, where I also was residing, or because I was back in the United States. Through word of mouth, talking to various villagers and hanging fliers in the village, we were able to interest five families from Grand Fond and one other family from another nearby village called Freyal in the region of Riviere Ciriques to participate. It is notable that the fliers attracted little attention while word-of-mouth stirred much interest. Figure 8 shows a detailed map of the Rosalie region including RFE and Grand Fond as well as the region of Riviere Ciriques where the tiny village of Freyal is located.
Once we identified the families, I went about visiting each one to gather personal information about them to present to potential guests via the RFE website. Simultaneously, and possibly more importantly, the goal of the personal visitations was to establish an element of familiarity and trust between the participants and myself. The personal information varied between families, as all of them are unique in their own ways, which is the essence of the program. There were several general questions asked of each. These included:

1. How many family members reside in the house (adults and children)?
2. What are the occupations/activities of the family members?
3. How many guests can the family accommodate at one time?
4. What amenities are available to guests?
5. What can guests expect during their stays?

Figure 8: Map of Rosalie and the surrounding regions on the west coast of Dominica. Includes Rosalie Forest Ecolodge (blue triangle), Grand Fond (blue circle) and Riviere Ciriques (blue square). 1”~ .5m. Map created by the Dominica Tourism Board, Commonwealth of Dominica, 1991.
The range of answers to these questions provides the basis for which guests choose their host family. Also during these visits I took photographs of the family, the available accommodations and anything else that was deemed helpful, such as the outside of a home or the family garden for example.

After collecting information on each of the families Jem, Kemon and I went about creating web page write-ups describing each one. Each family has their own page that is separated into three sections entitled: “The Family,” The Accommodations” and “To Do” (http://www.rosalieforest.com/accomodation__homestay.php). The descriptions are somewhat intimate in that aspects of each family’s lives are open and available for anyone to see on the internet. This too creates a problem in that issues of privacy surface as do ethical considerations because the web pages are essentially a means of marketing people. To help counter these concerns, the families were able to review their personal web pages before they prior to publishing them on the internet and make any changes that they felt were necessary. Some families did make changes but overall they were very satisfied with the web pages. On the RFE website, a separate section called “Village Homestay” contains each of the families’ pages. The following pages show the six original host families’ descriptions and pictures as they appear on the internet.
Welcome to the home of the Laurence Family – Grand Fond, Dominica

The Family

The Laurence family consists of Ebi, 30, and his mother Paula Abraham, who has her own small banana farm, which she works on herself, with Ebi’s help, sometimes! They have a pit bull dog named Shaba, who looks after guests during their visit!

Ebi has worked in the past as a police officer and a primary school teacher, and is currently working as a tour guide, taking guests to all corners of the island. He also likes dancing, and is a very active member of the local village Catholic Church, where he plays music on occasion.

The Accommodation

The Laurence family home is modest and traditional. The bedroom available is compact and clean, and Ebi is an excellent cook ensuring that you are never hungry at the Laurence’s.

The house has no running water, but there is a pipe outside. To bath you can either wash in the river, or collect water from the pipe and wash at the back of the house. A traditional outside pit toilet is adjacent to the accommodation. The house does have television and electricity.

A night with the Laurence family, is a real taste of traditional, and still widely practiced Dominican life.

To Do

Sunday is church day for the Laurence’s, but Ebi enjoys a drink at the weekends at the local disco, Steve's place! During the day, it is also possible to get some experience with Paula on the banana farm. Ebi is also one of the most knowledgeable people in the village when it comes to local history.
Welcome to the home of the Lazare Family – Grand Fond, Dominica

The Family

Mrs. Lazare, Gweneth, (aka Shi Shi) is most definitely the head of the Lazare household. She lives with her husband, Andrew, her grandson Anton, and her two adopted young children, Jonika and Johnson. They also have a cat named Tiger - so beware. Shi Shi is the head of restaurant and housekeeping here at Rosalie Forest, Anton, 22, is a fireman and a qualified tour guide, and Andrew, whilst currently unemployed, is working on an extension to the family home. Jonika and Johnson are 12 and 13 years old respectively and both attend Castle Bruce secondary school.

The Accommodation

The Lazare family home an interesting mixture of modern and traditional Dominican architecture, with an old coal pot wooden structure kitchen, the original wooden part of the house, and the new concrete extension being built by Andrew. They have a TV, and phone, and live a relatively humble life.

There are two guest rooms available in the, original, traditional part of the house, which are basic and comfortable. Any guest from Rosalie Forest or any village member, can vouch for the food, which is normally taken with the family together, in the living room and not at a dining table; a very Dominican way to do things! Shi Shi is not always present for dinner, as she is catering to the rest of the Rosalie Forest hunger needs!

To Do

Play games with Janika and Johnson; drink and play dominos, drink and play dominos, and drink and play dominos with Anton, but deal with the wrath of Shi Shi when you get home! Anton is also lead singer in the local reggae and calypso star band, The Blazing Squad.

Alternatively, chat and socialize with Shi Shi and Andrew, or if it is Sunday, the family are very involved in the local Catholic church.
Welcome to the home of the Pascal Family – Grand Fond, Dominica

The Family

The Pascal family is part of local history, and the household has 3 members, Joyce Pascal, her father Ryan, and her nephew Bernette, 27. Joyce is the current chairperson of The Community Management Committee (CMC), a community based organization that tries to assist with the development of the village.

Joyce worked closely with us here at Rosalie Forest, to develop the village bamboo cafe. In the past, she has been chairperson of the local government village council. She has also been a women's bureau field officer and a schoolteacher.

Her father, Ryan, is 99 years old, and is still, to this day, the village bottled gas salesman, as well as enjoying cricket and playing the banjo. Bernette is young, free and single, and spends much of his time helping his aunt with the upkeep of The Rosalie Estate, which she inherited a part share of a few years ago, when Saudia's father (Joyce's daughter who lives in England) Conrad Cyrus, the old estate owner, passed away.

The Accommodation

The Pascal family home is modern and reasonable well equipped, with television, telephone, and even internet access. The bedroom is a decent size, and there is a living room where the family spends their time together.

As a rule, the Pascal's eat together around the family dinner table, whilst watching TV or having family discussions.

To Do

Go drinking with Bernette, and play Dominoes in the local bar, sit and chat with Joyce, or play the banjo with Ryan; whatever you choose, this lively family, are looking forward to welcoming you into their home.
Welcome to Marcelline Lawrence’s Family home – Freyal, Dominica

The Family

The Lawrence family, Marcelline, her husband Ivan, daughter Gracie and their dog Shady, lives in the village of Freyal close to Riviere Ciriques, Dominica.

The family has a local farm that produces bananas, cocoa, coffee, spice (cinnamon) and other crops, and this is where Ivan spends much of his time. Gracie is a primary school teacher in nearby Morne Jaune and Marcelline spends much of her time gardening and maintaining the home.

The Accommodation

The Lawrence family lives in one of Dominica’s more modern homes and have television, a telephone and running water, although extra water is also collected from outside.

The available bedroom is spacious and comfortable and the family often relaxes in the living room during the evenings to watch television or to have conversations. Meals are usually taken together.

Please note: this is a non-smoking and non-alcoholic household.

To Do

Assist in household and gardening tasks with Marcelline, visit the farm and participate in boxing bananas, weeding dasheen or learning about spice (cinnamon) harvesting with Ivan, or visit the primary school in Morne Jaune with Gracie. Guests are also invited to attend the local Pentecostal church with the family on Sundays.
Welcome to the home of the Prince Family – Grand Fond, Dominica

The Family

Edith and Alphonse Prince are amongst Grand Fond's youngest inhabitants! They live with their 18-year-old grandson, Randel, in a traditional house near the top of the village. As well as farming cinnamon and dasheen, they also have a beautifully manicured flower garden that is their pride and joy.

The Accommodation

Their modest family home, which has electricity and running water, is clean and comfortable.

The bedroom, although fairly small, is bright and cheerful, with a great view of the well kept gardens.

To Do

Edith and Alphonse could always do with a helping hand in the garden, and enjoy conversation about almost anything. Edith is an experienced cook, and both of them have a lot of gardening knowledge to share with their guests.
Welcome to the lively home of the Lockhart Family – Grand Fond, Dominica

The Family

The Lockharts live in Grand Fond and the family is a large one, consisting of Martin and Joann, and their seven children, ranging in age from 3 to 20 years old.

Martin works as a fireman at Melville Hall Airport and spends most of his free time working in the garden or entertaining friends. Joann, with occasional help from Martin and the children, runs a local convenience store and bar in the village, which sells fried chicken and chips at the weekends. Most of the Lockhart’s seven children attend school, while the eldest child, Ortisha, has graduated from college.

The Accommodation

The family lives in quite a large, but traditional, Dominican home, with electricity, running water and television.

They also has a very large garden area full of dasheen (a local root vegetable) and star fruit, which they occasionally sell, as well as providing for the family.

To Do

Help Joann and Martin in their gardens, hike around the area with the kids, relax and have a drink with Martin, or help the family in their local business. On Sundays, guests are also welcome to attend the local Baptist church with the family members.
3.2 Program Issues & Concerns

Early on in the program, several issues arose. One of these was the problem of establishing my own credibility with the host families who were inviting me into their homes and sharing personal information with me. After all, I am an outsider. Jem Winston, on the other hand, is well known and respected by many locals as an employer, community member and, although originally from England, he is now a Dominican citizen. In addition, Kemon Cuffy is familiar to nearly everyone in the Grand Fond community and by many outside of the village as well. Thus, my credibility with community members began with my collaboration with these two individuals and I am unaware of any hindrances resulting from such. In addition, when interviewing the host families I found that being forthcoming about not only the program goals but also my own goals as a participant and researcher seemed to make them more willing to open up to me. After the initial interviews, I was able to remain in contact with most of the families, and visited some of them on later return trips to the island.

Another issue that arose early had to do with the fact that the requirements for participation in the program were automatically, and unfortunately, exclusionary. For instance, the need to provide guests with private accommodations means that only those families with extra rooms/space can participate. In many instances, it was the more wealthy members of the community that had such extra room. Thus, those individuals/families with more modest homes and those with a large number of people occupying the home could not participate. The result is that while the homestay program seeks to allow guests to experience Dominican life, inevitably, they will miss, at least in part, what life is like for villagers of more modest means. This issue comes with the added concern that such exclusions may create tensions between individuals within the community. However, there has been no evidence of this so far.

In setting up the program, I became aware that some members of the community believe that one of the participating families is involved in witchcraft activity. Prior to visiting this particular family, I heard that I should not to let the individuals in the home touch me, for that is how they would draw power from me. While I am in no position to opine on the truth of this matter it did cause me to consider what implications their participation would have. For example, there could be implications for how other community members perceive the family and the guests, who are not privy to the situation. In the end, the family in question did participate in the
program and feedback from guests that stayed in this family’s home shows no indication of negative consequences relating to this concern.

To date there have been approximately 45 guests of the homestay project. In 2008 and 2009, students and faculty from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio were participants. In between the University visits, there have been various other guests throughout the years. These non-University guests tend to be predominantly couples who are staying longer on the island.

As the program progresses other issues come up, the most troublesome of which is the issue of money. This ties in with the limits in guest numbers at RFE, so small numbers of homestay guests is not surprising since only a tiny fraction of the RFE guests will participate. RFE’s number of guests varies depending on the season and at its highest point, there may be 25-30 people staying there. During the slower times of the year, there may only be one or two guests. One issue affecting the homestay relates to the dissolving of the former “3 Rivers Ecolodge,” and the creation of “Rosalie Forest Ecolodge,” The result of which was a change in the type of accommodations available to guests at the lodge but not necessarily in the numbers of guests that visit. It is important to realize that since the homestay program is an activity that is tied to, and very much dependent upon, RFE, any occurrence within that business has a direct effect on the program and thereby the potential income for participating families. It is worth noting that it may be possible in the future for the village members to take over the organization of the homestay project, however, the idea is not currently under consideration. In such a circumstance, the homestay would presumably face issues similar to the ones mentioned in this thesis. At one point, Jem’s decision was to lower the price from $150 XCD for one guest and $250 XCD for two guests to $125 XCD for one guest and $225 XCD for two. The result of this drop was that one host family abandoned the program. However, prior to the decision Jem called a meeting of all families to discuss the issue with them and, according to him, none of the families expressed dismay over lowering the price in order to encourage guest participation. Since then, business got better and eventually the price came back up. Presently the price stands at $200 XCD for one person and $325 XCD for two (see table 3.2 for the pricing breakdown).

More recently, a broader concern is beginning to reveal itself. That is, the possibility of government regulation affecting the program. The speculation by Jem and others is that homestay hosts may have to adhere to the same standards as larger accommodations, such as hotels. Such regulations would include such things as white sheets on the beds, spotless
accommodations and routine inspections among others. While such regulations are often beneficial for guests, they simultaneously go against the entire purpose of this program, which is to experience Dominican life in as real of a setting as possible. At the time of this writing, April 2010, no regulations have been imposed.

Despite the issues and concerns mentioned above, the RFE homestay program is growing in participation with four new host families added since its onset bringing the total number to 10 and, as mentioned above, approximately 45 guests so far. The following section shows that the feedback from guests that have stayed with these families indicates that the program is working well.

3.3 Feedback from Homestay Guests

Feedback from homestay hosts, guests and RFE owner, Jem Winston informs this work and offers valuable insight into how well the program is working. In July of 2007, a middle-aged couple from France became the first guests to participate in the RFE homestay. They stayed in the Grand Fond home of Ebi Lawrence and his mother Paula Abraham. They provided the following quote to me after their homestay experience:

“We arrived in Grand Fond around 5 pm, and Ebi took us straight to church for a choral practice, very nice! We then went to his place to have a homemade coffee and to visit the house. We settled in the first room on the right, but unfortunately Mama Abraham was in Roseau during all our stay because she was sick. After a little while, we all went to see people playing football on the village field, a nice moment with the villagers, with a lot of kids taking interest on us. It was then time for dinner; Ebi’s cousin came to help cooking, nice food but quick dinner, local style I guess. His cousin stayed to eat with her children but then ate in the kitchen after us. After that we went around in the village and Ebi invited us for a drink at the bar before going to sleep. The next day he woke up at 6.30 am with the radio very loud to clean the house. So as you can imagine we woke up as well (guest should be told about that, but don’t ask Ebi to change). When we got out of our room a coffee was waiting for us, before a large breakfast (more likely to a lunch, very nice). Then he took us with some children (cousins) to visit two wonderful waterfalls, that was gorgeous. We took them [the children] home and that was the end of our home stay (around 12.30).
We really enjoyed the overall experience because we really felt dived [sic] into the community. We spoke a lot with Ebi about many interesting subjects (he is clever and very open minded). We also met a lot of people and now, any time we go to Grand Fond, we have a lot of friends. That makes us want to go there more and more. First we think that the price was a bit high, but by speaking with Jem we realise that it’s hard to make it cheaper as many people are involved [in the homestay program].”

Several items are notable here. First, this couple is French, which explains some of the English writing discrepancies. Second, and more importantly, the cultural exchange goal of the homestay project seems to work and money from RFE guests made it into the pockets of a Grand Fond family. Third, interaction between the hosts and guests in this case seems fruitful, which fits with one of the main goals of the program. Fourth, the unexpected event, i.e. waking up at 6:30am, indicates a need to be as thorough as possible when describing host family routines, however, it seems unlikely that every detail is accountable. Since one of the main goals of the project is to offer guests an authentic experience, it is not feasible to ask hosts to change common aspects of their daily lives. Lastly, and once again, issues of cost come up and although this couple understands the reasoning behind those costs, other guests may choose not to participate on those grounds. This may especially be true considering RFE offers the experience to the guests that are already paying to stay at the ecolodge. The rates at RFE are as low as $40 XCD ($14.90 USD) per night for a camping plot and as high as $240 XCD ($89.37 USD) per night for a cottage.

The second pair of guests to participate in the homestay did not do so until December of 2007, nearly six months after the first guests. This couple was younger than the first and was from the United States. They stayed in the home of Edith and Alphonse Prince. The following is an excerpt from written statements the couple gave me regarding their stay:

“I think it was a really great experience for so many reasons-I will definitely leave Dominica with a much better perspective on everyday life here, and it was nice to establish connections in the village. We hope to go back and visit many of the people we met in the remainder of our time here. We got to hear Dominicans’ side on many issues-from international politics to food and farming, economics and perhaps more than anything else, sports-especially cricket! The morning after we slept at the Princes’ house, Edith sent us around the village to
meet all her children and their families, which was a highlight of our stay. While Edith and Alphonse, being pretty old, were a little difficult to converse with, their children were overflowing with things to talk about. Alphonse was so interesting, though, as an old-timer who had worked and lived here for so long, and Edith was an incredible cook and caring hostess, if a little stern at times. Another big highlight was their granddaughter, Selena, being there for the holidays. It was really nice having an interaction with a young child. I helped her with reading and we taught her how to play checkers, or Drafts as Alphonse called it.”

“Overall this is an experience well worth the money and time. The meeting with the families was invaluable. It has given our time here so much more depth than had we not stayed with a family. We congratulated ourselves on picking Edith and Alphonse, as we later felt like we had an “in” with the community.

I wouldn’t change anything about our stay with the Princes. No one can know how things will happen. If you expect something to be one way-and it turns out to be another way-only you are the loser.”

As expected, the details of this couple’s interactions differed from that of the first guests; however, the quality of the interaction is similarly high. The American couple also expressed some “downsides” to the stay. One is the difficulty in understanding the language of their hosts, which, despite being English, contains a thick French Creole accent. In this regard, it is no surprise that the earlier French couple did not indicate such a difficulty. They also mentioned to me directly that they felt like the family was too often catering to their needs. This aspect is something that Jem and I thought about early on but it seems nearly impossible to change, as it is common for hosts to want to take special care of their guests, i.e. “cater to them,” as a sign of hospitality, manners and to provide comfort.

3.4 The Miami University Student/Faculty Homestay Experience

In March of 2008, a mixed group of 21 Miami University students and faculty, with various backgrounds, participated in a sustainable development workshop that took place in Dominica. The workshop, hosted by Miami University Geography Professor Thomas Klak, included several activities, one of which was to participate in the RFE homestay. Over the course
of two nights, ten participating families were each host to 2-3 of the Miami people. In addition, everyone would be staying with a different family on their second night than they did on the first. Interestingly, prior to the Miami University visit, five host families were participating so Jem convinced five new families to volunteer in order to accommodate all of the faculty and students.

The ten families that took part in the homestay program represented a wide variety of occupations, interests and knowledge. For instance, one family owns a local bar and taxi service in the village while another family owns a bakery that makes fresh bread that they sell to village residents. Some members of the host families are farmers, builders, teachers or firefighters. A broad range of age and educational backgrounds were present in the family members and some families were larger than others were. Aspects similar to this are found in the literature review above and arise in several of the responses collected from the Miami students before, during and after the workshop and the homestays. These students comprise both undergraduate and graduate participants, so once again there was a range of ages represented. It is important to mention that the decision before arriving at the homestay locations was that female students would room together and the same for males.

3.4a Miami University Guests Feedback

It was important to gather feedback from the students, faculty, host families and coordinator of the homestay project, Jem Winston. This process began prior to leaving the United States when, as a course activity, both students and faculty completed a short questionnaire and ranking survey of activities planned for the trip according to their initial perception of the value of the experience (i.e. the learning experiences). The rankings were based on a simple 1-10 scale with “1” being the highest score and there were ten activities listed, one of which is the homestay experience. After returning from Dominica, the group completed the exact same questionnaire and survey again. This allows for a before and after look at the respondents opinions and possible insight into what has changed in their individual experiences. The questions regarding the homestay experiences include:

1. Describe your image of home life in a Dominica village
2. Describe a potential benefit for a visitor of an overnight village stay experience
3. Describe a potential benefit for a host family of an overnight village stay experience

4. Describe a potential drawback for a visitor of an overnight village stay experience

5. Describe a potential drawback for a host family of an overnight village stay experience

6. Give an example of what you think a Dominican family can learn from you

7. Give an example of what you think you can learn from a Dominican family

Analysis of the ranking results (Table 3.3) shows that of the 19 [out of 21 total] students and faculty that responded, eight (42%) perceived an increase in the learning and experiential value of the homestay, six (32%) perceived a decrease in the value and five (26%) were unchanged. In every one of the responses from the unchanged group, the before value and the after value was ranked highest (i.e. 1).

The responses to the before and after questions varied but several things stand out. Most predictably, the majority of responses collected after the homestays were more thorough and informative than those collected before the homestay. It follows that despite the fact that the perceived value of the experience dropped for some, it still was a positive learning experience for most involved. It is also important to note that several different experiences from the trip comprise the ranking exercise. Therefore, changes in before and after ranks by individuals may be the result of

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Table 3.3: Homestay before and after rankings based on participant responses. Averages and percentiles at bottom. (U) Up, (D) Down, (S) Same.
personal enjoyment of one experience over another and not necessarily a positive or negative criticism of the homestay. A sampling from a variety of the most informative of the student’s responses follows:

**Before homestay - Response to Q2:**
“It is the best way to learn about the people and culture of the village. As close to complete immersion as you can come on this type of trip.”
Value Ranking: 9

**After homestay - Response to Q2:**
“The visitor gets a personal relationship with the family and can ask them questions. It is an up-close view of a real Dominican family and life.”
Value Ranking: 1

A response from a different student participant reads:

**Before homestay - Response to Q1:**
“Pleasant, unencumbered, close knit.”
Value Ranking: 6

**After homestay - Response to Q1:**
“Closer knit to community and extended family than US - closer engagement w/ the land than US average citizen - less stress, more engagement in human valuable life ways - less concern w/ cleanliness [and] neatness.”
Some interesting points come out in these two responses. Firstly, in both the value ranking went up after the homestay experience. The first response speaks intimately of a “personal relationship with the family,” which suggests that strong bonds were created despite the short duration that the host family and their guests spent together. In the second response, it is notable that there are comparisons made to the American lifestyle. The final comment regarding cleanliness and neatness is an interesting observation that can be interpreted as either complementarily and/or derogatory in nature.

In looking at the responses of those students/faculty whose perception of value went down in the before and after questions it is much harder to draw conclusions as the answers of the following respondents are comparable to the previously mentioned ones.

**Before homestay - Response to Q2:**
“You get to experience their life, even if it is only a little piece of it.”
Value Ranking: 5

**After homestay - Response to Q2:**
“The interesting conversations about life, policy, politics, etc. both in Dominica & the USA. It is a great opportunity to see a different perspective & ask questions.”
Value Ranking: 7

From another respondent:

**Before homestay - Response to Q1:**
“People laughing, understanding each other without lots of explanation, daily chores done collaboratively.”
After homestay - Response to Q1:
“Lots of conversation + human
togetherness - Garden/food central
themes - Interest in foreign issues/community
members abroad”

As for those participants whose responses went unchanged, several had close to the same answers to Q2 both before and after the homestay. In this sense, I, for one, am convinced that the experience lived up to their expectations and feel that it is more helpful to deduce their enjoyment from their own words rather than the rankings.

Upon returning to Miami University, the student and faculty study abroad workshop participants provided an open-ended commentary on their homestay experience. The purpose was specifically to provide this author with further data by which to assess their homestay experiences. Out of the 21 total participants, 15 have completed the requested commentary, a very good response rate. In addition, there are no instances in the commentaries where negative aspects outweigh the positive ones and many of the responses contain insightful and notable quotes. The following quotes come from different participants:

Response 1.
“As a product of western society, the homestay was an invaluable experience that I would not give up for the world and has truly changed my outlook on life. If I could, I would travel back to Dominica just to hang out with my host families again.”

Response 2.
“The residents of Grand Fond prove that life is more than ‘things.’ As I heard several times, ‘there is no such thing as ‘a’ good day, everyday is a good day.’”
Response 3.
“Therein lies the beauty of the homestay: you organize a lovely night with a host family, but through being immersed in these ongoing lives you (hopefully) become swept up in deliciously unplanned events.”

In these responses, the homestay appears to be of real benefit to the Miami study abroad workshop and its own future in terms of longevity and attracting interest.

Response 1.
“I really do think this will be the highlight that will draw participants from the Miami workshop for years to come.”

Response 2.
“I thought the homestay was in so many ways the highlight of the trip to Dominica.”

Several common themes come up in the homestay commentaries. Many participants wrote positively about such things as the meals they ate, the arrangement of the home itself and details about the family who lived there but just as intuitive were some of the “negative” aspects of the experience.

Response 1:
“I got a GI thing…might have been from dishes that had not been as clean as I was accustomed to (took a spoon to the bathroom to clean it at breakfast). Began having issues later that day.”

Response 2:
“I noticed that for dinner and breakfast she used
numerous imported packaged products including canned beans, boxed juice, canned tuna, etc. This may be what her family eats every day, which is one thing. It may be that she expects we like it.”

The majority of the stated negative aspects stemmed from the schedule of the workshop as a whole, which had to be altered several times eventually resulting in the students and faculty having less time to spend with the host families.

Response 1.
“The only negative was that we wanted to make plans for more things to do with the family, but we didn't have enough time or another day to stay there.”

Response 2.
“It was very interesting to see two different families, but given the amount of time with the second, I think that it would have been much more beneficial to stay with the same family two nights.”

The above responses prompted Miami workshop organizer, Dr. Tom Klak, to decide that in return study abroad workshops to Dominica, students will spend both of their homestay nights with the same family.

Although the scheduling issues were unavoidable, for some of the Miami University participants, the homestay experience may have suffered. However, these responses are not criticisms of the homestay experience itself.

Response 1.
“The second night we got in really late. (sorry, I don't even remember the name of the woman/family)...”
Response 2.
“We spent very little time with each family (and even less daylight time, which makes it absurd to presume that we learned any real thing about their daily lives.).”

3.4b Grand Fond Host Families’ Feedback

After the Miami University visitors left, several of the participating families provided feedback in the form of unstructured and in many cases quick interviews. Nonetheless, there are some interesting things to note. Most commonly, the families expressed the need for spending more time with their guests from Miami University. The impression given is that the families were not upset about the scheduling problems, but disappointed about the lack of interaction. This sentiment complements the responses from the students and faculty of the same nature. In addition, it seems that all of the families enjoyed spending time with the Miami group and expressed a desire to continue their participation in the homestay program. The overwhelming impression is that the Miami students and faculty were pleasant guests.

3.4c Feedback: The Coordinator

As mentioned, Jem Winston, owner of Rosalie Forest Eco Lodge (formerly 3 Rivers Eco Lodge) acts as coordinator of the homestay program and played an instrumental role in its inception and organization. There were many opportunities both before and after the Miami University visit to meet with and talk to Mr. Winston, thus his input is very valuable.

First, the homestay is a very important program to Mr. Winston and his business. As he states, there are many advantages to such a program. For example, both his company and the host families earn money from it and at the same time, there really are no out-of-pocket expenses for the families because there is little preparation food of course involved and it costs nothing to participate. As mentioned previously, the price includes a small fee to cover RFE expenses. In addition, since the guests arrange homestays through RFE, the business acts as a sort of buffer (i.e. coordinator). Guests can learn about the program beforehand and discuss the options with the Rosalie Forest staff (including Winston) and hosts get advance notice on when guests will arrive, their special needs, if any, and what to expect. Probably the best part about having a
coordinator like Jem Winston is that he is actively involved in the communities, the region and
the island as a whole. Hosts can express opinions, concerns and suggestions to Winston and in
this way, the hope is that the program will continue to strengthen and grow.

There were some issues for Winston prior to the arrival of the Miami group. Finding
enough families to host the 21 students and faculty was a big one. By talking to village residents
and then encouraging them to pass along the word to any others who would be interested in
participating, it was easy to locate new hosts. As mentioned previously, one family dropped out
citing concerns over adequate payment for homestay services and this created a worry that others
would feel the same way. However, Winston held a meeting of homestay hosts in order to
explain the situation of the Miami University group, what they expect, how long they would be
at the homes, etc. At this meeting, the issue of money did come up and, according to Winston, no
one seemed to have a problem with it and several saw it as sufficient compensation. In addition
to the meeting, informal interviews with the families indicate that they seem to have no problem
with the portion of the money that goes to RFE.

In talking with Winston during March/April of 2008, it was clear that he wanted to
continue the program and enjoyed being involved in it. Along with the benefits to the host
families, Jem Winston’s business and the RFE guests benefit as well from the deep involvement
with members of the surrounding communities because of putting together the homestay
program. The involvement aspect is something that Winston truly enjoys and wishes to continue,
after all, he is part of these communities as well. It is important to note though that Jem does not
make as much money on the night that the family stays in the village compared to if they just
continue to stay at his ecolodge. In this way, RFE income is diverted into the Grand Fond
community. Of course, he sees other benefits such as helping the community and the island as a
worthwhile trade-off.
Chapter 4

Analyzing the Homestay Project Results

The Grand Fond Homestay Program, while much different from conventional tourism, is working. That is, its goals of bringing tourist money into a small community that does not usually benefit from such, enhancing cultural understanding and maintaining interest have thus far been successful. In this regard, the program fits into the center of the Patterson, et al (2004) model, signifying a quality tourism experience. The program also has numerous correlations with the resources seen earlier on community-based and heritage tourism. Pulsipher’s (2003) ideas of drawing from social and natural capital are applicable because that is what the homestay does. The program is intellectually engaging and, judging from the guest’s own testimonials, invokes humanitarian responses. Coordination and cooperation between stakeholders (Jamieson 2000; Uriely, Israeli and Reichel 2002) is occurring between RFE and the host families. First-hand interpretation of the Grand Fond/Rosalie area, its cultural and historical significance to the community, comes from the host families and results in “mindful” guests who have a genuine concern for the families and their lives even after the experience is over (Nuryanti 1996; Moscardo 1996; Poria, Butler and Airey 2003; Garrod and Fyall 2000, 2001; Heuman 2005; Mooney 1996). While there is some indication that the host families went out of their way to accommodate guests, overall there seem to be no large issues with the authenticity of the experience (Wang 2007). At the same time, other problems put forth by various authors are not a factor thus far. For instance, there has been no tension and/or competition between the stakeholders (i.e. RFE and the host families) (Reed 1997). Linkages between village residents are working to filter money back into the larger community and, presumably, the island as a whole (Cooper 2004; Goodwin 2002). Finally, environmental impacts of the program are so far minimal with guests participating in low impact excursions with host families such as short hikes, gardening and interactions with others in the community (Gu and Wong 2006; Moscardo, et al 1996).

Adhering to a one particular idea of sustainable development to apply to the homestay project is challenging, especially when taking into account the difficulties with simply defining what sustainable development is. Klak and Flynn’s (2007) work, in which sustainable
development is described as a three-legged stool, presents one of the more applicable and understandable definitions. The three legs of the stool represent three goals required of sustainable development: ecological integrity, economic viability and social justice. Weakness in any one of the “legs” can cause the entire unit to collapse.

In applying the data collected on the Dominica Homestay Program to Klak and Flynn’s three goals, the question of its contributing to sustainable development is clear. The authors describe ecological integrity as including “environmental health, protection and stewardship” (2). The homestay meets these criteria for several reasons. First, the importance of the environment to the survival of the Dominican people cannot be overstated. The majority of the islanders have personal gardens, if not small farms, and for those that do not, locally grown foods are still an everyday staple. The homestay, then, provides a unique opportunity for visitors to the island to experience real families living off the land. This has the added effect of raising environmental consciousness by educating on a personal level. Thus, the homestay indirectly promotes environmental knowledge, protection and stewardship through participation in such things as nature hikes and farming with the host family. Secondly, the environmental impacts of the homestay are virtually nonexistent compared to those caused by, for example, larger hotels and accommodations who frequently take larger numbers of tourists to the more popular natural sites on the island. In addition, inside the village the risk of encroaching on the habitats of local wildlife lessens. That is not to say that there are no environmental impacts from homestay guests. One example that comes to mind is the already existent difficulty of garbage collection and disposal in Dominica. To some extent this fits in with the work of Kates, et al (2005), where the concern is that sustainable development may become a disguise for destructive activities. Guests would almost assuredly contribute to this problem even if on a very small scale. However, the homestay has a lower environmental impact than most other places they would stay in Dominica. Finally, there is the issue of transportation to and from the village, which increases emissions into the atmosphere, however, this too is minimal in comparison with similar effects stemming from large-scale, conventional tourism.

In environmental terms, the advantages of the homestay program greatly outrank the negatives and as a result fit in with Klak and Flynn’s ideas of sustainable development. However, in looking at the economic viability of the program the results are not as positive and representative of the weakest “leg” in Klak and Flynn’s stool analogy. The authors describe
economic viability as economic security at local and national levels (2). Yet, this has been a problem for the homestay program. On the local scale, it is a positive aspect that there are few out-of-pocket expenses for host families, and no fees for them to be participants. Yet, the income generated through the program for those families has been minimal because participation has been limited. In this case, a constant and reliable source of income from the project alone is probably not possible for participating families at this time. Similarly, on the national level the program does not have the backing or the reach to be a significant and reliable source of income for the country. Other concerns regarding whether this sort of development is actually sustainable (Daly and Townsend 1993, Krueger and Agyeman 2005) so far seemingly have little relevance to the program, however, it is premature to say that they never will. For instance, during an interview with me in March of 2008, Sam Raphael, former President of the Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association and owner of Jungle Bay Resort and Spa, a more upscale lodge than RFE, indicated that government regulations regarding such programs such as the homestay were needed and may happen sooner than later. This may be an indication of potential problems to come because, depending on what is required, hosts may not be able to comply.

The economic benefits of the homestay program can increase in the future with increased participation. On the other hand, the current economic status of the program could stall it and effectively end it before improvements happen. In this sense, it is questionable whether this aspect of the program can contribute to a sustainable lasting outcome. One recent problem is that RFE has been undergoing a change in its structure and accommodations. At the onset of the program, most of the lodges at RFE were located in a valley that was once a banana farm. At that time, a central restaurant served as a meeting place for lodge guests and the entire facility was accessible by a dirt road. Over the course of the program, the valley accommodations and the restaurant were sold and all of the guest units except one are now located uphill and deeper into the forest. This creates an accessibility issue in that now homestay guests have to walk 15-20 minutes downhill to the previously convenient dirt road in order to get transportation to the village. This change has also had the added result of a decrease in the number of village locals the lodge employees due to a decrease in need (e.g. smaller forest restaurant, less need for property maintenance). This aspect is interesting because it clearly shows how the homestay intermediary, or “middleman,” while instrumental in facilitating the program, can simultaneously cause it to be vulnerable.
The third and final leg of Klak and Flynn’s (2008) stool of sustainable development is that of social justice, which the authors describe as being inclusive and contributive to the welfare of society. They go on to state that when referring to ecotourism in these terms, social justice includes cultural interaction and mutual respect (2). As with the goal of economic viability, the homestay program encounters some problems here, the largest of which is the fact that the program is by necessity exclusionary. As mentioned previously there are certain requirements that homestay families must meet, for example, private accommodations and facilities for guests. While these requirements are not too strenuous, they still act to exclude a significant segment of the population that may live in small residences or utilize outside facilities. The result of this is that those households that do meet the requirements are usually of average income. However, this exclusionary aspect is not actually as bad as it may seem; after all, the program incorporates these average Dominicans whereas most other hotels and ecolodges do not.

On a final note, cultural interaction has proven thus far to be strong between hosts and guests, and it appears to be one of the strongest aspects of the homestay program in general. The responses and comments offered by homestay participants attest to this.

In using Klak and Flynn’s three goals of sustainable development to analyze the homestay program we see that there is no clear-cut answer to the question of its contribution to sustainable development. While the ideas of social justice and ecological integrity appear strongest in the data presented here, it is the aspect of economic viability that represents the weakest leg of their metaphorical stool of sustainable development. Thus, while the homestay program offers a great deal of insight, it is difficult to predict what the future will hold. It seems probable that the homestay program will be a lasting one especially if it continues to work and the idea continues to spread through the RFE website and word of mouth. At this point, instead of dwelling on whether the program is, in itself, sustainable or if it can contribute to wider sustainable development on the island, it is more fruitful to try to come up with some solutions to any number of issues as they may arise. These include government intervention in the program, waning interest in program participation from hosts and/or guests and problems at RFE either with acting as intermediary for the program or with the business itself. Thus far, government intervention seems to be far off. The commentary collected from the hosts and guests, as well as the data and observations made in the field indicate that the program has a future. Finally, the
continuing involvement of Jem Winston, Kemon Cuffy, and me show a dedication to ensuring the future of the program.
Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks and the Future of the Grand Fond Homestay Project

At the time of this writing, the Grand Fond Homestay Project has been operating for over two-and-a-half years. Correspondence in February of 2010 with Jem Winston shows that guests at RFE are still participating at a rate of about one person/one couple per month with at least one other couple booking the experience for a future visit. This means that on average each of the host families will receive one or two guests per year. There are currently ten host families participating in the program and most of them have been participating since the beginning. In addition, in the Spring of 2011 RFE will be hosting a Dominica “EcoFest” in which workshops on sustainable living and environmental protection will occur as well as excursions to natural sites, live music, crafts from local artists, and more. One of the packages RFE is offering to guests interested in attending includes a night at the home of a host family in Grand Fond during their visit.

Although it is impossible to predict the long-term successes and problems with the RFE homestay program, and notwithstanding the old adage, “all good things must come to an end,” the indication for now is that the program will survive for some time. The fact that RFE guests continue to participate and that the number of host families is increasing is encouraging because it means that, so far, interest is not waning.

The hope now, in my opinion, is not only that the RFE/Grand Fond homestay program survives into the distant future, but that it also influences the creation of similar programs on the island of Dominica and other locales. In this vein, it is my hope that the case study presented here may be helpful in establishing working community-based tourism solutions that are viable and sustainable for future generations while simultaneously helping to avoid and overcome problems that accompany such an endeavor. In the meantime, RFE and the host families in and around Grand Fond await their next visitors from abroad.
Appendix A:

Homestay Terms and Conditions for Hosts

The goal of the Rosalie Forest Ecolodge Homestay Programme is to offer guests the opportunity to experience true Dominican life through the eyes of its residents. The programme focuses on interaction between host and guest as a way to enhance and exchange cultural knowledge and understanding. Involvement in this programme requires that host families avoid altering their lifestyles to suit guests and instead seek to involve the guest in everyday life (e.g. church, gardening, drinking etc.). It is, however, important that the safety of homestay guests be ensured at all times, which is the commitment and responsibility of the host family.

Homestay General Information:
- Homestay durations are limited to one night only
- Homestay families will be notified of guest(s) arrival at least one day in advance, although every effort will be made to advise the host much earlier.
- Guest transportation to and from the homes will be provided by Rosalie Forest Ecolodge
- Issues, concerns and suggestions should be expressed directly to Rosalie Forest Ecolodge as they arise, and every effort should be made to ensure the guest is unaware of such problems

Homestay Payment Information:
- One guest: EC$ 150
- Two guests in the same bedroom: EC$ 250

• In the event of guest(s) cancellation a proportional percentage of the booking deposit, if one has been taken, will be provided to the host families. This amount varies with each reservation.
• On some occasions reservations are placed through one of Rosalie Forest Ecolodge approved 3rd party booking agents, who are entitled to a small commission (usually 10-15%). In this case, the same percentage of the final payment will be deducted from the payment for the host family.
• Hosts will receive payment within 3-7 days of the guest’s final check-out from Rosalie Forest Ecolodge.

Host Families Must Provide:

- Meals (Dinner and Breakfast) *
- Clean & private accommodations
- Clean towels & sheets
- Access to bathroom
- Conversation and guest inclusion (interaction is important!)
* In the event that a guest(s) is vegetarian or has special dietary needs, the host family will be notified at the time of booking. Every effort should be made to accommodate the special needs, and if this is not possible, the host family must inform, Rosalie Forest Ecolodge immediately, in order that alternative arrangements can be made when necessary.

**Guest Arrival:**

- The host agrees to be at home at the arranged time to receive the guest.
- Start with a warm and friendly welcome as soon as the guest(s) arrive.
- Introduce all of the family members present
- Show the guest(s) the inside and outside of your home, particularly the bedroom and bathroom facilities
- Inform them of dinner and breakfast times in advance
- Allow them to participate and assist in activities and be prepared to answer any questions they may have throughout the experience

**Other Information:**

- If a guest(s) requests any services beyond what the Homestay programme provides (e.g. craft instruction, guided tours, etc.) then it is up to the host family and the guest to agree upon the terms of these services before they are rendered including, for example, payments and time periods. Rosalie Forest Ecolodge cannot be held responsible for any outside arrangements made directly between the host and the guest, so families are expected to use their own discretion in such matters.
- If the host offers any service or anything else to the guest for which they expect payment, it must be explained beforehand that there is a fee. Failure to explain to the guest that there is a price, may result in non payment for that service. Rosalie Forest Ecolodge cannot be held responsible for any outside services arranged directly between the host and the guest.
- Although this project focuses on involvement in the lives of real Dominicans we ask that host families please be courteous and understanding of guest’s expectations in terms of comfort and expectations.
Appendix B:

Homestay Terms and Conditions for Guests

The goal of the Rosalie Forest Ecolodge Homestay Programme is to offer guests the opportunity to experience true Dominican life through the eyes of its community residents. The programme focuses on interaction between host and guest as a way to enhance and exchange cultural knowledge and understanding. Keep in mind that host families are not professionally trained in the hotel/service/tourism industry and have been encouraged to avoid altering their lifestyles to suit guests. Instead, Homestay families seek to involve guests in their everyday lives, interactions and activities (e.g. church, gardening, drinking etc.).

Homestay General Information:
- Homestay durations are limited to one night only and include dinner and breakfast
- Guest transportation to and from the homes will be provided by Rosalie Forest Ecolodge
- Issues, concerns and suggestions should be expressed to Rosalie Forest Ecolodge or the host family as they arise

Host Families Provide:
- Meals (Dinner and Breakfast) *
- Clean & private accommodations
- Clean towels & sheets
- Access to bathroom
- Conversation and guest inclusion (interaction is important!)

* Vegetarians or special needs can be catered to – the guest must inform us at the time of booking of any special dietary needs; failure to do so may result in these needs not being met, and will be entirely the responsibility of the guest, who will not be entitled to compensation or refund.

Other Information:
- If a guest(s) requests any services beyond what the Homestay programme provides (e.g. craft instruction, guided tours, etc.) then it is up to the host family and the guest to agree upon the terms of these services before they are rendered including, for example, payments and time periods. Rosalie Forest Ecolodge cannot be held responsible for any outside arrangements made directly between the host and the guest, so families are expected to use their own discretion in such matters and guests are expected to make sure they are willing to pay for any additional services requested.
- If the host offers any service or anything else to the guest for which they expect payment, it must be explained beforehand that there is a fee.
Failure to explain to the guest that there is a price, may result in non payment for that service, at the discretion of the guest. Rosalie Forest Ecolodge cannot be held responsible for any outside services arranged directly between the host and the guest.

* HOMESTAY GUESTS: Please remember that you are invited as guests into someone’s home and not in a hotel. The families involved in this program are volunteers who are excited to be welcoming you into their lives and homes. The host family will make every effort to meet your needs and ensure you have a happy stay in their home, but please understand that they are not professional!

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE HOMESTAY HOSTS DO NOT CARRY ANY LIABILITY INSURANCES. AS SUCH GUESTS ARE ADVISED THAT THEY ARE STAYING WITH THE FAMILY AT THEIR OWN RISK AND THAT NEITHER THE HOST FAMILY NOR ROSALIE FOREST ECOLODGE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM DURING THEIR HOMESTAY.

Guests will be required to sign a disclaimer to this effect before entering the host home.
Appendix C:

HOMESTAY AGREEMENT - HOST

I, the Homestay host Family, understand that the responsibilities for hosting the ________________, international homestay guest(s) in my home include providing the following:

- a room (preferably a private room unless otherwise requested by the guest), and access to a toilet and wash facilities,
- Evening meal and breakfast.
- I will endeavor to provide a safe and pleasant environment for the homestay Guest.

I, the homestay Family, will endeavor to be patient and understanding with the international homestay guest that we host in our home. I will respect the culture and religion of my homestay guest. I will strive to communicate with the homestay guest and work toward the resolution of any misunderstandings or conflicts that may arise. If we cannot resolve the misunderstanding, we will notify Rosalie Forest Ecolodge for mediation.

I, the homestay Family, will alert Rosalie Forest Ecolodge if problems arise with the homestay guest. I will communicate with Rosalie Forest Ecolodge if the homestay guest decides to move out of the homestay or is talking about doing so.

I, the homestay host, agree to abide by and be bound by, the Homestay Guest Terms and Conditions, for the Rosalie Forest Ecolodge homestay programme.

WAIVER OF LIABILITY

I, the undersigned, agree to the above contract with the homestay guest and Rosalie Forest Ecolodge. We hereby release Rosalie Forest Ecolodge from any and all current and future claims, charges, costs, and/or causes of action for loss of property, personal injury, illness, accident or death sustained by any member of the homestay family or their guests, incurred as a result of any action taken by the homestay guest or family introduced by Rosalie Forest Ecolodge.

Although Rosalie Forest Ecolodge facilitates the contact between guests and housing providers, any housing agreement or related services shall be between the guest and the housing provider and not between either party and Rosalie Forest Ecolodge. Rosalie Forest Ecolodge is not liable to either party in regards to the obligations of any housing agreement or related services.

Main host (PRINT NAME) ____________________________________________

Main Host Signature: _______________________________ Date: ________________

Rosalie Forest Ecolodge authorized officer (PRINT NAME) ______________________

Rosalie Forest Ecolodge authorized officer signature: ____________________________

Date: ____________________
Appendix D:

**HOMESTAY AGREEMENT - GUEST**

I, ____________________________________________________the Homestay guest,
understand that the responsibilities for my homestay with the family
_____________________________________________, in their family home include providing
the following:

- a room (a private room unless otherwise requested by me), and access to a toilet and
  wash facilities,
- Evening meal and breakfast.

I, the homestay guest, will endeavor to be patient and understanding with the international
homestay family in their home. I will respect the culture and religion of my host family. Should
any misunderstandings or conflicts arise, I will try to solve them directly with my host. If we
cannot resolve the matter, we will notify Rosalie Forest Ecolodge for assistance.

**I, the homestay guest, agree to abide by and be bound by, the Homestay Guest Terms and Conditions, for the Rosalie Forest Ecolodge homestay programme.**

**WAIVER OF LIABILITY**

I, the undersigned, agree to the above contract with the homestay family and Rosalie Forest
Ecolodge. We hereby release Rosalie Forest Ecolodge from any and all current and future
claims, charges, costs, and/or causes of action for loss of property, personal injury, illness,
accident or death sustained by me or any member of my group/family, incurred as a result of any
action taken by the homestay guest or family introduced by Rosalie Forest Ecolodge.
Although Rosalie Forest Ecolodge facilitates the contact between guests and housing providers,
any housing agreement or related services shall be between the guest and the housing provider
and not between either party and Rosalie Forest Ecolodge. Rosalie Forest Ecolodge is not liable
to either party in regards to the obligations of any housing agreement or related services.

Main Guest (PRINT NAME)________________________________________

Main guest Signature: _____________________________ Date: ___________________

Rosalie Forest Ecolodge authorized officer (PRINT NAME)
________________________________________

Rosalie Forest Ecolodge authorized officer signature: _____________________________

Date: ___________________
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