

Beyond the International Volunteering Experience:
Former Volunteers as Practitioners of Unofficial Development in Vietnam

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Joan DeJaeghere and Dr. Gerald Fry, Co-Advisors

August 2015

Acknowledgements

I have many to thank for making this dissertation possible. A big thank you to Patrick Arnold at VIA for listening to my research proposal and connecting me with VIA alumni. I am all the more grateful for his help as I learned of his frequent travels and busy schedule. VIA alumni, thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences that formed the basis for this study. I could not have asked for a better group of people to work with—your frankness, thoughtful reflections, and overall friendliness helped make this project more manageable. I also would like to thank the former Peace Corps volunteers who provided feedback for my survey. Their stories were not featured in this study, but they helped with an important part of the research process.

I am thankful for the opportunities to learn from many great faculty members at the University of Minnesota, particularly my two advisors, Dr. Gerald Fry and Dr. Joan DeJaeghere. They offered insightful comments and were very supportive throughout this process. I aspire to have their breadth and depth of knowledge, collegial spirit, and well-stamped passports. I also extend my appreciation to Dr. Lisa Park and Dr. Frances Vavrus for serving on my committee. I asked them to be on my committee because I had taken classes with them and appreciated their perspectives. I wanted another opportunity to work with them, and I am glad that they accepted to be a part of my committee.

I would also like to thank my colleagues in the comparative and international development program for the fun memories of graduate school and their help in shaping my thinking for this project. During the writing of this dissertation Liz Greene, Aditi Arur, Bindu Timiri, and Heather Cline were tremendous sources of support. I am very thankful that in the process of completing this program I have also made lifelong friends.

Beyond my network in Minnesota, two friends who have also been sources of support are Dr. John Trimpey and Andrew Shiotani. Dr. Trimpey was a professor of mine in college, and his appreciation of Vietnam helped me to realize the value of my heritage at a point in my life when I was trying to escape it. Andrew Shiotani is a friend that I made while completing my master's degree, and he was instrumental in encouraging me to pursue this degree at the University of Minnesota. I am thankful that Andrew led me to a vibrant academic community in a beautiful state.

Last and most importantly, I am ever grateful for my mom, dad, sister, husband, and in-laws for helping to take care of my daughter so that I could have time to write. A special thank you goes to my husband, Chris, for going with me to Minnesota when we were still dating so that I could pursue this degree and for his unwavering support throughout this process.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my ancestors. Their history is my history, my future is their future. I seek to learn from their mistakes and build upon their triumphs.



Photograph of my maternal grandparents and their children taken circa 1951. My mom, their last child, was yet to be born when this photograph was taken.

Abstract

International volunteers demonstrate that development practice is not the sole reserve of professional development workers. As actors conducting unofficial development work, defined as those who do not follow guidelines developed by the development industry and who do not have training in international development, international volunteers contribute to different understandings of development and foreign aid. Looking beyond volunteers' impact on the host country during the actual volunteer experience, this dissertation examines how international volunteers engage with the host country after completing their volunteer assignment and the development implications for the host country. Interview and survey data gathered from alumni of an international volunteer program in Vietnam operated by the nonprofit organization Volunteers in Asia (VIA) reveal four categories by which to classify former volunteers' engagement. These categories—committed contributors, default participants, potential contributors, and indifferent abstainers—reflect the former volunteers' interest and their actual involvement in activities that contribute to Vietnam's socioeconomic development. Due to their continued linkages to people and processes in Vietnam, committed contributors and default participants represent a source of social capital for their former host country. Potential contributors, or those who are interested in contributing to Vietnam's development but have no record of involvement since their volunteer assignment, embody a potential source of social capital for Vietnam. The indifferent abstainers have little interest in partaking in Vietnam's development; consequently, they may not be considered an immediate source of social capital for Vietnam. The study reveals that the unofficial development practiced by international volunteers is centered

on relationships, and through those connections between former volunteers and Vietnamese nationals flow goodwill, knowledge and skills, and money. Rather than manifesting as structural changes in Vietnam, the development undertaken by international volunteers brings personal transformations for the volunteers and the people with whom they interact.

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List of Abbreviations

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
IIE	Institute of International Education
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IVS	International Voluntary Services
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VANGO	Vietnamese American Non-governmental Organization Network
VIA	Volunteers in Asia
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

Prologue

This project was inspired by my experiences in Hue, Vietnam in the summer of 2011 when I served as a volunteer with a nonprofit organization established by Vietnamese Americans. My motivation for volunteering in Vietnam was to make connections with Vietnamese Americans undertaking development projects in Vietnam, and I approached the organization directly to see what opportunities were available to me. The terms of my volunteer assignment were negotiated directly with the director of the NGO who was based in San Jose, California. The NGO's Vietnam-based staff helped me to obtain a visa and housing near its office in Hue. My main responsibility for the two-month period was to help evaluate one of their programs that involved training local youth to spread public health messages to their peers.

After a short time in Hue, I could not help noticing the multitudes of volunteers from Western countries who came through the city. Almost all the international volunteers that I met were in their twenties and were college or recent college graduates, unlike myself who was approaching 30 and was pursuing a doctoral degree. Many of them were short-term volunteers who were only there for a few weeks, but I also met some long-term volunteers who were spending at least one year in Vietnam. I was able to meet some of these volunteers through my well-connected housemate and coworker who was a local Vietnamese, and I also met others at the few nightclubs and bars in Hue. I did not have to go out of my way to meet other international volunteers, for even the NGO that I was affiliated with had two other volunteers in addition to myself, one undergraduate student from the United States and an Australian who had an advanced law degree. The three of us were in Vietnam for roughly the same amount of time, and

during our two months at the NGO there was also a group of five boy scouts from France who spent a few weeks socializing with the kids at the children's shelter that the NGO operated. There was also a group of six medical students from the U.S. who came with money and gifts, and the NGO staff arranged transportation for the group to go disseminate their donations to poor communities near Hue. These medical students were also interested in providing medical checkups to villagers in the area. In addition to current volunteers, I also met two former volunteers who remained in Hue and were employed at NGOs established by foreigners. Both happened to be Vietnamese Americans and had started as volunteers with an organization called Volunteers in Asia (VIA).

I found myself feeling conflicted over the presence of international volunteers in Vietnam. On one hand, I was concerned that the constant flow of international volunteers (including my own presence) was more disruptive to the local community and the host organizations than what we offered, and I was troubled by how easy it was for Westerners to access Vietnam and haphazardly participate in volunteer work. I was under the impression that many of the younger volunteers were there mainly for the cultural experience, and I questioned whether they would make the effort to turn their short-term volunteer work into more sustained engagements with Vietnam to solve its development challenges. On the other hand, the two former volunteers who remained in Vietnam offered me a glimpse of a beneficial aspect for the country to host international volunteers. I witnessed those two individuals' dedication to the community development work that they were doing, and the strong bonds between them and the local children with whom they worked were apparent.

When I returned to the U.S. and discovered that Dr. Gerald Fry, one of my dissertation advisors, personally knows the founder of VIA, which is the organization that those two former volunteers had utilized, I decided to conduct this formal study to help clarify some of the ambivalence I felt regarding the presence of international volunteers in Vietnam. Because I did not go to Hue with the intent of studying the impact of international volunteerism, I regrettably do not have formal field notes to utilize as data for this study; however, my close interactions with current and former volunteers while I was there, as well as my own experiences as an international volunteer, influenced my research questions and interpretation of the data.

Chapter 1: An Introduction of the Study

Recognizing “Unofficial” Development

Low- and middle-income countries, also known as the global South, receive both solicited and unsolicited assistance from foreign entities that, broadly speaking, wish to improve lives. An industry is built around development assistance to the global South, and this professional side of development practice emphasizes technical knowledge and has its own codes of conduct and best practices (Dichter, 2003). Besides the professional development endeavors, an “unofficial” side of development practice also exists. On one hand, the tasks of alleviating poverty and improving living standards in the global South are undertaken by professionals who have the credentials and institutional affiliations that mark them as development workers; on the other hand, people outside of the development industry may also engage in activities that affect development goals, sometimes acting with intention to support development but also possibly acting without much thought to the development agenda or without the desire to characterize their actions as development work. Fechter (2012) emphasizes the need to recognize the variety of actors involved in development work in order to uncover different perspectives and practices of development:

...when thinking about aid workers, it is useful to maintain a broad scope in terms of who counts as an aid worker, as it is likely that activity at the margins is pointing to changing understandings and practices of what constitutes aid. (p. 146).

The many practices of unofficial development, which are actions not necessarily guided by international protocols and standards established by the professional development

industry and are performed by actors who are not professional development workers, ought to be recognized and analyzed for a more complete understanding of how development processes are unfolding. The gaze beyond itself might afford the development industry opportunities to uncover alternative forms of aid that could be scaled up when shown to be promising or intercepted when undesirable consequences are known.

Acknowledgements of the unofficial side of development practice exist in a special issue of the *Journal of International Development* that was published in 2004 with the title “The Public Faces of Development.” The editors of the special issue note in the introductory chapter that: “Whilst development is in the broadest sense a ‘technical’ and specialized activity practiced by particular ‘experts’ and organizations, it also faces outwards to a range of non-specialized publics” (Smith & Yanacopulos, 2004, p. 657). The authors in the special issue recognize that while certain development challenges do require advanced training and technical skills to solve, development endeavors are also open to regular citizens who are not professionally trained. With or without professional training in development work, anyone can, for instance, donate money to a nonprofit organization that does work in the global South or use their consumer power to support more ethical and fair business practices. The idea that development has a public face shows an awareness of diverse actors, meanings of development, and approaches to development challenges, and it provides a promising framework for understanding and perhaps shifting north-south relationships (Smith & Yanacopulos, 2004).

This study contributes to discussions about unofficial development, or the public face of development, in the context of U.S.-educated individuals traveling to Vietnam to

volunteer. Looking beyond what volunteers offer to the host country during the actual volunteer experience, this study examines how volunteers engage with Vietnam after completing their volunteer assignment and the development implications for the host country. The study also offers possible explanations for volunteers' continued engagement with Vietnam or lack thereof. Participants in the study are alumni of a volunteer program organized by Volunteers in Asia (VIA), a non-profit, non-religious provider of international volunteer experiences. The focus on alumni rather than active volunteers allows insights about the long-term effects of international volunteering for the host country.

The phenomenon of global Northerners volunteering in the global South exemplifies the unofficial, or public face of development, par excellence: assistance to organizations and communities is being offered by concerned citizens who want to make a difference, but expertise in international development is not a prerequisite for participation. In addition, the assistance is not necessarily tied to frameworks or best practices established by the development industry such as the Millennium Development Goals. With a wide variety of international volunteer service providers facilitating the process, anyone with the interest, time, and financial resources can become involved in efforts to alleviate poverty or improve living conditions in the global South¹.

Unofficial development, when it involves international volunteering, tends to have different orientations than official development. Whereas official development, particularly as practiced by governments and international financial institutions, often operates from an economic framework that sees the infusion of economic capital into a

¹ According to Simpson (2004), international volunteering makes development practice accessible to the general public.

country as a means for fostering change and views economic growth as an indicator of development progress, unofficial development functions more from a relational approach in which social relations rather than financial contributions are instrumental for development. With unofficial development, progress is marked by mutual understanding, deeper connectedness between people who come from different political or cultural traditions, and a willingness to leverage one's access to resources for the betterment of others. These outcomes from international volunteers' practice of unofficial development are revealed in this study's tracings of the experiences and interests of former volunteers since the completion of the VIA program. The next section offers further explanations of international volunteerism and VIA.

International Volunteering with Volunteers in Asia (VIA)

International volunteering, also known as international voluntary service, is defined by Brassard, Sherraden, and Lough (2010) as "an organized period of engagement and contribution to society by volunteers who work across an international border, in another country or countries" (p. 2). Simply stated, it is volunteer service that occurs outside the volunteer's country of residence. What constitutes volunteer work is an ongoing debate that is beyond the scope of this study, but Smith's (2000) conceptualization of volunteer work as activities that 1) are performed for the benefit of others or in addition to the volunteer's self-interests; 2) offers little or no financial reward for the volunteer; and 3) involves non-coerced participation encapsulates the oft-discussed voluntary and altruistic nature of volunteer work.

Lough (2015) estimates that between 800,000 to 1.1 million people from the United States volunteered internationally each year from 2004 to 2014. People at various

life stages can engage in international volunteering, and one may find, for instance, a youth volunteering abroad as part of a church group, or a working adult partaking in the employer's corporate responsibility program, or a retiree volunteering with the Peace Corps. International volunteering appeals to those who crave an international experience but who also want to express altruism or to develop certain skills. It is a popular route for spending the gap year between educational or career shifts because it provides opportunities for self-reflections while still being productive. Many colleges and universities view international volunteering as a pedagogical tool and have incorporated it into international service learning courses, alternative spring break programs, or internships at organizations abroad. International volunteering may be a main objective for some people while for others it might be paired with other goals, such as the goal for university students to learn or for church groups to spread Christianity while completing the volunteer assignment.

A variety of for-profit, non-profit, private, and governmental programs exist to meet the different demands for international volunteering. Providers of international volunteer experiences negotiate placements for volunteers, provide in-country support, and perhaps offer pre-departure orientations and post-departure debriefings. Volunteers in Asia (VIA), based in San Francisco, is one such provider that currently offers renewable, one-year volunteer posts in Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, and China. The organization also has a variety of educational exchange programs of shorter durations in Indonesia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and China, as well as programs that bring Asians to the Bay Area. This study focuses exclusively on alumni of VIA's volunteer program in Vietnam.

Sherraden et al. (2006) offer a typology of international volunteer service providers that helps to contextualize VIA's position within the international volunteer service industry. They identify two major types of providers: ones that focus on developing participants' international understanding and those that incorporate volunteers into development aid and humanitarian relief efforts. These authors describe three additional dimensions that differentiate international volunteer programs in addition to the purpose of the volunteer assignments: nature of service, duration of service, and degree of internationality. The nature of service dimension refers to whether the volunteer works individually or as part of a team comprised of other international volunteers, and the duration of service dimension indicates the length of the assignment. The researchers categorize programs that last one to eight weeks as short-term, those lasting three to six months as medium-term, and those with a duration of at least six months as long-term. Lastly, the degree of internationality refers to whether volunteer assignments occur in one country context or multiple contexts since programs may involve unilateral, bilateral, multilateral, or transnational posts. According to the authors, unilateral programs are the most common, and they involve one organization sending volunteers to a post in one host country. In contrast, bilateral and multilateral programs involve the collaboration of two or more providers from different countries that send volunteers to other countries within the partnership. Transnational programs, considered a subset of multilateral programs, send the same volunteers to more than one country.

VIA characterizes itself as "a private, non-profit, non-religious organization dedicated to increasing understanding between the United States and Asia through service and education" (www.viaprograms.org). Although some of the work that its

volunteers perform may have developmental impacts for Vietnam, VIA is more concerned with the personal development of its participants and strive to help volunteers improve such areas as language skills, cross-cultural competence, and awareness of global issues. These goals contrast with development-oriented volunteer organizations such as the Peace Corps where emphasis is placed on bettering the host society while the personal development of volunteers is a secondary concern. As Sherraden et al. (2006) note, development-oriented volunteer organizations are interested in the transfer of skills and technology from volunteers to the host community and therefore place stronger emphasis on volunteers' qualifications as compared to organizations that promote international understanding. As an organization that seeks to foster international understanding, VIA has very broad eligibility requirements, which include native fluency in English; U.S. citizenship, permanent residency or a degree from a U.S. university; and completion of a bachelor's degree by the volunteer's departure date. As stated on the organization's website, "VIA does not require any specific educational background, prior language training, teaching or overseas experience" (www.viaprograms.org). In regards to the other dimensions mentioned in Sherraden et al. (2006), VIA is a unilateral organization that provides individual rather than group volunteer experiences, and its one-year program in Vietnam belongs in the long-term category.

VIA offers volunteer placements in educational institutions and NGOs with five focus areas: education, environment, health and disability, community development, and anti-trafficking. The organization charges about \$2,100 per participant for its Vietnam program, an amount that only partially covers the cost to run the program. Corporate and foundation grants, along with individual contributions, help meet the remaining costs.

VIA volunteers receive emergency medical and evacuation insurance; training materials and accommodation during the training period; language tutoring at most posts; housing; a small living stipend that is comparable to the local salary; ongoing support from staff in Asia and the U.S.; and transportation to and from a mid-year conference.² VIA's longevity and its active alumni network provide indicators of the organization's legitimacy within a relatively unregulated industry where there is little assurance of the quality of the volunteer programs being offered by providers.

VIA began in 1963 as a summer program for students at Stanford University and was established by the university's Dean of Freshman Men, Dwight Clark, in response to the students' demands for more experiential education and international experience. VIA became a formal nonprofit organization in 1966, which is also the year that its program in Vietnam began. VIA's Vietnam program was in operations for two years before it went on hiatus while the U.S. and Vietnam were at war. The Vietnam program resumed operations in 1990, five years before the two governments resumed diplomatic ties. As described in Do (2002), VIA's return to Vietnam was facilitated by the then-executive director Paul Strasburg's contact with key personnel at the U.S.-Indochina Reconciliation Project and the American Friends Service Committee, two organizations with humanitarian missions and a long presence in Vietnam. VIA's proposal to resume operations was accepted by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training in part because the Vietnamese government viewed VIA as an apolitical organization. Do

² VIA has been in existence since 1963, and over time the specific program offerings have changed with broad political conditions, its relationship with host organizations and host countries, and available funding. This description of VIA pertains to its current offerings and is meant to give the reader an overview of the organization. Do (2002) offers a more complete discussion of VIA's organizational history.

(2002) states that the Vietnamese government was also willing to allow VIA back because it needed help training English teachers as Vietnam sought to resume its ties with the West and as the Soviet Union's economic instability resulted in decreased assistance to Vietnam. Despite being allowed back in Vietnam, VIA operated under close scrutiny from the government, as seen by the requirement that VIA volunteers live in state-run guesthouses and the restriction of volunteer posts to only Hanoi, the capital city. By 1995 when Vietnam and the U.S. had normalized relations, VIA volunteers were allowed to live in private housing and the posts had expanded to other areas of the country, including Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City.

No longer a program only reserved for Stanford students, VIA currently recruits participants throughout the U.S., although many volunteers come from the Bay Area where VIA's office is located (P. Arnold, personal communication, October 23, 2012). The average age of participants is 25, which signals that participants generally join VIA soon after completing college. Although VIA does not explicitly recruit diaspora members to volunteer in their homeland, the Vietnam program attracts people of Vietnamese ancestry on a regular basis along with those without Vietnamese ancestry (P. Arnold, personal communication, October 23, 2012).

Although VIA depicts itself as an apolitical organization and the Vietnamese government also sees VIA's work in those terms, Do (2002) makes the argument that the organization does promote U.S. national interests in Vietnam, which she observed in its funding stream, program operations, and the experiences of VIA volunteers. Through a critical analysis of VIA, Do positions VIA volunteers as unknowing perpetrators of U.S. hegemony through their teaching of English and U.S. culture. Her study depicts

international volunteering as a politicized process despite the providers' nongovernmental status. Do's study highlights how the effects of the VIA program may not always match its intentions; in a similar vein, this study looks at the developmental impact of VIA despite its orientation as a cultural exchange program rather than a development organization.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the long-term engagement of volunteers in the host country, with consideration of the effects it may have on the host country's socioeconomic development. To fulfill this purpose, the case study methodology is utilized to examine the relationship between former VIA volunteers and the host country of Vietnam. The study offers a description of former volunteers' relationship with Vietnam, theorization of how these relationships connect former volunteers to Vietnam's development, and explanations of the conditions that affect former volunteer—host country relationships. The study broadly asks what ways do international volunteers engage in unofficial development, and what potential impacts do those engagements have for the host country. The specific research questions that guide the study are as follows:

- 1) What roles do former international volunteers play in Vietnam's development?
- 2) What conditions affect the strength and durability of social ties between former volunteers and Vietnam?

The first research question allows an exploration of the scope of former volunteers' engagements with Vietnam and how they may be linked to Vietnam's development.

Meanwhile, the second question seeks the factors that affect the relationship between the former volunteers and their host country.

Significance of the Study

International volunteering is widespread given such factors as the ease of travel, the push by higher education institutions for experiential learning, the marketability of an international experience for workers seeking employment, and the existence of a plethora of international volunteer providers with programs to meet the different demands. The growth of the industry outpaces the research available so that many facets of international volunteerism remain unexplored. Existing studies that discuss the effects of international volunteerism tend to focus on the personal development of volunteers or the impact for the host organization or community in the presence of the volunteers. This study presents a different approach in its focus on what happens after the completion of the volunteer assignments, thus raising awareness for stakeholders of the ripple effects from international volunteerism that may not be immediately apparent. The study serves as a reminder that the long-term effects of international volunteerism ought to be considered alongside investigations of impact from volunteers' immediate actions.

For international development studies and practice specifically, this study highlights a group of development actors that tend to be overlooked because most scholarship is directed at the works of professional development workers and organizations. Given that there are many serious critiques of development practice performed by official actors like multilateral and bilateral agencies, such as those expressed in Easterly (2006) and Moyo (2009), there is impetus to find alternative approaches to development practice that addresses undesirable issues like the power imbalances within the current aid giver-recipient relationships. This study highlights

such an alternative form of development practice, which is one undertaken by the general public through international volunteering.

Overview of the Remaining Chapters

This chapter provided an introduction to this study by framing international volunteering as an exemplar of unofficial development practice, thus grounding the study in the interdisciplinary field of international development. The next two chapters provide further contextualizing information for the study. Chapter 2 offers background information about the host country, Vietnam, with the aim to distinguish official and unofficial development efforts that can be found in the country. Chapter 3 features scholarly debates about how international volunteering impacts development. From there the dissertation shifts to discuss the empirical research, starting with an explanation of the theoretical framework and methodology in chapter 4. The findings for the study are discussed in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8. Chapter 9 provides a review of the main findings from the study, policy implications and areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Official and Unofficial Development Assistance to Vietnam

Introduction

This chapter provides information about the former VIA volunteers' host country, Vietnam. The first section discusses Vietnam's socioeconomic changes since the adoption of the pivotal *Doi Moi* economic reforms in 1986. The second section describes the level of official development assistance for Vietnam from governmental channels, and the third section discusses the unofficial aid provided by a key group besides international volunteers: the Vietnamese diaspora. This chapter not only provides information about the country context, but it also helps to elaborate distinctions between official and unofficial development actors.

Vietnam's Socioeconomic Changes since the *Doi Moi* Reforms

The formation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam followed two decades of warfare, first to free itself from French colonialism, then to define its model of governance. Since its formation the country has had a socialist political system, but in 1986 the Vietnamese government began a series of economic reforms to move the country away from a centrally planned economy to one that is more open and market-oriented. A case study of Vietnam produced by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) summarizes the country's transformations since the adoption of the reforms as follows:

One of the most striking features of the country's transformation has been its rapid growth, impressive expansion of trade and investment with the rest of the world, and significant poverty reduction. Viet Nam has achieved an average growth rate of more than 7% per annum in the last two decade. Both exports and

imports grew by around 20% per annum on average during this period. Foreign direct investment (FDI) grew from nearly USD 1 billion in 1990 to 20 billion in 2010. At the same time, poverty has been reduced significantly, from 58% in 1993 to 14.5% in 2008. During this period the country has deepened its economic integration with the world, engaging in a number of bilateral, multilateral and regional trade and investment activities. This has helped expand its trade and investment linkages, facilitate domestic reforms, and improve governance and the competitiveness of the economy. (OECD, 2012, p. 10).

No longer one of the poorest countries in the world, Vietnam is classified by the World Bank as a lower middle-income country. In 2013 it ranked 121 out of 187 countries in the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index, which is a composite score of socioeconomic indicators such as health, education, and standard of living. The following figure shows that Vietnam’s human development indices have been increasing steadily since 1980.

Figure 1: Human Development Index Trend 1980-2013



Source: United Nations Development Program, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VNM>

Vietnam is credited with mostly achieving three of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): MDG 1 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, MDG 2 to achieve universal primary education, and MDG 3 to promote gender equality and empower women (SRVN, 2013). The completion of MDG 1 is measured by such indicators as a decrease in the poverty rate, improved living standards, ownership of durable goods, and a drop in the hunger rate. Evidence of the achievement of MDG 2 can be found in the net enrollment rates in primary education, which was at 97.7 percent in 2012. Meanwhile, gender equality in access to primary education and employment are two areas used to determine progress with MDG 3.

Despite all the achievements on these international indices of progress, Vietnam is still grappling with some major issues. Some challenges for the country described by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) include "low competitiveness, high income disparity, environmental degradation, climate change threats, limited access to quality health and social services, outbreaks of avian influenza, inadequate higher and vocational education, and a lack of legal, regulatory and capital market systems that meet global standards." (USAID, 2015, p. 1). Poverty reduction has been unequally distributed, with higher rates of poverty in rural parts of the country and the Central Highlands where ethnic minority groups are concentrated. The World Bank (2012) described 20.7 percent of the Vietnamese population as living in poverty and 8 percent living in extreme poverty in 2010 with 90 percent of those living in poverty and 94 percent of those in extreme poverty concentrated in rural areas. Meanwhile, while ethnic minority groups accounted for only 15 percent of the population, they made up 47 percent of the poor and 68 percent of the extreme poor. In addition, the country's

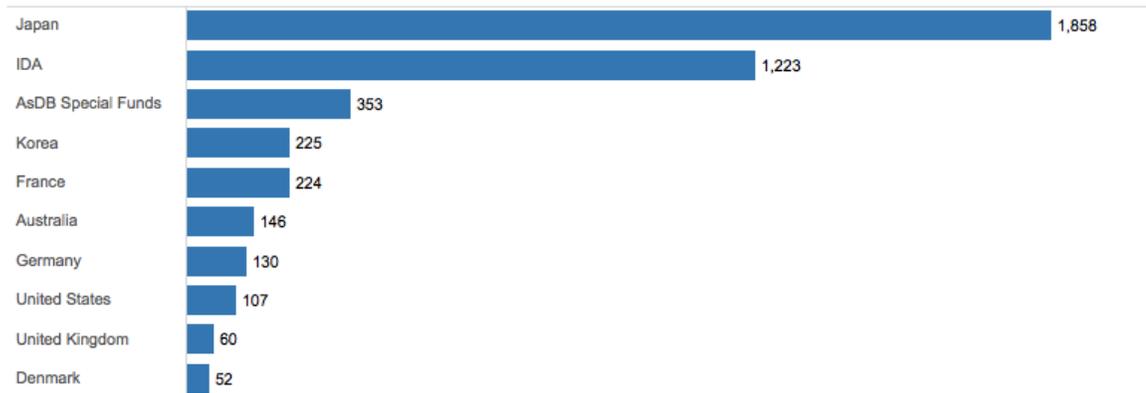
education system is viewed by many to be inept at providing the skilled labor needed in the new economy. This latter point is recognized by the Vietnamese government who, in its Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2011-2020, prioritizes three areas to help make Vietnam a modern and industrialized country by 2020: improve market institutions, promote human resources/skills development, and infrastructure development.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Vietnam

The OECD characterizes official development assistance (ODA) as money provided by governmental agencies to help promote economic development and welfare of developing countries. This financial assistance comes in the forms of loans that are below market value and grants. Technical assistance usually also accompanies these financial flows. The amount of ODA given to Vietnam has increased in the last decade with disbursements at \$1,650 million in 2000 and increasing to \$3,541 million in 2010 (OECD, 2012). According to Cox et al. (2011), Vietnam is one of the top five recipients of ODA in the world, after Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Ethiopia; yet, it is not an aid-dependent country. They note that the total volume of ODA given to Vietnam is less than what the country receives from foreign direct investments, tourist revenues, or remittances.

ODA offered to Vietnam comes from many development partners. Figure 2 shows the top ten donors for Vietnam from 2012-2013. Eight of these donors are governments of countries while two are international financial institutions. The second highest donor listed is IDA, which stands for International Development Association and is a program of the World Bank reserved for the world's poorest countries. The abbreviation of the third largest donor stands for the Asian Development Bank.

Figure 2: Top Ten Donors of Gross ODA for Vietnam, 2012-2013 average, USD million

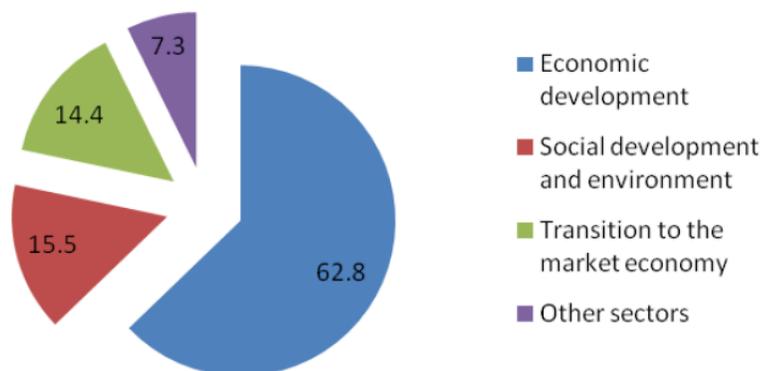


Source: OECD-DAC; <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats>

In 2009 there were 28 bilateral and 23 multilateral donors who assisted Vietnam.

Although the pool of donors is wide, most of the aid comes from a small group of donors, including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Japan, France, Germany, and Korea (Cox et al., 2011). Donors prioritize helping Vietnam's economic sector, particularly funding projects to improve the country's transport and energy infrastructure, and agriculture and rural development (Cox et al., 2011). The following figure shows ODA disaggregated by sector.

Figure 3: Total ODA from 2000-2009 by Sector



Source: Cox et al. (2011)

For its part, the U.S.'s assistance to Vietnam through USAID focuses on three areas: enhancing governance, increasing health and well-being, and addressing legacies from the war between the two countries. As outlined in the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Vietnam: USAID Assistance 2014-2018, the first objective involves supporting projects to increase accountability and transparency within the country, as well as foster citizen involvement. The second objective would allow USAID to support projects surrounding issues such as HIV/AIDS, persons with disabilities, women's empowerment, climate change, and disaster relief. Lastly, projects that fall under the third objective include cleanup of toxins from former U.S. military bases in Vietnam and other environmental contaminations from the war. With \$239 million budgeted for five years, the promotion of health and well-being has highest priority, followed by governance restructuring and addressing the legacies from the war. The budgets for those two areas are \$86 million and \$19 million for five years, respectively.

Unofficial Development Assistance from the Diaspora

In recent years there has been increasing interest within the aid industry to include diaspora members³ into development projects. A few prominent examples include USAID's African Diaspora Marketplace program, the United Nations' Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) program, and the African Development Bank's Migration and Development Trust Fund. An explanation for the appeal of employing diaspora members from the TOKTEN program states that diaspora

³ Sheffer (1986) defines modern diasporas as "ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands" (p. 3).

members are more likely to overcome the linguistic, logistical, and cultural issues that might arise during a project than other types of workers (United Nations Volunteers, 2006). These programs provide institutional support to channel the financial and intellectual resources of diaspora members toward the countries of origin; yet the characteristics of diaspora members that make them attractive recruits to development agencies have allowed many to bypass those institutions to provide assistance on their own. This section highlights the assistance offered to Vietnam from its diaspora members who work outside of the official development industry. A brief overview of the is provided before the discussion of their assistance to Vietnam.

Profile of the Vietnamese diaspora. Almost four million members make up the Vietnamese diaspora, and they live in nearly 103 countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, 2012), but this estimation includes both Vietnamese nationals living abroad for employment or studies and emigrants who are now citizens elsewhere. References to diaspora members in this study are of those who have emigrated from Vietnam rather than Vietnamese nationals living abroad. There are about 1.5 million diaspora members in the U.S., 300,000 in France, and 250,000 in Canada. Australia is another country with a large Vietnamese diaspora concentration of roughly 245,000 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, 2012). The largest Vietnamese communities in the U.S. are in Santa Ana and San Jose in California and Houston, Texas. With the height of the emigration from Vietnam having taken place in the mid 1970s and 1980s, this diaspora group is seeing the coming of age of its second and, in some instances, third generations.

The Vietnamese diaspora exists as the result of the U.S. war in Vietnam (Rumbaut, 2002; Dorais, 1998). The exodus is generally described as three major waves

that are differentiated by the political condition of the country, the socioeconomic background of the emigrants, and the legal status given to them by the host country. The first large wave occurred around the time that Saigon fell in 1975, which signaled the end of Viet Nam's war against the U.S. Those who left during the first wave were mostly the political and educated elites with ties to the defunct South Vietnamese government. In 1975, the U.S. alone received 125,000 refugees and another 3,038 non-refugee immigrants from Vietnam (Rumbaut, 2002).

The second wave occurred in 1978 and was spurred by Vietnam's dispute with neighboring Cambodia and China and by restrictive internal policies. The second wave was a time of chaotic departure as people numbering in the hundreds of thousands tried to escape by boat. At the conclusion of 1978, there were almost 62,000 Vietnamese boat people waiting in camps in various Southeast Asian countries, and in June of 1979 alone, there were about 54,000 new arrivals (UNHCR, 2000). As a group, those who left during the second wave came from more diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds than the first wave, including a larger proportion of Vietnamese of Chinese heritage (Dorais, 1998).

The third wave occurred after the establishment of the Orderly Departure Program, which was administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help people leave through more structured and legal channels. The program, established in 1979, prioritized the emigration of those desiring to reunite with relatives settled elsewhere, Amerasian children, and former detainees of the communists' re-education camps. The Orderly Departure Program ended in 1994, and today, most people

who petition for permanent relocation do so under the family reunification clause of immigration regulations.

Diaspora philanthropy. Unlike ODA, diaspora assistance to Vietnam is difficult to track because it can occur as an individual act conducted through informal channels. For instance, it would be difficult to record all the amounts of money that have been given to people in Vietnam by relatives visiting from abroad. A characteristic of diaspora assistance, therefore, is that it is difficult to track because of the informal and individualized ways of giving.

While such personal transfers are still common, Sidel (2007) notes that there have been shifts in the way that Vietnamese diaspora members assist Vietnam. He describes the evolution of philanthropy to Vietnam from Vietnamese Americans as having three phases. From 1986 to 1995, the trend was for Vietnamese Americans to give cautiously and narrowly. Funds and goods sent during this timeframe were mainly directed at diaspora members' relatives for the purposes of boosting the family's income, investing in family businesses or the education of relatives, and facilitating their emigration. There was little support for charitable organizations in Vietnam. From 1995 until 2000, there was an expansion of donations toward collective causes such as churches and temples that provided social services to the poor. Sidel attributes this change to the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam that enabled diaspora members to return and give directly to their organization of choice, thereby bypassing any government bureaucracy that was highly suspicious to the diaspora members. In addition, he also thinks that Typhoon Linda, which struck Vietnam in 1997 and was classified as the deadliest typhoon to hit Southeast Asia in a century and devastating floods that hit central

Vietnam in 1999 provided platforms for Vietnamese Americans to give. Sidel (2007) describes the period from 1999 up until the publication of his paper in 2007 as a period of diaspora giving that was:

more organized, more ambitious, and more institutionally linked in the United States and in Vietnam—to other Vietnamese American NGOs, and to broader domestic and international NGOs eager to help and to work in Vietnam.” (p. 11).

That period saw the proliferation of many small and large programs that addressed a variety of social issues in Vietnam, including natural disaster relief, support for victims of Agent Orange, and educational scholarships. He states that there were hundreds of such groups by 2005, and in late 2004 diaspora members had begun efforts to establish an entity that could provide assistance on how to navigate Vietnam’s bureaucracy for those interested in doing philanthropic work in Vietnam. In 2005 the Vietnamese American Non-governmental Organization Network (VANGO) was thus established.

While one might think that collective giving to Vietnam would allow better tracking of these activities, Truong, Small, and Vuong (2008) note that many of these Vietnamese American operations have avoided registering their work with the People’s Aid Coordinating Committee in Vietnam. Despite having formal 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in the U.S., these organizations avoid registration in Vietnam because of the burdensome process to register and fear of alienating their Vietnamese American donors. Some of these Vietnamese American operations have even purposefully avoided obtaining 501(c)(3) status in the U.S. because they have enough success raising funds through individual or business contacts. Many of these operations are run by volunteers

who do not have the extra time to fulfill the grant-writing and reporting often required by formal funders.

Perhaps because of VIA's location in California, the state with the highest concentration of Vietnamese Americans, the VIA Vietnam program attracts many diaspora members even though it does not specifically recruit them. Participation in VIA is a way for young diaspora members to participate in philanthropic work in Vietnam. In comparison, the philanthropic activities described in this section tend to involve first generation Vietnamese Americans who have used their connections in Vietnam and with each other to establish programs that serve people in Vietnam. For Vietnamese Americans who were born in the U.S. or who immigrated to the U.S. when they were young, participation in a program such as VIA, rather than establishing their own programs in Vietnam, seems to be the preferred means to re-establish links with their ancestral country. While international volunteering is analyzed as its own phenomenon in this study, it is also closely linked to philanthropic work because volunteers serve within NGOs in various capacities. The philanthropists described in this section, therefore, are sometimes also international volunteers if their work brings them to Vietnam.

The focus on diaspora philanthropy was to show how former citizens of Vietnam have become advocates and financial supporters for their compatriots who remain in Vietnam; however, philanthropic work in Vietnam also involves non-diaspora members. There are also efforts spearheaded by other groups, such as U.S. Americans who served as veterans in the war with Vietnam. Little research has been done on the scope war veterans' involvement in Vietnam's socioeconomic development, but a search online

reveals many social projects in Vietnam that were established by veterans. Just as USAID prioritizes supporting projects that address the legacies from the war, it seems that individual veterans have already taken up that charge for some time.

Conclusion

There are vast differences in the ways that official development assistance and unofficial development assistance are formulated and delivered to Vietnam. ODA relies on governmental channels whereas unofficial development assistance sometimes involves an avoidance of governmental involvement. This official title of ODA allows it to address structural changes to a country not possible through actions of individuals offering unofficial assistance. Documentation of ODA and rationalizations of its projects are also much easier to find than those of unofficial assistance, which may or may not exist because there is no requirement for non-formalized associations to do so and because the actions may be driven by emotions. Although unofficial assistance may seem small-scale compared to ODA, there is no way of knowing for sure how extensive it is due to its nature resting in individual rather than institutional actions.

Chapter 3: Opportunities and Challenges in Using International Volunteers in Development Efforts: Perspectives from the Literature

Introduction

As discussed in Sherraden et al. (2006), there are international volunteer service providers that are development-oriented and those that are not. Consequently, volunteers who participate in development-oriented programs are part of the development industry while those who join a program like VIA, which has cultural exchange as its mission, are involved in unofficial rather than official development practice⁴. In either case, the presence of global Northerners volunteering in the global South is a controversial phenomenon. This chapter presents perspectives from the literature that reflect concerns about global Northerners volunteering in the global South as well as those that highlight the potentials for development from the phenomenon. These assessments of international volunteerism that involves the North-South flow of volunteers help to further contextualize how VIA participants fit within development processes.

Opportunities for Development Presented by International Volunteering

Acknowledgements of international volunteers' critical role in development are most readily found in programs that incorporate volunteers directly into a development

⁴ My conceptualization of development-oriented volunteer providers as being part of the development industry serves to distinguish them from providers without a development focus. I consider these organizations a part of the development industry because of their mindfulness of international standards, protocols and research on development. In practice, many development-oriented volunteer organizations in the nonprofit sector sit at the margins of the development industry, and they are working to gain broader recognition of the inherent values of volunteerism for development. On October 30, 2013 many representatives of organizations that work with volunteers created the Paris Accord on Volunteering for Sustainable Development to express their support for volunteerism as a development strategy. Currently there are 57 organizations that have signed this Paris Accord.

agenda. In such programs, international volunteers are recruited for their existing skills or trained to perform development work, and the volunteer is generally in the community for one or more years. The U.S. Peace Corps, Australian Volunteers International, and Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers are government projects that recruit volunteers from its own citizenry to provide development assistance in the global South. There are also nonprofit organizations like Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and Cuso International that rely on international volunteers to promote development. Other examples of development-oriented organizations with international volunteering as their focus can be found in the membership registry of the International Forum for Volunteering in Development.

VSO, an organization that began in England in 1958 and was the inspiration for the U.S. Peace Corps, operates by the belief that strong personal relationships are necessary to accomplish the main goal of development, which to the organization is the empowerment of individuals, organizations, and communities to become actively involved in solving issues of poverty (VSO, 2003). As such, its programs seek to embed international volunteers into the social fabric of the host communities to grow those relationships. The organization explains that:

It is not only about what volunteers do, but how they work with organizations and communities to support change through the building of relationships. A person engaged in volunteering benefits from increased self-confidence in their power as an individual to influence change and inspire others. They act as a bridge between organizations and the communities they aim to serve and can inspire change in behavior and attitude in a wider group. They encourage the

collective responsibility that enables solid outcomes, such as shared skills or changed practices, to be sustained. The volunteer-community relationship is about collaboration and working together to develop solutions, meaning that change comes from the grassroots and is locally owned. (VSO, 2015b).

Organizations like VSO pride themselves on being able to employ an approach to development that prioritizes cooperation and mutual learning. They believe that under the right conditions, international volunteers can avoid the wide power distance with members of the local community that sometimes exist when official development workers come into a community as technical experts. By spending an extended time living and working in a country, international volunteers have the opportunity to develop knowledge of the local language, deep personal connections within the community, and a keen awareness of the local political culture that form the basis for a more collaborative approach to development (VSO, 2015a). From this perspective, international volunteering is valuable because of its attention to the process of engaging with local stakeholders and not just to measurable development indicators (Lough & Matthews, 2013). According to Lewis (2006), “international volunteering as an area of development activity is important because it potentially humanizes what is often left as a technical or managerial process” (p. 3).

Supporters of international volunteering for development have pushed for considerations of less obvious outcomes than those associated with volunteers’ provision of services for marginalized populations or the knowledge and skills that are offered by volunteers. Lough and Matthews (2013) call these outcomes the “added values” of international volunteering, which they concede are not always easy to link to measures of

progress such as the Millennium Development Goals or quantitative measures of socioeconomic progress that are important to funders. Consequently, they believe that international volunteering is highly undervalued. The shift to a more relationship-oriented approach to development discussed above could be considered an added value of international volunteering.

A second added value of international volunteering is its contributions to capacity development, which mixes technical cooperation with encouragements of locals to take ownership of the change process (Devereux, 2008). Capacity development involves paying attention to local knowledge and developing skills and enabling conditions for individuals in the community to tackle challenges without heavily relying on outside expertise. Long-term immersion in the host organization and host society is a key feature of international volunteering that promotes capacity development. As discussed in VSO (2015a), immersion brings time for trust to develop and opportunities for mutual learning to occur. Also, international volunteering's focus on cooperation rather than directives, mutual learning rather than one-sided technical transfers, and partnerships rather than unilateral decision-making provide the framework for capacity development to occur (Devereux, 2008).

A third added value of international volunteering is the opportunity for the host organization to acquire broader support and resources for its mission. Empirical research in Lough, McBride, Sherraden, and O'Hara (2011) revealed that some volunteers provide financial donations to their host organizations and also utilize their personal networks to collect additional funds for the host organization or raise awareness for its cause. The emphasis of this perspective is that the host organization benefits not from volunteers'

knowledge and skills but rather from their financial resources and social connections.

The authors conclude that:

international volunteers may provide *bridging social capital* to organizations in low-income regions of the world that may not be easily supplied by domestic volunteers. These linkages can help bridge the resource gap; connecting those in low-income countries with more powerful individuals and institutions in resource-rich countries. (p. 135).

As such, hosting international volunteers is a way for organizations to expand their outreach into the global community. The host organizations connect directly with the volunteers but potentially also with the volunteers' contacts from home. Whereas the other two values discussed thus far apply predominantly to long-term volunteering assignments, this third benefit is possible for volunteer assignments of shorter duration.

A fourth added value of international volunteering is its contribution to the reconciliation of diaspora communities with the homeland. Many diasporas are formed when economic, political, and/or social unrests force people to emigrate from their country of origin. Diaspora members may have experienced tremendous loss and trauma in the displacement period, and their relations with the homeland could be strained because the regime in power was the cause of their displacement. Participation in philanthropic work, which includes international volunteering, is part of the healing process for some diaspora members. Writing about philanthropic work within the Vietnamese diaspora, Truong, Small, and Vuong (2008) give the following explanation as to why Vietnamese Americans contribute to Vietnam:

members of the diaspora give to their country because it allows for some form of connection to a place of origin and the re-establishment of identities dispersed through migration....For those who grew to adulthood in Vietnam, philanthropic work can help to fill a hollow gap they may have felt since their forced separation from the country” (p. 258).

The mobilization of diaspora members to become volunteers in their country of origin is a growing priority for bilateral, multilateral, and nonprofit agencies due to the belief that diaspora members are cultural and linguistic insiders who can more easily navigate the bureaucracies and cultural expectations in their country of origin (Terrazas, 2010). The efforts to mobilize diaspora members tend to emphasize the benefits for the homeland, but as expressed in Truong et al. (2008), volunteering in the homeland carries an emotional weight for diaspora volunteers.

An underlying assumption in these elaborations of the beneficial sides of international volunteering is that the interactions between volunteers and locals will be without misunderstandings and that immersion in the local culture will automatically bring nuanced understanding about the people and conditions on the ground. Grusky (2000) and Simpson (2004) agree that international volunteering can be a means for global Northerners to learn and challenge assumptions about North-South relations, but they emphasize that immersion alone does not guarantee that volunteers will recognize the deep historical and structural causes of many development problems. Raymond and Hall (2008) also note that cross-cultural misunderstandings and the reinforcement of stereotypes are likely to occur. These authors emphasize the need for facilitators of international volunteering to encourage and provide guidance on how to reflect on the

volunteer experience critically, especially for young and inexperienced volunteers who may have a simplistic view of the causes and solutions for underdevelopment. While this suggestion might help volunteers become better informed about the consequences of their voluntary action, the suggestion is unlikely to be heeded because it demands that volunteer providers underscore the negative aspects of a service that they are providing. To highlight the negative consequences of international volunteering would jeopardize the providers' ability to attract participants.

Rather than critical reflections, one way that conscientious volunteer providers could mitigate the possible negative consequences is to ensure that the right conditions exist surrounding the volunteer assignment. Devereux (2008) describes the six criteria for ensuring positive outcomes for international volunteering: 1) stakeholders are driven by humanitarian concerns; 2) reciprocity in the relationships; 3) volunteers must live and work under local conditions; 4) long-term commitment; 5) local accountability and North-South partnership; and 6) attempts to address causes rather than symptoms of underdevelopment. Lough et al. (2011) see the capacities of individual volunteers, sending and host organizations, along with the tasks of the volunteer assignment, as variables that may affect the outcomes of international volunteering. Considerations of these areas would help dispel the critiques that international volunteering hinders rather than promotes development. The next section provides a discussion of these critiques in more details.

Challenges for Development Posed by International Volunteerism

Criticisms toward international volunteering are usually directed at volunteer tourism and gap year programs. Volunteer tourism is a type of tourism that infuses

volunteer work with vacation activities (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014). Proponents of volunteer tourism depict it as a more responsible way to travel because the volunteering component brings the traveler closer to the host community and shifts the traveler's role from that of an onlooker to a contributor (Coren & Gray, 2012). Meanwhile, gap year programs meet the needs of people experiencing a transition in their academic or professional lives. While acknowledging that people in different stages of adulthood participate in gap year programs, most of the discussion in the literature focuses on the period between high school graduation and university entrance. Supporters of the gap year emphasize the opportunities for personal growth from the mixture of travel and volunteer work. Criticisms tend to reflect practical concerns for how host organizations must incorporate volunteers into their work but also opposition to the neocolonial and neoliberal underpinnings of these programs that have negative implications for the host communities.

The crux of the first critique is that the returns from hosting international volunteers are not worth the costs. The concern is that host organizations expend precious resources to train and support volunteers, with this problem perhaps more pronounced for organizations that host short-term volunteers (Lough et al., 2011). While the expenditure of resources might be justified to bring volunteers with specialized skills, it is common for participants of volunteer tourism and gap year programs to be given tasks that are routine and do not require expertise, thus raising the question as to whether those expenditures are justified. In the study by Lough et al. (2011), volunteers' fulfillment of these unskilled tasks was well-received by the host organization because it made up for shortages in organizational staffing, but Guttentag (2009) presents an

opposing view, which is that volunteers' presence can decrease demand for local labor to perform those tasks. Even in the scenario when volunteers are given more complex tasks, their limited skill sets, especially in communicating in the local language or understanding cultural nuances, could produce unsatisfactory work or serious misunderstandings (Guttentag, 2009; VSO, 2015a).

The second major argument against volunteer tourism and gap year programs is that they perpetuate the power disparity from the colonial era. Colonialism involves not just territorial conquests but also the power to shape discourse about others, and Simpsons' (2004) analysis of the gap year industry's promotional materials found that the industry creates a discourse of need in certain areas of the world while overemphasizing the capability of European youth to solve development challenges:

Gap year projects create a publicly accepted 'mythology' of development. The notion of the 'third world' is highly important in the popularity of gap year programs. Indeed, the very legitimacy of such programs is rooted in a concept of a 'third world', where there is 'need', and where European young people have the ability, and right, to meet this need. (p. 682).

The result is a simplified notion of development that does not consider structural inequalities and one that positions volunteers as saviors and host societies as their dependents (Simpson, 2004). Volunteers' ability to make a difference is advertised as an inevitable outcome without critical reflections of the process and end goals that may prove otherwise.

Another illustration of the colonial legacy in gap year programs is the ability of volunteers to assume the role of "experts" even though they may not have the

qualifications or skills: “Communities are training grounds where volunteers are encouraged to teach the children of the developing world, yet, unqualified, are not trusted to teach our own” (Griffin, 2013, pp. 868-869). Griffin’s (2013) observation highlights the privilege bestowed on volunteers not because of their merit but simply because they are from the global North, and this both reflects and feeds the narrative of the global North’s superiority. Simpson (2005) warns that “In creating apparent experts, the gap year industry risks not only permitting practices for which participants are not held accountable, but also establishing exploitive relationships between travellers and hosts” (p. 465).

Besides the specters of colonialism, many scholars also find the neoliberal underpinnings of gap year and volunteer tourism programs to be problematic. Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) describe volunteer tourism as a neoliberal form of development practice because it involves the commodification of development practice. Like Simpson (2004, 2005), Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) recognize the discursive power of gap year providers, and they note that development work is marketed as something that is pleasurable to perform as part of a vacation or leisure time. While that depiction is problematic on its own, it also brings forth the question of sustainability when development depends on people who only commit when they have free time.

The influence of neoliberal ideologies in the gap year and volunteer tourism industries can be found in the prioritization of volunteers’ needs over those of the host community. Individuals approach volunteer tourism and gap year programs with many motivations beside the wish to be altruistic (Brown, 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014), and the desire to increase participation in their programs often drive international

volunteering providers to cater to those demands while overlooking the needs of the local community. This is especially true of for-profit organizations, but as discussed in Guttentag (2009), the practice exists even among nonprofit organizations. Citing the work of Matthews (2008), Guttentag (2009) gives the example of a conservation project in Costa Rica that worked to stop the poaching of sea turtles without considering the effects for local community members who rely on turtles for their livelihoods. The conservation group worked in partnership with a local group, but Matthews (2008) notes that the group's perspectives did not reflect the broader wish of the community. Although that conservation group can claim that its activities have local consent because of the partnership with a limited number of local stakeholders, Matthews (2008) believes that market factors played a major role in the group's programming. This example challenges the pro-international volunteering assumption that civil society's involvement in projects ensures the protection of the community's best interests. As mentioned in Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011), nongovernmental entities in development also encounter challenges with efficiency, transparency, and accountability, not just governmental bodies.

Despite the numerous and strong critiques of international volunteering, there are few who have called for the elimination of the practice; rather, most scholars call for reforms. Simpson (2004) suggests a pedagogy of social justice for gap year participants while Palacios (2010) and Kontogeorgopoulos (2014) believe that avoidance of a discourse grounded in volunteerism or development by the volunteer service providers could help downplay the paternalistic characteristics. The famous speech made by Ivan Illich in 1968 is a rare call to stop international volunteering, at least that which involves

students. He called attention to the limited skills that student volunteers offer, to the inability of the middle-class volunteers to comprehend and relate to the problems faced by the people they purport to help, and to the overall paternalistic tone of the endeavor. Almost 50 years after this call by Illich, international volunteerism and gap year participation is on the rise even as contemporary scholars continue to discuss the critiques that Illich made half a century ago.

Conclusion

Like most other development practice, the use of international volunteers to promote development has its advantages and disadvantages, and this chapter discussed the major viewpoints on each side. Despite the disagreements about the specific opportunities and challenges for development when international volunteers get involved, the overarching theme in these discussions is that the presence of international volunteers poses a disruption to local processes. The intensity of the disruption and whether that disruption poses benefits or harm depend on many factors, such as the characteristics of the individual volunteers, the motives of the host and sending organizations, the scope of the volunteer assignment, and the environment at the host sites. Both supporters and critics of international volunteering seem to share the sentiment that one must look beyond the obvious, either to find the “added values” (Lough & Matthews, 2013) of international volunteering or to see how the ideological underpinnings of the practice undermine the good intentions.

While the conversations about international volunteering’s role in development have been detailed and rich, one area that is under-researched is the long-term implications for countries that host international volunteers. Discussions regarding the

impact of international volunteering tend to focus on the microlevel of volunteers and mesolevel of organizations. The macrolevel of nation-states and beyond has received attention, but the conversations about impact at this level tend to be limited to the neocolonialism and neoliberal features of certain volunteering programs. To understand how international volunteering affects nation-states, one must turn to writings from scholars of international relations who mostly write about the function of international volunteering in diplomacy. Rather than focusing on the impact for host countries, most of these studies discuss the consequences for countries that send volunteers. The soft power that the U.S. gains from its government-sponsored Peace Corps program is a topic that has gotten much attention (see Nye, 2008; Cobbs, 1996; Clinton, 2010). This study fills the gap in the literature by analyzing how alumni of one international volunteering program relate with the host country of Vietnam to shed light on the impacts for the host country. The next chapter explains the theoretical framework of the study and the process that data were collected and analyzed.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Introduction

Answering Lough and Matthews' (2013) call for researchers to examine the “added values” of international volunteering for development, this study investigates how volunteers engage and relate with the host country after their in-country assignment to determine if and how those relationships might benefit the host country. The scope of the study is limited to one country context—Vietnam—and one group of former volunteers—VIA alumni. The study aims to describe former volunteers' relationship with Vietnam, theorize how these relationships connect former volunteers to Vietnam's development, and explain the conditions that affect the former volunteer—host country relationship. The research questions of the study are:

- 1) What roles do former international volunteers play in Vietnam's development?
- 2) What conditions affect the strength and durability of social ties between former volunteers and Vietnam?

This chapter explains the theoretical framework of the study and details the process that I went through to obtain and interpret data. The explanation of the research process includes a discussion of the methodology, data collection methods and instruments used, and the approach for interpreting the data. A discussion of how I addressed the credibility of the data and limitations of the study is also provided.

Theoretical Framework

This study rests on the premise that international volunteering creates a space for people from the global North and global South to interact, and it offers opportunities for the creation of social relations that may facilitate the host country's socioeconomic

development. I conceptualize these social relations as not being bounded by the duration of the volunteer assignment but possibly extending beyond and changing with time. This section acknowledges the scholars and ideas that inform my framework.

In this study, participation in international volunteering is conceptualized as a possible gateway for contributing socially and economically to societies, although my research specifically focuses on whether and how they continue to engage with the host country after the volunteer project. This view regarding international volunteering's function, which is to motivate and mobilize individuals to participate in other socially-oriented activities, was discussed in McGehee (2002) who conducted pre- and post-trip surveys with participants of an international volunteering program organized by the Earthwatch Institute. The study tested the hypothesis that new social ties established during the program help foster volunteers' subsequent participation in social movements and found supporting evidence for it. In a subsequent publication, McGehee and Santos (2005) explain that in addition to the creation of new social ties that facilitate participation in social movements, international volunteering also provides a consciousness-raising experience that might lead people to support social movements:

volunteer tourism presents a unique opportunity for exposure to social inequities, as well as environmental and political issues, subsequently increasing social awareness, sympathy, and/or support. (p. 764).

My study follows a similar line of inquiry, although I am interested in volunteers' subsequent involvement in activities that might count toward the host country's socioeconomic development rather than in former volunteers' participation in social movements at large.

Another key component of my framework is that volunteers might have more to offer the host country beyond the parameters of their volunteer work. Social capital theory is salient for this proposition because it offers both an explanation for why former volunteers' might continue to engage with Vietnam and a lens for understanding what former volunteers offer to Vietnam. As a conceptual tool, social capital helps to explain the effects from membership in social groupings, usually within a domestic context, but it can also be applied to relations between international volunteers and host country nationals. From their meta-analysis of studies about social capital, Adler and Kwon (2002) present a definition that considers its essence, sources, and effects:

Social capital is the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor" (p.23).

This definition points to social capital as an asset that stems from actors' social relationships, and its existence facilitates the acquisition of tangible and intangible goods. Although viewed as an asset, the "capital" label of social capital is not measurable as is economic capital or embodied by the individual as is cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Instead, social capital's value comes from its facilitating role in the acquisition of other forms of capital, or its convertibility to other types of capital as described in Bourdieu (1986).

Social capital is often discussed as a resource for individuals, but in this study it is viewed as a potential resource for Vietnam that exists when social relations between international volunteers and Vietnamese nationals are retained. Ongoing social relations between former volunteers and Vietnamese nationals could provide the motivation for

former volunteers to participate in activities that contribute to Vietnam's socioeconomic development, and they could also facilitate the exchange of information needed for involvement. Citing Gamson (1992) and McGehee (2002), McGehee and Santos (2005) state that:

individuals are much more likely to identify with and participate in a social movement if encouraged by those around them. Within the particular context of volunteer tourism experiences, social networks are found to be important predictors for this involvement" (p. 762).

While the authors are referencing involvement in social movements at large and social networks established among volunteers, the ideas could also apply to engagement with the host country after the volunteer experience and social networks between former volunteers and Vietnamese nationals. These authors' emphasis on social linkages as an impetus for action can help explain why former volunteers continue to engage in Vietnam or not.

Relations between former volunteers and Vietnamese nationals, and in turn Vietnam, may be described in terms of bridging social capital. In distinguishing bridging social capital from bonding social capital, Putnam (2000) states that bridging social capital "can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves" (p. 23). In Putnam's (2000) terms, bonding social capital is "sociological superglue" while bridging social capital is "sociological WD-40" (p. 23). When applied to international volunteering, bonding social capital exists among volunteers whereas bridging social capital is generated between volunteers and host country nationals. Randel, German, Cordiero, and Baker (2004) note that bridging social

capital is more difficult to create because it involves finding connections among people with less apparent connections, but international volunteering is a means to establish those relations. An application of bridging social capital to practice is found in Lough et al. (2011) who discuss international volunteers' roles in the transference of resources from their home country to the host. The notion that international volunteers provide bridging social capital is useful for this study because it implicates former volunteers within processes in Vietnam.

Besides serving as a bridge between Vietnam and outside resources, former volunteers may also provide resources for Vietnam directly. The literature on diaspora members' contributions to the homeland provide many examples of how people who reside outside a country can still be impactful. These include providing financial remittances through various channels (Goldring, 2004), social remittances⁵ (Levitt, 1998), or philanthropic work (Truong et al., 2008). In these writings, diaspora members' participation in these activities is explained by lingering social ties in the homeland. My thinking is that because international volunteering provides opportunities for volunteers to establish social ties in Vietnam, it is possible for them to be impactful in a similar fashion as diaspora members if those ties are strong enough. One does not necessarily need a diaspora identity to send money, influence behaviors and practices, or support social causes in Vietnam.

⁵ Levitt (1998) defines social remittances as “the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving-to sending-country communities” (p. 927). The concept of social remittances highlight the non-economic impacts of diaspora members, for instance in their transmission of cultural practices adopted in the country of settlement back to the country of origin.

Methodology and Methods

Given that the purpose of this study is to explore how former volunteers relate and engage with the host country, a qualitative, single case study was conducted of former VIA volunteers and their relationship with the host country of Vietnam. Case study research allows an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon because the focus is on a single unit of analysis (Yin, 2014). This study's case is bounded by the former volunteers' affiliation with VIA and the Vietnam setting of their volunteer experience. Former VIA volunteers and their relationship with Vietnam constitutes what Stake (1995) calls an instrumental case because it helps to illuminate a broader issue, which is the possible long-term benefits for a country that hosts international volunteers. The Vietnam country context also makes an instrumental case that shows the importance of social relations to a country's development given that the country's rapid growth occurred after its reintegration into the global diplomatic and economic systems. An examination of former VIA volunteers' attitudes and actions toward Vietnam allows me to theorize any influence that former volunteers might have towards Vietnam's development and to explore the reasons behind their engagement or lack thereof. The case helps to explain the possible impacts of international volunteers beyond their volunteer experience.

The case study is combined with the tracer study methodology, which involves seeking information from participants who have completed a program. The objective of a tracer study is to determine what has happened to individuals since their participation in a particular program (Nam & Fry, 2012). While tracer studies are commonly used in programmatic evaluations to determine how interventions have affected clients, the purpose of this study is not to evaluate the VIA program on whether it met its

programmatic objectives; rather, it is to follow up with a group of its alums to understand whether in what ways Vietnam remains a part of their lives. The tracer study methodology brings focus to any Vietnam-related experiences after VIA among alums.

Data Collection Process

My initial contact with VIA began in October 2012 with Patrick Arnold, Senior Asia Programs Director. I proposed the study to Patrick, who was interested in the issues to be discussed in the study. In addition to his desire to contribute to scholarship, Patrick professed that VIA is a small organization with limited resources to conduct research, and he saw this study as an opportunity for the organization to obtain information that could potentially be useful for its practice. Patrick was my contact at VIA throughout the project, and he provided feedback for my data collection instruments, sent out my invitation to participate in the study and subsequent reminders to alums, as well as provided input on my preliminary analysis. Patrick did not try to push my research agenda in any direction and instead allowed me the freedom to design the research as I wished.

The study received approval from the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board in February 2013, and data collection began in August 2013 after the instruments were piloted. An online survey and semi-structured interviews conducted by phone or Skype were the primary methods of data collection. The data collection occurred in two stages, with survey data collected during the first stage and interview data collected during the second stage. The first stage took one month to complete, and the second stage lasted four months. The survey was designed to take about 30 minutes

to complete, and each interview lasted approximately one hour. A recording of each interview was made with the consent of the participant.

The total number of alumni of VIA's Vietnam program from 1966-2013⁶ is 204. Patrick emailed the invitation to participate in the survey to 145 alums whose emails he has on file. He also posted a link to the survey on VIA's Facebook page for alumni of its Southeast Programs, which has 55 members. These attempts yielded 31 responses. Twenty-three of the 31 respondents provided their contact information on the survey and agreed to participate in the follow-up interview. All 23 respondents who agreed to the follow-up interview were contacted, but five of them could not be reached; therefore, the total number of interviews conducted was 18. The overall data gathered from alums consist of 31 survey responses and 18 interviews.

In addition to the data provided by the former volunteers directly, I also gathered information about VIA and the specific organizations and communities that hosted the former volunteers. Some information about VIA was provided by Patrick while others were obtained from the organization's website. Information about the host organizations and communities were found through online searches that were conducted after I completed each interview and as I wrote about the individuals. To better understand each former volunteer, I also searched online for any publicly available artifacts about the individual. This yielded artifacts such as resumes, blog posts, and personal videos. These different data sources were sought to achieve a deep understanding of the individuals and add context for my findings, which are the aims of case study research.

⁶ The VIA program in Vietnam was not in operation from 1968-1989.

Methods for Collecting Data from VIA Alumni

Two methods were used to collect data from VIA alums: an online survey and semi-structured interviews. The survey can be found in Appendix A, and the interview protocol is in Appendix B. The semi-structured nature of the interviews helped to ensure that relevant issues were addressed while providing the opportunity for me to explore new issues brought up by participants. As discussed in Warren (2001), interviewing for qualitative research necessitates the researcher to remain flexible and attentive to new ideas that might emerge during the course of the interview, and semi-structured interviews offer that flexibility. The pattern of the interview follows what Rubin and Rubin (2005) call the “main branches of a tree” model (p. 124), which entails a division of the interview into parts, or branches, that are each covered by core questions. These core questions were then probed to obtain deeper, clearer, and richer data. The core questions of my interviews were placed in chronological order, starting with questions about the participants’ motivations for joining VIA, then proceeding to their experiences during VIA and post-VIA.

There were four “branches,” or core areas of information that I sought during the interviews. The first branch of questions asked for demographic information and motivations for volunteering, and particularly why to Vietnam. The demographic questions help foster understanding about the types of individuals that VIA and Vietnam attract while the questions about motivations show the intentions of participants going into the program. Of particular concern to this study was whether participants had pre-existing interest in performing development work in Vietnam in order to compare that with their post-VIA attitudes toward Vietnam.

The second branch consists of questions about participants' history with Vietnam prior to their participation in VIA. Questions in this group asked participants whether they had any first-hand exposure to Vietnam and in what capacity, e.g. as a tourist, student, and/or diaspora member. There were also questions that asked about their knowledge of Vietnam's history, culture, and language. The information obtained from these questions acted as baseline data showing participants' relationship with Vietnam prior to their volunteer experience.

The third branch of questions asked participants for a description of their VIA experience. These questions solicited details about the location, duration, and responsibilities of the volunteer assignment and also about participants' interactions with locals. There were also questions that asked about the highlights and lowlights of the volunteer experience. The aim of questions in this group was to produce rich descriptive data about the volunteer project and the participants' engagements with the local communities during the volunteer period.

The fourth branch of questions focuses on participants' post-VIA interests in Vietnam and their participation in activities that relate to the country's development. To measure interests, there were questions that asked participants whether they seek out information about current events or social issues related to Vietnam and if they want to be a catalyst for change in Vietnam. There were also questions about participants' desire and efforts toward maintaining contact with local Vietnamese met during their VIA experience and their host organization. Meanwhile, participation was ascertained through questions about any post-VIA travel to Vietnam, financial contributions to individuals or organizations with Vietnam as their focus, and knowledge exchange in the forms of

Vietnam-related employment or studies. The indicators of participation correspond with the Vietnamese government's national development strategies, which include increasing tourism (Strategy on Vietnam's Tourism Development Until 2020, Vision to 2030), facilitating remittance transfers and voluntary action in Vietnam among diaspora youth (Resolution 36/NQ-TW), and enhancing Vietnam's international and regional cooperation in higher education (Strategy for Education Development 2001-2010 and the Vietnam Higher Education Renovation Agenda 2006-2020). Because the Vietnamese government has an inclusive outlook⁷ towards its diaspora communities, I also considered any support for diaspora causes as part of participation, which manifested in questions about participants' interests in diaspora issues and contributions of money, time, and expertise that benefit diaspora members.

Cases for Analysis

Although there were data for 31 former volunteers, this study focuses on the 18 former volunteers who completed both the survey and interview. The survey alone did not provide enough information about the individuals, and thus complete cases could only be built surrounding those who provided information in both the survey and interview. Table one provides a brief overview about the focal participants of this study and figure 5 maps the location of their volunteer posts. Each participant is discussed in more detail in the findings chapters.

⁷ As stated in Resolution 36/NQ-TW established in 2004, "All Vietnamese, regardless of their nationalities, religions and origins, social status and reasons of departure, who wish to contribute to the fulfillment of the above-said goals are welcomed to join the great national unity."

Table 1: Overview of Study Participants

Case Number	Participation Year(s)	Pseudonyms	Vietnamese Ancestry?	Location of Volunteer Assignment	Main Responsibilities at Volunteer Post
1	1966 (3 months)	William	No	Ban Me Thuot	Construction of small dams and improvements to school buildings
2	1990-1992	Mike	No	Hanoi	Taught English and economics to undergraduate and graduate students
3	1994-1996	Elsa	No	Hue	Taught English, literature, and culture to teachers-in-training
4	1996-1998	Dan	No	Da Lat	Taught English to undergraduate students
5	2000 (3 months)	Kent	No	Hanoi	Advised students about study abroad opportunities; administrator of TOEFL Exam
6	2002-2003	Trang	Yes	Hanoi	Taught English to undergraduate and graduate students
7	2003-2004	Kerry	Yes	Hanoi	Taught English, economics, and intro to business to undergraduates
8	mid 2000s ⁸	Lindsey	Yes	Hanoi	Taught English and served as English resource at a government research facility
9	2008-2009	Tri	Yes	Hue	Taught English and coordinated extracurricular activities at a children's shelter
10	2008-2009	Allison	No	Nha Trang	Taught English and course on

⁸ To maintain anonymity, this participant did not want her exact year of participation revealed.

					American culture to undergraduates
11	2008-2010	Deborah	No	Long My, then Hanoi	Taught English to NGO workers, children in the community, and civil servants (1 st year); taught computer science courses to university students (2 nd year)
12	2008-2010	Bethany	No	Long My, then Hanoi	Taught English to NGO workers, children in the community, and civil servants (1 st year); English resource for university students preparing to study abroad (2 nd year)
13	2008-2010	Kevin	Yes	Long Xuyen	Taught English conversation classes to university students
14	2009-2011	Thomas	No	Thanh Hoa, then Hue	Taught English to undergraduate and graduate students (1 st year); program assistant at a rainforest conservation NGO (2 nd year)
15	2009-2011	Nandan	No	Hai Phong	Taught English and political theory courses to university students; administered international exchange programs
16	2009-2011	Nathan	No	Tanh Linh	Taught English to NGO workers, government workers, and English teachers
17	2012-2013	Derek	No	Hue	English resource for a rainforest

					conservation NGO
18	2012-2013	Haru	No	Can Tho	Taught English to graduate students and courses in debate/critical thinking to undergraduates

Figure 4: Location of Study Participants' Volunteer Posts



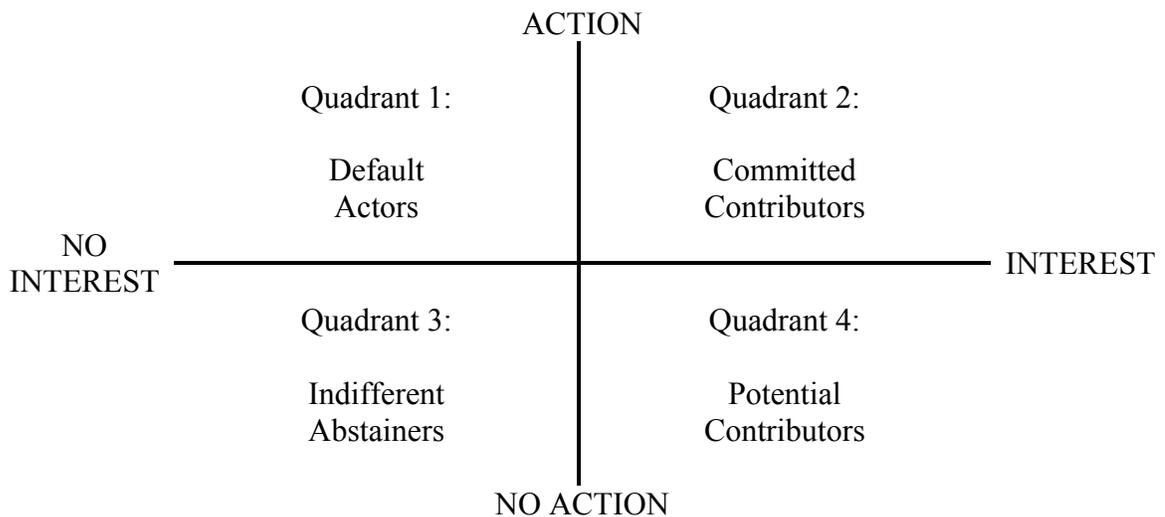
Data Analysis

After the survey closed, data analysis began as I simultaneously collected data through interviewing. To analyze the surveys, I first compiled a profile sheet for each of the 18 former volunteers with their survey responses, which allowed me to focus on them

as individuals. Areas that needed further clarification were highlighted so that I could ask the participant to elaborate during the interview. I returned to analyzing the surveys after the interviews were completed and transcriptions were produced from the recordings of the interviews.

The survey responses and interview transcription for each former volunteer were analyzed together using analytic induction, which is a deductive method of data analysis that begins with a proposition or hypothesis from the researcher (Patton, 2014). I approached the data with the understanding that former volunteers' intents may not always equal action. This concept also influenced my construction of the survey, as can be observed in the existence of questions that ask about their desires and those that ask about their behaviors. I found a graphical representation of this concept to be helpful, and I constructed a diagram with the horizontal axis depicting former volunteers' desire to incorporate Vietnam-related activities in their lives and the vertical axis showing whether they have taken any action. This created four quadrants into which I could place each case:

Figure 5: Diagram for Classifying Data by Participants' Interests and Actions



The diagram separates the data along two main dimensions: interest and action. Interest is separated by the vertical axis, with the two quadrants on the left containing cases of former volunteers who have weak interest in socioeconomic development in Vietnam since completing the VIA program and the right two quadrants containing cases of those who expressed interest in following or participating in Vietnam's development efforts post-VIA. Former volunteers' interests were assessed using the open-ended survey question "What role, if any, do you see yourself playing in reducing poverty in Vietnam?" in addition to responses to questions about their interests in following current events in Vietnam ("How would you rate your level of interest in keeping informed about current events in Vietnam?") and maintaining contact with Vietnamese nationals ("Which of the following statements best describes your feelings about maintaining contact with Vietnamese nationals?"). Although the latter two survey items do not ask about interest in development activities specifically, they provide information about former volunteers' general interest in maintaining social ties in Vietnam. According to McGehee and Santos (2005), social networks facilitate participation in social movements, and a former volunteer who has contacts in Vietnam would be more likely to engage with the country than those without contacts.

The second dimension, demonstrated participation in socioeconomic development efforts, is divided along the horizontal axis of the diagram. Cases of former volunteers who have not actively participated in Vietnam's development were placed in either of the bottom quadrants while those who have been active were placed on either of the top quadrants. Evidence of participation is provided by responses of "occasionally" or "frequently" to the three survey items that asked for their involvement in donating

money, time/expertise, or volunteering directed at the people of Vietnam. Also considered were responses during the interview to questions about their participation in activities that contribute to socioeconomic growth in Vietnam.

The placement of each case within the diagram also depended on the interview data, which were first coded individually and then each case was compared and contrasted with other cases along the areas of former volunteers' interests and participation. The name for each quadrant of the diagram emerged from the data. The placement of each case within a distinct category helps to illuminate the spectrum of social ties to Vietnam beyond the volunteer period, but these categorizations do not necessarily describe the identity of the former volunteers. Fluctuation in interest and irregular patterns of participation are major themes from the data. For instance, a former volunteer classified as a committed contributor has not always had steady interest and regular involvement in Vietnam-related activities. With each individual there are periods of inactivity and times when Vietnam is not a priority. The positions of the cases within the diagram represent my interpretation of former volunteers' relationship with Vietnam after examining each person's range of activities and interests holistically and in comparison with other cases in the study.

Credibility

Several steps were taken to enhance the rigor and therefore credibility of this study. One was the piloting of the survey instrument with members of the Minnesota chapter of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and my personal contacts who are also Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. This group was chosen to pilot the survey because they, like VIA alumni, had participated in a long-term international volunteering

program. Twenty-five people tested the survey and provided feedback by answering questions that I attached to the end of the survey. These questions asked for their opinions about the readability of the survey questions and the appropriateness of the answer choices, as well as any biases that they sensed in the survey. I also interviewed five respondents to obtain input about whether the questions would solicit the types of information that would help my study. The interview protocol was not piloted, although I shared it with Patrick at VIA and my advisors who provided input.

A second method for strengthening the rigor of the study was the triangulation of data sources. Data from former volunteers were gathered from a survey and interviews, and artifacts from an online search also helped to corroborate the information obtained directly from the former volunteers. I also conducted member checking by asking each former volunteer to review and comment on the profile that I composed about him or her.

Limitations of the Study

One aim of this study is to explain why former volunteers continue to engage with Vietnam or not after completing their volunteer assignment. The volunteer experience itself is an important factor that influences volunteers' post-program attitudes and behaviors, but the information about that experience came only from former volunteers' memories. For some, participation in VIA occurred years, sometimes even decades ago, which might have resulted in important details being omitted. I tried to mitigate this issue by asking probing questions during the interview. Also, I conducted additional research about the location and host organization where the volunteer served to obtain more contextual information, but that tended to yield current information rather than information about the specific time period when the volunteer was there. Consequently,

while my study can discuss former volunteers' current social relations in Vietnam, it cannot go into details about the genesis of those ties.

Another limitation of this study is its sole focus on the positive implications from former volunteers' relations with the host country, which leaves the negative implications unexamined. As discussed in the literature, the presence of international volunteers can have negative repercussions for the host organization and community, which presumably means there will also be negative long-term consequences for the host country. This study's orientation towards finding the added values of international volunteering precludes an examination of the negative aspects, which would be an important area for further research.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the theoretical framework of the study and described the process that I undertook to collect and analyze the data. It also presented the limitations of the study as well as the approaches utilized to enhance credibility. The findings from the data will be discussed in the next four chapters. Each of the findings chapters discusses one quadrant of figure 1 and the affiliated cases.

Chapter 5: Committed Contributors

Introduction

Six of the former VIA volunteers may be classified as committed contributors based on their expressed interest in maintaining ties with Vietnam and a record of participation in activities that contribute to the country's development. This chapter begins with a description of each committed contributor's case followed by a comparison across the cases of their social ties in Vietnam since the completion of the VIA program. The chapter then proceeds to highlight the conditions that affect the strength and durability of those ties. The conclusion of the chapter discusses how committed contributors may be linked to Vietnam's development. The next three findings chapters share the structure of this chapter.

Profiles of Committed Contributors

Mike. Mike was part of the first cohort of VIA volunteers that went to Vietnam in 1990 after the program's hiatus during the war. The opportunity to participate in VIA arose while he was completing his master's degree in international relations and public administration at the University of Pennsylvania. Mike was a student assistant for the founder of the U.S.-Indochina Reconciliation Project, a non-governmental organization that worked to normalize relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and that helped VIA obtain funding to restart its operations in Vietnam. Although his initial interest was in international development work in West Africa, Mike had experience living in Asia for one year as an English teacher in Shanghai during his graduate studies. The opportunity to live and work in Vietnam when it was not very

accessible to the West given the U.S. sanction made volunteering an attractive post-graduation option.

Mike was 30 years old when he arrived in Hanoi with two other volunteers. He was assigned to teach economics and English to both graduate and undergraduate students at the National Economics University. Mike's arrival at the university came a few months after a high profile case in which a U.S. American teacher was deported from Vietnam for using inappropriate materials to teach at Hanoi Foreign Languages School; consequently, he recalls being vigilant about what materials he brought to class. Rather than the popular sources that had gotten the other teacher in trouble with authorities, Mike relied on academic sources that were less incendiary. Mike has this reflection about his overall experience at the university:

It was challenging but fun too, and I was very energized by the fact that, you know, I felt like I was doing something important. I was in a place and a time where Vietnam was really in need of that kind of support and work, so you feel good in sort of a larger way, but you also feel good and busy. And the town was fun, it was easy to get around, and I don't know, I really enjoyed my time there. Those years that, you know, kind of like this real new frontier and this exciting place of promise, of great promise and things were moving in a very good direction.

Mike taught about ten hours a week as part of his VIA assignment, but he also found teaching positions at three or four other places, which brought his teaching load up to 30 hours per week.

After two years as a VIA volunteer, Mike stayed in Vietnam to work for Save the Children in Thanh Hoa in northern Vietnam and then in the Mekong Delta. When a colleague at Save the Children advised Mike to improve his colloquial Vietnamese, he enrolled in a Master of Arts program in Vietnamese literature at Hanoi Teachers College. While he never finished that thesis, he credits the program for helping him understand the nuances of the language and enabling him to switch more easily between formal and informal Vietnamese. After working for Save the Children, Mike found employment with the United Nations and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and was responsible for several projects related to Vietnam. He spent a total of eight years in Vietnam, including the two years with VIA. Mike accomplished his early goal to have a career in international development, and he has mostly lived and worked abroad since his VIA days. At the time of the interview, he was working for USAID in Burkina Faso, tasked with rebuilding the agency's presence in the country after a 15-year absence.

Elsa. Elsa was 23 years old when she joined VIA in 1994. She had participated in two cultural exchange programs prior, first to Quebec, Canada as a youth cultural ambassador in high school and then to Senegal as a study abroad student at Amherst College. The previous cultural immersion experiences that were positive, coupled with dissatisfaction with her career path at the time, led her to pursue international volunteer work. Vietnam attracted her attention because it was a place she knew little about despite its prominent place in American history. In addition, Elsa wanted to gain a deeper understanding of Vietnamese culture since she grew up amidst a sizeable Vietnamese community in Oakland, California.

Elsa's volunteer post in Vietnam was at a teacher's college in Hue where she taught English language, literature, and culture classes to mostly 4th and 5th year students. During her two years in Hue, Elsa's social network consisted mostly of Vietnamese nationals with whom she was able to explore surrounding areas that were, in her words, "so very, very far off the beaten track." At the completion of her volunteer work in Vietnam, Elsa taught English in Laos with VIA for another two years.

Since her completion of the VIA programs, Elsa has worked with various nonprofit organizations serving immigrant and refugee populations in the U.S., including Vietnamese and Laotian clients. Her roles with those organizations include program developer, fundraiser, grant writer, and associate director. She has also served as a board member of VIA and a nonprofit organization founded by Vietnamese Americans that offers humanitarian assistance and youth empowerment programs in Hue, Vietnam. She currently resides in Oakland, California and works as an independent consultant for nonprofit and governmental organizations. In 2006 she went back to Vietnam as a tourist and was able to reconnect with some of her former students.

Kent. Kent was a practicing labor and employment attorney before he took a break to participate in the VIA program. He made the decision to join VIA after a vacation in Vietnam increased his initial interests in the country, which have their origins in his friendships with Vietnamese Americans and in his studies of international relations during college. He shares that his participation in the VIA program was a much needed break from the law profession, and it allowed him to explore potentially more meaningful work.

Kent joined VIA in 2000 when he was 33 years old. His assignment was at the Institute of International Education (IIE) in Hanoi where he served as an educational advisor. His role was to help students identify and apply to programs of study in the U.S. He also helped administer the Test of English as a Foreign Language and did outreach to various language institutes and universities. Three months into his volunteer assignment, Kent became director of the IIE office in Hanoi, thus ending his role as a VIA volunteer. He spent almost three years in Vietnam working for IIE.

Kent finds the pace and focus of life in Vietnam more appealing than in the U.S., and he reminisces fondly about his time there. In the following quote, he shares what he finds to be more attractive about life in Vietnam than in the U.S.:

I think what sticks out in my mind about living in Vietnam is just how, it was almost how real and rich—not rich, rich is not the right word for it—but it’s like a very real present existence. You were there right then, and everything I felt was very much acute. It’s hard to explain it. When I compare it to life in the U.S., I find life in the U.S. to be extremely boring. It’s very rote, we all know exactly what’s going to happen tomorrow, there are no surprises, there are no expectations, there are no worries or concerns, you know, beyond the trivial things like what am I going to buy...whereas in Vietnam it was a much more down-to-earth, everyday kind of existence where you’re really looking at what’s going on around you and working with it, and it’s all memorable.

Besides the overall satisfaction with life in Vietnam, Kent also felt fulfilled by his work at IIE:

I'd like to think that I did good in the sense of opening people's awareness to other opportunities to grow and develop.... I supported the ability of the country to draw upon skills acquired in education to develop or grow in the future. It's still a small little thing, but at least if you help a few people to begin to learn something or to grow, then they can come back and do things for others.

Kent recognizes that as an administrator of educational programs that allowed Vietnamese nationals to bring back new skills to their country, he was contributing to Vietnam's development. It was a role that he continued to occupy for a few years after leaving Vietnam.

After his three years in Vietnam, Kent returned to the U.S. and continued working in managerial positions at IIE's offices in New York City and Washington, D.C. He worked stateside for IIE for five years, and his work brought him back to Vietnam several times. Since his employment with IIE ended, he has not visited Vietnam and has gone back to practicing employment law, this time at a large international NGO rather than in a corporate setting. Kent remains very interested in Southeast Asia as a region and would like to work in an area that blends law and international work, such as in international public affairs.

Lindsey. Lindsey is a second generation Vietnamese American who had been to Vietnam prior to her volunteer experience. As a high school student, Lindsey accompanied her family to visit relatives in Vietnam, and she also studied abroad in Hanoi for a semester during her junior year at the University of California, Los Angeles. The decision to study in Vietnam was influenced by her mother who wanted Lindsey to

learn about her heritage and improve her Vietnamese language skills. That study abroad experience left Lauren wanting to spend more time in the country. She explains:

it [the study abroad trip] was just an amazing experience. I came back and was really missing that, you know, that time...[I] graduated from college and worked for a few years, worked for two years specifically, and so that whole time, you know, I sort of always had it on my heart that I wanted to go back on my own for an extended period of time.

Lindsey learned about the option to volunteer with VIA through her work with the Vietnamese community in Los Angeles. While Lindsey's mother had approved of her studying in Vietnam, she resisted Lindsey's decision to volunteer there because, as a single mother, she needed Lindsey to help with the family in the U.S. Furthermore, Lindsey's mother equated volunteering in Vietnam with helping the communist regime rather than the populace. In spite of her mother's resistance, Lindsey joined VIA. In protest, her mother stopped communicating with Lindsey for the next six months.

Lindsey's participation in VIA occurred some time in the mid 2000s, and her post was at a government research facility in Hanoi. She taught English and served as an English resource for researchers at the center. Because her students and contacts at the research facility were older than she and many had spouses and children, Lindsey did not have as much opportunity to socialize with them outside of her work, unlike other VIA volunteers who had teaching positions at universities. At the end of her one-year volunteer contract, Lindsey accepted a paid position coordinating a VIA summer program in Long Xuyen in the southern part of Vietnam. Her plan was to remain in Vietnam after her summer work with VIA and teach English in the Central Highlands region; however,

her mother had a stroke, and Lindsey left her coordinator position one week before the program ended to be with her mother in the U.S.

In the years immediately following her return to the U.S., Lindsey made annual trips to Vietnam to maintain a romantic relationship. She continued thinking that she would return there to live and work, but since the stroke left her mother unable to work, Lindsey prioritizes staying in the U.S. where she can help her family. She now works as a grant writer at a nonprofit organization in Orange County, CA that focuses on maternal child health for predominantly Latino clients. While she occasionally helps with fundraising for a Vietnamese American NGO that provides financial assistance to orphans and handicapped children in Vietnam, Lindsey dedicates most of her time towards helping Vietnamese immigrants in the U.S. She occupies leadership roles in two organizations, one that provides mentoring to at-risk Vietnamese American youth in Orange County and another that focuses on promoting Vietnamese arts and cultural events.

Tri. A second generation Vietnamese American, Tri was a VIA volunteer from 2009-2010 when he was 22 years old. Previously he had spent one year studying in Vietnam as part of the School for International Training's study abroad program for undergraduate students. After college, VIA was one of several options that Tri sought to obtain international work experience. While waiting for a reply from the Japanese English Teaching (JET) program, Tri was notified that he had won the Ford Foundation Community Scholarship from VIA, which would pay for his program fees and travel expenses and provide an additional \$1,000 to start a community development project in Vietnam. The financial incentive from VIA, coupled with uncertainty about his

acceptance into the JET program, drove Tri towards the VIA program. Despite learning shortly later that he was accepted to the JET program, he did not change his mind about going to Vietnam.

Tri was posted at a children's shelter in Hue after the VIA program coordinator noticed his good rapport with kids at a pre-departure event. At the children's shelter for abandoned and orphaned youth, Tri was originally assigned to teach elementary, middle, and high school level English to the shelter's children and those in the surrounding community, but the responsibilities soon grew into other projects; in addition to teaching English, he also coordinated extracurricular activities for the children and served as an English resource and volunteer coordinator for the nonprofit organization that runs the shelter.

After completing the VIA program, Tri stayed another year in Hue to work as a volunteer coordinator for a U.K.-based nonprofit organization that ran another children's shelter in the area. Tri's second year in Hue was followed by entrance into a Ph.D. program in international family and community studies at Clemson University. Today, he continues to mentor the children at the shelter associated with his VIA post and is the global volunteer director for the organization that runs the shelter. His career goal is to reform the volunteer tourism industry to include more critical reflections and responsible actions.

Kevin. Kevin, a second generation Vietnamese American, participated in VIA from 2008-2010. He was 21 years old at the start of the program and had been to the country thrice before to visit family members. With an interest in social work that began in childhood, Kevin hoped to network and gain experience in the field by volunteering

with VIA. He approached VIA with previous work experience as a sexual assault counselor and sought work on gender issues, particularly in the empowerment of women and girls. Kevin's first choice was a VIA post at a nonprofit organization that combats human trafficking along the Vietnamese-Cambodian border, but that organization was not willing to accept a male volunteer at the time. Instead, Kevin took a volunteer post at nearby An Giang University with intentions to informally volunteer with that anti-trafficking NGO.

Kevin's VIA post was teaching English conversation classes at the technical university in Long Xuyen, but as he explains:

my main purpose there was not to be an English teacher... at the time I think I was much more like, I'm going in there and we're going to start rescuing people and things like that, and that's obviously a lot more action-oriented, a lot more attuned to the American mindset of solving problems by force and that's kind of how I envisioned my experience would be, like going there solving problems really out of ambition and force. I realized later that that's not how things work anywhere, not even in America.

Highly motivated to leave a mark on Vietnamese society, Kevin spent time networking with local community leaders in his spare time in order to discover how he could help the community. He was inspired in part by his mother's unrealized dream for herself to become a doctor who serves the poor. He was also motivated by a \$1,000 grant from the Ford Foundation offered through VIA. The grant, which was part of the Ford Foundation's support for the reconciliation process between the U.S. and Vietnam, was

given to a limited number of VIA participants who were of Vietnamese ancestry to initiate community development projects in Vietnam.

The grant money was ultimately used by Kevin to start a prevention program for girls at risk of entering the sex industry in Long Xuyen. After conducting a needs assessment, Kevin concluded that many young girls in the area were not fully aware of their career options, and he therefore designed a mentorship program targeting economically disadvantaged girls who come from families where the mother or grandmother has a history within the sex industry. The program relies on volunteers from the local university to go to their mentees' homes to offer academic tutoring and counseling about the mentees' futures. The program offers training in basic social work principles to the university students who are then assigned two or three mentees. The mentored girls may be from third grade to high school level. Kevin wants to help the girls persist in school and envision for themselves a future beyond the sex industry, as well as to instill hope in them by demonstrating that there are people willing to invest in their futures. Kevin notes that there was much interest from the community when the program began, as indicated by the more than 100 applications from university students for the 15 available mentor positions.

The program continued for five years but has now ended. Its sustainability was due mainly to its sponsorship by the provincial Department of Health, although it received some additional funding from people within Kevin's personal social network. The program continued to be a side project for Kevin as he sought to build a career in the U.S. Since completing VIA Kevin has obtained a master's degree in social work and has worked at the East Meets West Foundation. He currently works at a nonprofit

organization that provides academic and social support for economically disadvantaged girls in northern California.

Ties with Vietnam since the VIA Program

Half of the former volunteers in the committed contributors category are second-generation immigrants from Vietnam who rated themselves as having at least some knowledge of the Vietnamese language and at least an intermediate level of familiarity with Vietnamese culture. All three of these volunteers with Vietnamese heritage had visited Vietnam prior to joining VIA, and two of these three had studied abroad there. In contrast, the three former volunteers without Vietnamese heritage began the VIA program with no knowledge of the Vietnamese language and only a basic understanding of Vietnamese culture. The following table shows how these six former volunteers rated their Vietnamese language proficiency and knowledge of Vietnamese culture at the start of the VIA program:

Table 2: Committed Contributors' Language and Cultural Proficiencies Before VIA

Language and Cultural Proficiencies	Mike	Elsa	Kent	Lindsey	Tri	Kevin
Reading Vietnamese	None	None	None	Basic	Intermediate	None
Writing Vietnamese	None	None	None	Basic	Intermediate	None
Speaking Vietnamese	None	None	None	Intermediate	Intermediate	Basic
Understanding spoken Vietnamese	None	None	None	Intermediate	Intermediate	Basic
Knowledge of Vietnamese culture	Basic	Basic	Basic	Advanced	Intermediate	Intermediate

Mike and Kent had visited Vietnam briefly prior to the VIA program, but those trips were

not made to reconnect with family members as was the reason for the Vietnamese American volunteers. In essence, the VIA experience helped to expand the three Vietnamese American volunteers' social ties in Vietnam while it allowed Mike, Elsa, and Kent to develop new ties.

For these six individuals, completion of the VIA program did not end their involvement in Vietnamese affairs. Four of these six former volunteers found employment in Vietnam following their volunteer work: Tri remained in Vietnam for one year working at another nonprofit organization, Kent was there for three years to work at the organization where he had been a volunteer, and Mike spent an additional six years in Vietnam. Lindsey had a temporary position with VIA and would have stayed longer in the country had she not been called home by her mother's medical emergency. In Mike's case, he was not only an employee in Vietnam but also became a student at a Vietnamese university enrolled in a graduate-level Vietnamese literature program.

Those four have since moved on from their Vietnam-based positions, although Mike and Kent continued working on Vietnamese issues in their next positions. Mike describes his situation as follows:

...people in my agency still understanding [sic] that I've got some capacity to work in Vietnam so I was, even after I left Vietnam and I was working in Washington, I was sent to Vietnam to develop some new programs in the mid 2000s, so like 2005-6, three or four years after I had left for good.

In a similar scenario, Kent's familiarity with Vietnam made him the ideal candidate for assignments that involved the country, which resulted in several business trips to Vietnam for him. Today Mike and Kent's professional lives do not involve Vietnam,

which demonstrates how involvement in the host country is likely to fluctuate. Before their career paths turned away from Vietnam, however, both Mike and Kent were employed in positions oriented at improving Vietnamese society. For Mike this involved work with Save the Children and then with USAID while Kent's work was in the area of international educational exchanges.

Mike and Kent's post-VIA involvement with Vietnam revolved primarily around their employment, but for others in the committed contributors category, it took the form of voluntary work outside of their paid profession: Elsa served on the board of directors of a Vietnamese American NGO that works in Vietnam; Kevin helps to fundraise for the project that he began in Vietnam; Tri is acting as the volunteer coordinator for the organization he worked with during VIA; and Lindsey volunteers to mentor at-risk Vietnamese American youth in Orange County, California in addition to promoting Vietnamese arts and cultural events.

For Elsa, Kevin, and Tri who are still active in Vietnam-based projects, connections with the people that they served are stronger than those with the organization that was affiliated with the VIA post. Kevin and Elsa both volunteered at universities, and their ties to those institutions ended with their VIA program; however, they both report maintaining casual friendships with some of their former students. While the severed ties with the universities might be intentional by Elsa and Kevin because that is not where their interests lie, the severance may also be explained by the structures of the universities; linkages with universities usually stem from formal partnerships and thus would be difficult to maintain given that both Elsa and Kevin lack an institutional affiliation through their work.

Unlike Kevin and Elsa, Tri is still affiliated with the NGO that runs the children's shelter from his VIA post and currently serves as its volunteer coordinator; however, his involvement with the organization is a means for him to retain influence in the children's lives rather than as an end to itself. His role as volunteer coordinator for the shelter allows him to protect the children from the harmful effects of a constant stream of new volunteers coming to the shelter. Despite his preference for working and socializing with local Vietnamese rather than Vietnamese Americans, Tri is willing to stay connected to the shelter's management team, which is led by Vietnamese Americans, because it gives him the opportunity to create more mutually beneficial interactions between the children and the multitude of international volunteers who come to the shelter.

Among all six former volunteers in this category, Tri demonstrates the strongest ties to the local Vietnamese that he served as a VIA volunteer. He considers the children at the shelter to be permanent fixtures in his life and wants to continue his mentoring role indefinitely:

we⁹ even had a little pep talk with them in 2012 where we sat down with all the kids and we're just like, listen, we hope you guys know this already, but we're here to stay. We're going to be here when you guys get married, when you guys have kids. And so that's been amazing to see how, especially studying now, doing the research on volunteer tourism where there is that giver-recipient relationship when you first get there or for young volunteer tourists that's kinda what they believe. But over time just because of the mutually beneficial, or the mutual exchange between the kids and us, that giver-recipient line kinda just

⁹ Tri is referring to himself and another former VIA volunteer who is also still involved with the children's shelter.

faded and it became a bit more blurry and more blurry, and so now they're just my kids. They're part of my life.

Tri continues to invest much time and energy into the children at the shelter in his role as the volunteer coordinator for the shelter, frequent trips to Vietnam, and regular communications with the children in between trips.

In addition to his deep personal connections with the children at the shelter, Tri's continued ties in Vietnam are linked to his professional ambitions. His current role as volunteer coordinator for the children's shelter is directly related to his doctoral work, and he wants to continue being an advocate for a more responsible volunteer tourism industry, especially in the context of international volunteers at orphanages and shelters. He states his plans as follows:

Actually one of my qualifying exams or comp exams is to create a research and theory-based volunteer program manual. So kind of, you know, gathering resources so that volunteers are going deeper and beyond just exploring their motivations for volunteering but understanding the implications and the social justice issues that underlie what they're working on so that their volunteering experience can be productive and unharmful and also use their skill sets to the best capacity, as well as create social justice advocates out of them at the end....And I'm hoping this manual that I'm creating for this comp exam, I'm hoping that I can apply that and with other orphanages and children's shelters around Southeast Asia too. And so make it culturally broad enough so that it fits within other Vietnamese orphanages and children's shelters, so I don't really

see this as like solely for [the organization that runs the shelter] but I'm kinda an advocate for the wider fields that I'm working.

Although the cases of Mike and Kent show that professional linkages could change, Tri has the added emotional connections with Vietnamese locals not present in the other two cases, and perhaps even if his professional plans shift, he would still maintain his mentor role for the children at the shelter. Tri lived with the children at the shelter during his year with VIA and was in the same city with them the following year, which allowed him to know them on a deeply personal level.

After Tri the next former volunteer who is most involved in Vietnamese affairs is Kevin who taps into his personal network to raise funds for the project that he started in Vietnam. His case exemplifies the bridging role of volunteers described in Lough et al. (2011) in that he works to secure funds for a Vietnamese cause and to raise awareness about the human trafficking issue in Vietnam. Kevin also provides input for the curriculum and shapes the evaluation of the program. His involvement in the Vietnam project takes up about ten hours of his time each week. While that volunteer work is important to him, his focus is to build his career in the U.S., and gender-based issues is still a priority for him:

Geographically I prefer to stay here for now until I can feel more set in terms of where I'm going career-wise, professionally. But it's definitely not a priority for me right now to go back to Vietnam and work there. I'm also open, I think I've become considerably more open to other parts of the world that are also in need of gender advocacy for violence and gender-based violence.

Kevin's case also shows that participation in projects that support Vietnam's socioeconomic development need not entail actual visits but could be conducted while an individual is located elsewhere. Similarly, Elsa and Lindsey also participate without the need to visit Vietnam.

Whereas Kevin's post-VIA volunteer work entails communications with both Vietnamese nationals and Vietnamese Americans, Elsa and Lindsey's volunteer projects predominantly involve working with the Vietnamese American community. Elsa served as a board member of a Vietnamese American organization that works for people in Hue, the location of her VIA post. Her role in Vietnam's socioeconomic development can be described as supporting others who work on the ground rather than direct involvement. Lindsey's commitment is also in an indirect manner. For Lindsey, her contribution to Vietnam is helping to celebrate and preserve the Vietnamese culture among Vietnamese Americans. As expressed in Resolution 36/NQ-TW, the Vietnamese government seeks its diaspora's involvement in growing the country, which necessitates diaspora members to act upon their emotional connections with the country. Lindsey's volunteer work with the Vietnamese American community can be viewed as helping to build appreciation and pride in the Vietnamese heritage that could lead diaspora members to answer the Vietnamese government's call.

Conditions that Influence Ties

In this section, I explain the factors that contribute to the strength and durability of the ties in addition to factors that threaten them. The strength of the ties refers to the depth of the relationships while durability speaks to the sustainability of the ties over time. Both external structural factors and the volunteers' personal characteristics were

considered in the naming of these factors.

Institutional affiliation facilitates involvement from afar. Involvement in Vietnamese affairs among these six former volunteers is mediated by institutions. In other words, the former volunteers are not simply offering assistance on their own; rather, their actions occur within an institutional backdrop. For Mike and Kent, this occurred through their employers. Meanwhile, nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status provide avenues for Elsa's, Lindsey's, and Tri's involvement. Elsa's monetary donations and fundraising help for two organizations allow her to partake indirectly in projects in Vietnam. This method of engagement allows her to participate at her convenience and in a less committal way as compared to Tri and Kevin. Like Elsa, Lindsey's volunteer work with the Vietnamese community also occurs within an organizational context rather than as projects devised on her own. Meanwhile, Tri's affiliation with one nonprofit results in occasional trips to Vietnam, but he is able to help the organization improve its intake of international volunteers while still being a fulltime graduate student in the U.S. His institutional ties give him access to the decision-making process that affects the children at the shelter.

As for Kevin, a connection with the provincial Department of Health in Vietnam brings funding and legitimacy for the program that he conceptualized; however, those benefits are limited to operations in Vietnam. In the U.S., the connection to a governmental entity in Vietnam adversely affects Kevin's ability to garner support from people in the U.S. Kevin reports that he has limited fundraising options because the program is not part of a formalized nonprofit organization based in the U.S. and because of mistrust of the Vietnamese government among some potential supporters:

I knew that if I wasn't around, I needed some way to make it sustainable and that was to make it a government project. So it's actually a social project under a government agency. The larger umbrella the agency is the Department of Health. The provincial Department of Health, so that's something that is always sticky when I explain. A lot of Americans are very wary of that, and not just Vietnamese Americans but other all Americans, especially older ones who were around for the war.... it's very sticky because it's not a nonprofit, and most people prefer to donate to a 501(c)3 and it's a government project so a lot of older folks are uncomfortable. So I've done only personal fundraising right now. The last few years I've only done friends, family, acquaintances, colleagues kind of fundraising. I haven't done any, I've done very few grants because I don't have the status that would be required for grants.

Kevin's case exemplifies how an affiliation with the Vietnamese government can both facilitate and hinder one's projects. In particular, negative perceptions of the Vietnamese government prevent potential supporters of his cause who are still affected by the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Priority given to social network maintenance. These six cases demonstrate that conscientious effort is needed to maintain social relations across time and physical separation, and this effort entails input from former volunteers and their collaborators. Travel to Vietnam is a means to reconnect with people, which all former volunteers in this category had done after VIA. For Mike and Kent, travel to Vietnam was necessary for work. When not traveling, these former volunteers rely on technologies such as social media, email, and videoconferencing to help bridge the physical absence.

Videoconferencing technology is particularly important to Tri since it allows him to see and interact with the children from the shelter in real time. Former volunteers who were in Vietnam before the advent of the Internet are most keenly aware of technology's important role in the maintenance of social relations. Elsa recounts how the advent of the Internet changed the way she interacted with her contacts in Vietnam as follows:

at the time that I left there, email wasn't really functional and accessible for them, and those were mostly adults who didn't get on email and try to track me down. I think what ended up happening was when email became more available, I and my students quickly found each other virtually and enough time has passed so that most of those adults who I know, many of whom are not, just not tech-savvy, we had lost touch, and so a lot of these people I just went back and found. When I went back there, I just knocked on their doors, but you know for many years I didn't have any means to keep in touch other than writing letters, and we would write a few so there were a few years where we tried to maintain correspondence writing letters but it got a little harder with the time lag, and then I think I just stopped writing letters now that I use emails. So for the most part I haven't stayed in touch with them.

Elsa notes that she is able to stay in touch with people who have access to technology and the know-how to use it. For those in her network without technological literacy, reconnection was made possible when she was physically in Vietnam and visited them at their homes.

It is generally easier for a former volunteer to travel to Vietnam than for a Vietnamese to travel to the U.S. due to the more likelihood that former volunteers would

have dispensable income for international travel and also the privileges associated with holding a U.S. passport. For instance, Vietnamese nationals who wish to travel to the U.S. must jump many bureaucratic hurdles to prove their non-immigrant intent whereas a U.S. citizen wanting to go to Vietnam need only pay a small fee for a visa. An awareness of these structural issues helps to dispel the idea that only former volunteers are in control of their social ties. In reality, Vietnamese nationals are limited in the ways that they can engage with former volunteers due to the global political economy. Technology has allowed those in Vietnam who cannot travel to reach out to former volunteers with whom they wish to stay in touch, but even then the outreach is only possible for those with access to those technologies and the knowledge for how to utilize them.

While the ease of travel and access to technology may give the semblance that former volunteers are the proactive ones in the relationship, there is evidence from the data that lasting relationships require mutual interest from both sides. Tri describes the mutuality in the social ties as “a two way street where these kids or these friends also keep in touch with me or reach out to me as well.” While Tri feels strong attachments to the children at the shelter, they too have developed attachments to him. He says that they often turn to him to mediate problems that they do not feel comfortable approaching other staff members at the shelter. Meanwhile, Elsa’s former students have reached out to her and requested information and materials to help them complete their teacher trainings. Similarly, Kevin’s contacts with the mentoring project seek his input for the curriculum and program evaluations. In these three cases, there is a utilitarian purpose for Vietnamese nationals to maintain contact with the former volunteers. To understand fully the rationales behind the Vietnamese nationals’ efforts to maintain ties, further

investigation is needed that is beyond the scope of this study, but regardless of the Vietnamese nationals' rationale, the sustainability of ties in Vietnam is not dependent solely on former volunteers but also on the desire of those in Vietnam to keep in touch.

Lindsey's case seems to support the conclusion that the sustainability of social ties in Vietnam depends on having interested Vietnamese nationals. Unlike Elsa, Kevin, and Tri, Lindsey did not establish strong relationships with Vietnamese nationals at her volunteer post because they were older researchers who had family commitments. Their lack of interest in getting close to her while she was still in Vietnam prevented the establishment of a base for future relationships to spring. Consequently, Lindsey's connections lean more towards Vietnamese Americans than Vietnamese nationals.

Obligations to family. Although the focus of this chapter has been primarily on former volunteers' Vietnam-related activities, a point to be emphasized is that involvement fluctuates according to the former volunteers' personal circumstances. Obligations to family are one set of factors that explains why former volunteers may no longer be active in Vietnamese affairs. The cases of Kent and Lindsey illustrate how the individual's desire to live and work in Vietnam may be thwarted by familial obligations.

Lindsey's desire to live in Vietnam was affected twice by her mother's health crisis, first when she abandoned her plans to remain in Vietnam after VIA to teach English and again when she returned to the U.S. but still wished to live in Vietnam. As Lindsey explains in the following quote, her relocation to Vietnam is no longer a viable option given her responsibilities toward her family:

...my mom had a major stroke so she ended up, she's not working anymore, and a

lot has changed for my family so I think reality sort of reminded me that it's not an ok, I'm taking a break and I'll be back in Vietnam. So I think as I got settled here, I just started working to support my family. It became more clear that it wasn't a viable option for me unless something like AMAZING came through, but because I'm financially responsible for my family now, it's a little bit more challenging to find something that would work with my circumstances.

Even before the stroke, Lindsey's mother had underscored Lindsey's obligations to the family and protested her participation in VIA. The mother's health crisis made the demand for Lindsey's presence in the U.S. more eminent, and it essentially makes any plans of Lindsey to stay long-term in Vietnam unfeasible based on the family's circumstances.

Kent also cites obligations to family as a reason for his departure from Vietnam after living there for three years and a factor behind his hesitation to leave the U.S. to pursue work abroad:

I'm black. There is a segment of an old fashioned black society where you are expected to take care of your family, and you know, it's still in certain quarters considered a shame if a person allows their parents to go into a nursing home. They're supposed to be taken care of by family. There are obligations that you meet.... It's just simply the way I grew up and is part of my own culture.

Whereas Lindsey describes her familial obligations in practical terms, i.e., her mother's inability to work necessitates Lindsey's financial contributions, Kent provides an explanation that is grounded in his African American culture. For Kent, it is not enough to financially support his parents; rather, he must be personally involved in the caretaking

process. The reliance on a nursing home to care for his parents is unacceptable and contradicts with the values by which he was raised.

Kent's description of his familial responsibilities resembles the tenants of filial piety¹⁰, which is a prominent feature of the Confucian-based Vietnamese culture.

Although Lindsey does not explain her situation in such terms, it is likely that she is subjected to similar expectations. After all, she could still offer financial assistance to her mom while pursuing her interests in Vietnam, but the strong influence of filial piety pushes her to do more by staying physically near her mother rather than moving to Vietnam.

In a study that investigates the manifestations of filial piety among Korean adults and their parents, Sung (1998) finds that one way for children to express filial piety is by making sacrifices for their parents. Lindsey's and Kent's disregard for their Vietnamese pursuits may be interpreted as a manifestation of filial piety characterized by the sacrificing of their own interests to honor the needs of their parents. The obligation to care for their elders is different than responsibilities toward a spouse or one's own children that was mentioned by other former volunteers as a reason for their noninvolvement in Vietnamese affairs. Whereas a former volunteer who is interested in living in Vietnam might be able to relocate a spouse or children relatively easily, the relocation of elderly parents, especially those in questionable health, would be a substantially more difficult task.

Conclusion

¹⁰ Sung (1998) defines filial piety as "a social norm that parents should love their children and that children in turn should love and respect their parents.... A core ideal of filial piety is the fulfillment of a child's obligations to the parent" (p. 371).

These six cases of Mike, Elsa, Kent, Lindsey, Tri, and Kevin demonstrate that former volunteers can have an ongoing role in development projects for the host country beyond their volunteer placement. This involvement can occur as part of their employment or through additional volunteer work oriented towards Vietnam. The activities may require their presence in Vietnam, but increasingly with technological advances, participation need not involve travel to Vietnam. Furthermore, commitment towards helping Vietnam's socioeconomic development may translate to collaborations with the Vietnamese American communities rather than direct work with Vietnamese nationals. Though their commitment may not last over time, at least for some time beyond the volunteer period they were advocates who continued to work to improve the lives of the Vietnamese people.

Chapter 6: Default Actors

This chapter discusses former volunteers who do not make a conscientious effort to partake in socioeconomic development in Vietnam, but their familial ties in Vietnam present opportunities to engage in activities that affect Vietnamese society. The two participants of this study whom I categorize as default actors do not have Vietnamese heritage; rather, they met and married Vietnamese nationals from their VIA experience. One former volunteer plans to live permanently in Vietnam with his family whereas the other volunteer lives in the U.S. Their cases highlight the subtle contributions to Vietnamese society from former volunteers who do not necessarily aim to foster change.

Profiles of Default Participants

Dan. Dan had a master's degree in anthropology and was working as an anthropologist/archaeologist on a reservation for the Zuni nation in New Mexico when he decided to volunteer with VIA in Indonesia. His decision was based on several factors, including a desire to travel, to change his work circumstances, and to accompany his girlfriend as she completed her dissertation research in Indonesia. When his romantic relationship ended, Dan decided to go to Vietnam instead of Indonesia largely to fulfill his curiosity about the country that occupied a prominent place in the general discourse of his generation. He explains his choice of Vietnam as follows:

There's a narrative of what Vietnam means if you're an American. Largely for people of my generation it's of course a war. You can't really find it on a map whereas there was a war and it was kind of a disingenuous war, you know there's a long narrative there about what it is for an American. So I just wanted to go see it.... It was sort of doubtfulness about the narrative and the sort of not knowing,

go and find out. My professional and graduate work is as an anthropologist and so I sort of, was dedicated to the idea of relativity, in other words trying to get past my own cultural blinders and see it the way people see it. That's one of the precepts of anthropology, to try and see the world through other people's eyes because ultimately it's not something you can completely do but you make the effort. I went over there more as an anthropologist.

Dan was 33 years old when he arrived at Da Lat University in 1996. For two years he taught speaking and listening English classes to undergraduate students alongside other teachers from abroad that were not affiliated with VIA. The more memorable aspect of Dan's experience in Vietnam was the time spent with his students outside of the classroom. He recalls that the student-teacher relationship was not rigid, and since he was around the same age as his students, he was able to create lasting friendships with a group of about 15 of his former students. The friendships grew from discussions about each other's cultures in casual places like cafes and restaurants:

We'd spend a lot of time outside the classroom together. They would come by, I'd play soccer with them, or we'd hop on motorbikes and we'd go somewhere at night to eat and drink and hang out, and so we spent an infinite amount of time to socialize with some of my students, and they just became really close friends.

There was a student teacher relationship there, but it wasn't like you know serious, I have to keep my distance. No one really expected that. Part of the reason that the university liked us was because we didn't have that distance with the students. So they'd come by your house and hang out, or I'd get bored one

night and go out with the students. I'd go out and sit at a café and students would find me, and we'd end up eating snails and drinking.

After VIA, Dan found employment in line with his professional training and currently works as a planner/historic preservation specialist in Arizona. He married a Vietnamese national whom he met while serving as a volunteer and occasionally contemplates retiring in Vietnam in the future because of its lower cost of living.

Nathan. Nathan was a participant of VIA from 2009-2011; he was 24 years old at the start of the program. He was inspired to go abroad by his sister who was enrolled in a language immersion program in Guatemala at the time. Nathan first applied to the Japan English and Teaching Program, but when his application was not accepted, he looked into VIA's program in China where a friend had volunteered. Because there was less demand for its Vietnam program, VIA asked Nathan to change destinations, which he agreed to do because his priority was to explore another country, and the setting was not particularly important. Nathan knew very little about Vietnam initially, admitting that he did not even know whether North and South Vietnam had reunited.

Nathan's post was in the rural district of Tanh Linh in Binh Thuan province. He was responsible for teaching English to workers of a Vietnamese NGO, as well as to government workers and English teachers in the area. According to Nathan, his supervisor at the NGO was "corrupt" and "incompetent", and that supervisor claimed the local government wanted to stop Nathan's classes because of insufficient enrollment. Nathan later found out that the supervisor was actually displeased with the way that he was conducting class and may have used the government as an excuse to stop the class. Thus, Nathan was transferred to another office of the same NGO where he faced a new

supervisor who was also “corrupt” and “incompetent.” After a total of six months at that NGO, VIA placed Nathan at a post in Hue where he taught English to students at the University of Foreign Languages. Nathan found the working environment at the university to be less frustrating, in part because he did not work directly under someone with substantial power in the organization:

When I went to Hue I had the good fortune of not being in direct contact with the person at the top of the university. I mostly worked with the people under him who were all incredibly competent. Some of them had studied abroad, they were all brilliant, they were usually pretty good at their jobs, and they sort of served as a buffer between the incompetent guy at the top and all the things that needed to function under him. The boss would come up with an idea that wouldn't work, and the people directly working for him would try to get him to change his mind while also mitigating the damage of his idea. The few times I had to work with him were horrible. Once he'd hired me and another Australian teacher to teach a class and the whole thing was a corrupt and incompetent scheme where almost all the students were cheating, but he didn't care provided he got his fees. It was just about him collecting money for having foreign teachers run a test. It didn't have anything to do with actually implementing the test or checking people's English skills. And some of the other bosses I've seen were similar. I had three different bosses whom I personally worked with who were all corrupt. Other volunteers and staff who worked for all three told me the bosses were stealing money from the organizations we were working for, and in all my interactions with them they would spend a lot of their time lying because they needed to cover up the fact that

what they said they were going to do and what they said they wanted to do, didn't have any bearing on what they were actually doing. There was always a disconnect between what they said and what they were actually doing. So you just had to work around that. It was rather frustrating... and I had some other volunteers after me who had similar experiences working for the heads of organizations. They said the key is never to work for the head Vietnamese boss of the organization. It was almost always a bad experience.

Despite his work misfortunes at the NGO, Nathan befriended and married a worker of the NGO who had also been a student in his class. The wedding took place in Vietnam while Nathan was still a volunteer in Hue. The couple built a house in the bride's hometown in Dong Nai province and lived there until after the birth of their son. At the time of the interview, Nathan and his wife were living temporarily in Berkeley, California as they visited both sides of the family and finalized her paperwork for dual citizenship. They plan to live in Vietnam in the house that they built, with Nathan working as an investment advisor from home.

Ties in Vietnam since the VIA Program

The volunteer experience with VIA was the first encounter that Dan and Nathan had with Vietnam. Both reported no knowledge of the Vietnamese language and culture prior to their trip; yet, they finished the VIA program with newfound ties to Vietnam resulting from marriages to Vietnamese nationals. The main activity engaged by Dan and Nathan that positions them as default actors in Vietnam's socioeconomic development is the sending of financial remittances to support their Vietnamese in-laws.

Remittances are recognized as an important source of financing for countries in

the global South; remittances are the second largest source of external funding for global Southern countries after foreign direct investments (Ratha, 2004). According to Chimhowu, Piesse, and Pinder (2005), remittances contribute to poverty reduction at the household, community, national, and international levels. In the Vietnamese context, an estimated US\$11 billion was remitted in 2013, a number that is 6.4 percent of the country's gross domestic product for that year (World Bank, 2015). Vietnam ranks sixteenth in the list of countries that receive the most remittances (World Bank, 2010). While Dan and Nathan's remittances primarily benefit their families, those remittances can be seen as contributing to Vietnam's development when viewed as part of the total amount of remittances sent to Vietnam each year.

The remittances sent to Nathan's in-laws have primarily gone toward career preparations for his wife's sisters:

We often help out, I often help out people in my wife's family. We often help them out, my wife and I. She has a younger sister and we're supporting her being an apprentice tailor and stuff like that. Another sister we're putting through college. She was putting herself through college before I met her, and then we continued to do that after I met her.

In Dan's case, the remittances have also been used to educate the wife's siblings, but the money also provided capital for her parents to purchase a house. The property, in turn, offered the family more financial stability and allowed them to establish a small business:

Her father was a farmer in the highlands, actually near Da Lat. He had a stroke, and he was incapacitated to the point where he couldn't farm anymore. And so it was a real struggle to sustain himself through the farm. So they moved down to

Vung Tau on the coast where they have relatives, and they were renting a house. We bought them a house, basically. And so they weren't paying rent, and we send money and her mother started a food stand, like a pho shop and seafood, you know those little Vietnamese businesses where you run out of the downstairs of your house. So she opened that, and you know there are seven or eight kids in this family, so you know there was some money for expenses for the kids who are studying, going to school. They're all done now, so we're not really sending them any money for the kids' education anymore. We send them a little money every once in a while. They were all in college. All the kids have done really well.

While the sending of remittances is usually discussed as a means for diaspora members to maintain ties to the homeland and as a reflection of their transnational lives, these two former volunteers demonstrate that people outside the diaspora may adopt the practice after marriage with a diaspora member. With their remittances, Dan and Nathan show a commitment to supporting a limited number of people in Vietnam, namely the immediate family members of their spouses. A unique aspect in Nathan's case is that the financial assistance offered to his wife's family in Vietnam occurs as the couple is trying to establish a life in Vietnam. In contrast, Dan's case reflects the more typical scenario of a couple with an established life in the global North sending money to relatives in the global South.

Outside of the family, Dan and Nathan still maintain friendships with certain people from their VIA experience. Dan keeps in contact with about 15 of his former students by means of social media and email and receives a warm welcome from them

when he visits Vietnam: “each time I go back they’ll rush to Saigon and be there when the plane arrives.” Meanwhile, Nathan describes his social network in Vietnam as being “thoroughly intact” because he considers Vietnam to be his permanent residence:

I still actually end up seeing a bunch of people from the first NGO because my wife used to work there, and so we sometimes go back and visit, and then I still see, I still talk to some of my students from the university in Hue, and I email a bunch of them...again we live in Vietnam and once we get her new visa and dual citizenship, we’re going to go back there...often I end up in places where I taught.

I know a lot of people in Vietnam, and I tend to see them again....

Nathan’s social relationships in Vietnam are woven into his daily existence given that he stayed in Vietnam after completing the VIA program and plans to continue living there.

In comparison, Dan’s life is rooted in the U.S. and is punctuated by visits to Vietnam.

For Dan, Vietnam is a destination to visit, albeit one that he will continually return to:

“I’ll go back every once in a while for the rest of my life,” but for Nathan, Vietnam will provide the setting for his life while the U.S. will be a destination for short visits: “once we get my wife’s second passport, then we’ll head back to Vietnam, and we’ll probably spend most of our time there. We’ll come by here sometimes, but we’ll spend most of our time in Vietnam.”

Residency in Vietnam provides opportunities for Nathan to renew and expand ties with people in Vietnam, and it also turns Nathan into a full participant within Vietnam’s economy. Once there, Nathan would contribute to Vietnam’s development through his consumerism of goods and services in the country. His social connections in Vietnam are dynamic and ever changing as he goes about his daily business as a resident of the

country. In contrast, Dan's connections are more static given the inconsistent interactions. Dan admits that the first four or five years after the completion of his VIA assignment was the period when he made the most visits to Vietnam and followed news items related to the country more closely. With the passing of time, he has lost that interest.

Conditions that Influence Ties

The following section discusses the conditions surrounding default actors' more subtle forms of involvement in Vietnam's socioeconomic development. Default actors do not seek opportunities to enact change, but these opportunities arise as a natural course of their lives. Marriage to a local Vietnamese and residency in Vietnam are two conditions that create opportunities for these former volunteers to partake in socioeconomic change. The other two conditions are the lapse of time since the volunteer experience and the existence of mistrust towards the work of NGOs in Vietnam. These last two conditions partially explain the limited role that default participants take in Vietnam's development processes.

Marriage to a local Vietnamese. Dan and Nathan married local Vietnamese women whom they met during the volunteer assignment. Consequently, they gained a set of relatives in Vietnam and brought cross-cultural interactions into their home life. Nathan recognizes that his marriage contributes to his continued ties in Vietnam:

The only reason really that I still have those relationships [with people in Vietnam] is because I married a Vietnamese woman, and we have our house in Vietnam...if I had just gone there and taught a couple of years and gone back to the U.S., I doubt I would be in much contact with everyone. I mean I'd probably

still email some of the students and stuff, but I'd have a lot less contact with it just because I wouldn't be living there anymore.

Nathan hypothesizes that without the marriage, he would likely have continued his life in the U.S. and perhaps maintained only casual relationships with a limited pool of Vietnamese people. The VIA experience did not imbue Nathan with the desire to engage directly in Vietnam's development, a sentiment shared by Dan. Their marriages, however, connected them to a Vietnamese family, and these former volunteers adopted their spouses' practice of sending remittances. In Nathan's case, the marriage also led him to relocate to Vietnam in part to receive support from her family and friends in the raising of their child.

Residency in Vietnam. Dan and Nathan live transnational lives given their marriages to Vietnamese spouses, travels between the U.S. and Vietnam, contacts with relatives and friends in both countries, and provision of remittances for their in-laws. One noticeable difference in their cases is residency in Vietnam, which Nathan has chosen but not Dan. By becoming a resident of Vietnam, Nathan is able to renew his existing ties in the country and expand his social network on a constant basis. His consumerism in Vietnam helps drive the Vietnamese economy on a daily basis in comparison with Dan who occasionally goes to Vietnam as a tourist.

The cases of Dan and Nathan demonstrate that relocating to Vietnam is a choice that depends heavily on practicalities. Dan's job necessitates being bounded to a specific place in the U.S. whereas Nathan can work remotely. In 2012, fourteen years after completing the VIA program, Dan was tempted to follow an opportunity to work in Vietnam with VIA, but his financial obligations and commitments in the U.S. prevented

him from pursuing that opportunity: “I was so tempted to just quit my job and go, but like I said I’ve got a mortgage, I’ve got a dog, wife’s in school, so many obligations.”

Whereas relocating to Vietnam would pose a disruption to Dan’s life, the move to Vietnam was made in part to allow Nathan and his wife access to a support network when they became new parents.

Lapse of time. Curiosity about Vietnam and a thirst for new adventures, rather than a desire to do good for the Vietnamese society, led Dan and Nathan to become volunteers. The desire to be a change agent for Vietnam did not develop during or after their volunteer assignment, and their current connections to Vietnam depend largely on their marriage to Vietnamese partners. There is an indication, particularly in Dan’s case, that the passing of time corrodes the non-familial relationships in Vietnam. For Dan, the VIA experience was something that occurred more than a decade ago, and the event becomes less momentous when put in perspective with the rest of his life:

Let’s see, I came back in ‘98, probably the first four or five years I was back, that’s when I did most of my visits back and stuff like that, so yeah, I haven’t been as actively [sic]. I guess you might say that, how do I put it, as a lot of time has gone by, it’s been 15 years since I came back at least, 16 years, so my life has changed. The things that you do when I was 32 or 33 were major milestones, right? Grad school, living in the Indian reservation in New Mexico, spending two years in Vietnam, and at that period of your life seem to have more oomph behind them. They take on a more dramatic period of your life. Now 18 years later you look back, 16 years later whatever, two years doesn’t seem like a long time. So

you might say the experience has mellowed, how's that? Not as dramatic as it was at the time.

Whereas participation in a program that lasts for two years would be considered a long-term immersion experience compared to programs that last for a few weeks or months, Dan views it as a relatively short segment in his personal history. He categorizes it as something that occurred in the distant past, and the novelty of the experience has diminished with time. The passage of time has made Vietnam less relevant in Dan's daily life, and this limited preoccupation with the country makes it less likely that he would seek activities geared towards the socioeconomic development of Vietnam.

Meanwhile, only three years have passed since Nathan finished VIA. Just as Vietnam was more on Dan's mind and influenced his activities in the four or five years following his participation in VIA, Nathan is also experiencing that pull from Vietnam at this time. It remains to be seen whether his case will follow the pattern of diminishing ties with time as observed in Dan's case. The fact that Nathan and his wife have begun the process to obtain her American citizenship indicates an interest in possibly changing their living situation in the future. Also, it is quite possible that familial ties from Nathan's side will draw the couple and their son back to the U.S. Continued residency in Vietnam would nullify the issue of time corroding engagements in Vietnam since the VIA experience, but a move back to the U.S. would make that a possibility again.

Mistrust of NGOs in Vietnam. Based on his bad experiences with several Vietnamese supervisors during his volunteer assignment, Nathan now has negative impressions of NGOs that work in Vietnam. The mismanagement of funds is a particular

concern for him, and this mistrust contributes to his hesitation to provide financial support for any NGOs in Vietnam:

Partly I don't donate to charity because I know that most of the charities working in Vietnam, the money that you give them is very good at providing jobs for the people who work for those charities. I don't know how much of that money actually goes to where it's supposed to be working on. So you are helping Vietnamese people in that you're employing Vietnamese people in relatively decent jobs, and they will take your money while they go to the café or do whatever they could be doing instead of working, but they're not necessarily going to be putting all that money towards what they're supposed to be putting it towards by any Western standards. So some part of that money will go to what it's supposed to, and the better the charity the more it will, but for the most part you're just providing money to provide the salary of the people who work for the NGO, which is really not the best use of anyone's money as far as I can see. Probably had I not worked for them, then I might have a better opinion, but everyone I know who've worked for any of the Vietnamese-run charities and my own personal experience with them, they're largely money fix.

Nathan observes that money donated to organizations in Vietnam tend not to go towards the intended population but rather for program management, including the salary of staff. He recognizes that the existence of NGOs offer employment opportunities for local Vietnamese, which he does not see as a good in itself. While some may recognize that Vietnamese workers operate differently, Nathan makes the value judgment that they have

poor work ethics that are undeserving of his financial support. He dismisses the work of NGOs as being largely moneymaking schemes.

Nathan's concerns appear often in critical investigations of NGOs and are not necessarily unique to the Vietnamese context. Just as major donors like the World Bank demand accountability and restructuring of practices before providing aid, Nathan also wants to be assured that his money will benefit the target population rather than to support undedicated workers. His personal experiences have led him to conclude that NGO work in Vietnam is largely ineffective, and consequently he has restrained from giving donations until persuaded otherwise.

Conclusion

The former volunteers who fall into the category of default actors do not seek opportunities to participate in Vietnam's socioeconomic development, and yet some of their actions could be said to contribute to Vietnam's development on a micro level. These actions, such as sending remittances and constant consumption of Vietnamese goods and services, arise organically as part of the former volunteers' marriages to Vietnamese spouses or residency in Vietnam. The remittances benefit a small group of people in Vietnam, mainly the in-laws of Dan and Nathan. The constant consumption of goods and services in Vietnam, made possible by Nathan's relocation to Vietnam, contributes to the local economy near his residence on a small scale.

Default actors may seem apathetic towards the task of improving socioeconomic conditions in Vietnam because they do not support broad causes and their financial contributions are reserved for family members, but they do help bridge the resource gap between the global North and global South through their practice of sending remittances.

The development consequences of their actions still exist despite a lack of intention on their parts to partake in socioeconomic improvements in Vietnam. According to Chimhowu, Piesse, and Pinder (2005), remittances “transfer resources from developed to developing countries, thus reducing inequality at the international level” (p. 94). Dan and Nathan’s actions may not be significant for Vietnam’s development when considered on their own, but they contribute to the overall total of remittances sent to Vietnam, which are an important source of financing for the country. The contributions of default actors are subtle, and the former volunteers who belong in this category may not even realize the developmental impact of their actions. Recognition of the subtle and indirect ways that default participants engage with Vietnamese society may assist in the creation of initiatives to amplify the positive outcomes since they are generally felt only within the former volunteers’ immediate social circles.

Chapter 7: Indifferent Abstainers

This chapter describes former volunteers who express limited interest in affairs related to Vietnam and have devoted little energy and resources toward Vietnam's socioeconomic development since their time with VIA. Although the three former volunteers in this category find their VIA experience to be invaluable and would recommend international volunteering to others, their post-VIA lives involve little to no activities that contribute to Vietnam's development. As compared to the other categories of former volunteers discussed in this study, indifferent abstainers provide the least amount of social capital for Vietnam given their disinterest and lack of involvement in Vietnamese affairs. While they may not contribute much to Vietnam directly, these indifferent abstainers' satisfaction with their experience in Vietnam and ideological support of international volunteering opportunities could make them valuable resources for the recruitment of future international volunteers.

Profiles of Indifferent Abstainers

William. William participated in VIA's inaugural program in Vietnam in 1966 when it was a summer volunteer program for Stanford University students. Although Vietnam was at war with the U.S., VIA's presence in the country was made possible by a partnership with the now-defunct organization International Voluntary Services (IVS), a nonprofit organization founded by the Mennonite, Brethren, and Quaker churches that had long-term volunteers in Vietnam who helped with community development projects. VIA selected and trained volunteers while IVS performed the in-country placements.

That summer William graduated from Stanford, and his post-college options included going to Africa as part of the Peace Corps, working at a summer internship for

his congressman, preparing for graduate school, or joining VIA. William chose VIA for a variety of reasons, one of which was to deepen his understanding of the country to bolster his work in the antiwar movement. In addition, William had participated in summer community development projects in Indiana and Oregon while he was in college, and he saw an opportunity to continue that line of work in Vietnam. A third reason was that William knew VIA's founder, Dwight Clark, personally and had confidence in the quality of the program. Lastly, some of the other VIA volunteers going to Vietnam were friends, and he wanted to share that experience with them.

William and another VIA volunteer were placed in Ban Me Thuot, an area in the Central Highlands of Vietnam that is home to a variety of diverse ethnic groups¹¹. Ban Me Thuot was considered a no-contest area at the time, so William and his fellow VIA volunteer were in a relatively safe area. The two VIA volunteers collaborated with teens from the Rhade ethnic group in the building of small dams that provided access to clean water for the villagers. They also helped to improve school buildings by laying cement over the previous mud floors. Communication with people in the villages was mostly done in French, the language that had been taught in schools when France controlled Vietnam and a language in which William had developed some proficiency while studying at Stanford in France.

After his summer with VIA, William attended the University of Chicago and earned a Ph.D. in sociology. Subsequently, he pursued a career in academia, teaching courses in sociology and educational leadership in the U.S. as well as in Vancouver, Canada. He has retired as a professor and now lives in Portland, Oregon. He admits that

¹¹ For a discussion of Vietnam's ethnic groups, see Vu, K. (2008). *54 dân tộc Việt Nam = 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam*. Ha Noi: Thong Tan Publishing Company.

he did not develop further interests in Vietnam or Asia from his VIA experience, stating that “it [the summer in Vietnam] was a part of my consciousness, but as an academic I was always much more interested in Europe than in the Far East and in the commonalities and tensions between the U.S. and Europe and Cold War issues.” William did not visit Vietnam again until the summer of 2013 when he participated in a tour organized by VIA to mark its 50th anniversary. That experience rekindled his interest in the country and how it had changed and was changing, which he pursues by following current events and reading recent scholarship about Vietnam.

Trang. A Vietnamese American who was born in a refugee camp in Malaysia, Trang participated in VIA after graduating from college. A combination of reasons led her to VIA, including difficulties finding employment and strong interests in teaching, discovering her roots, and visiting family in Vietnam. She was familiar with VIA because a family friend was a board member of the organization. Her parents, who had left Vietnam as refugees, were generally supportive of her decision to volunteer in Vietnam, though they were concerned that she would have to endure difficult living conditions. Trang had not been to Vietnam prior to her VIA experience.

In 2002-2003 Trang served as a volunteer at the Hanoi University of Foreign Studies where she taught English conversation and writing to second and third year students in the business program. She also taught a separate English conversation class for graduate students. Trang had overall good relationships with her students, who she said paid her great respect, including the older graduate students. She is proud to have introduced her students to the learner-centered approach and critical thinking emphasis of her own schooling:

It's very fulfilling to know that I was able to teach them in a style that I was taught, which is again that out-of-the-box thinking, the pushing boundaries. One of the biggest things that I think I taught my students was to always question, and I think in that society they were taught never to question the teacher. You know, what the teacher says is right, what the book says is right, you know, which to me is a terrible way to teaching, and I taught them to always question me. It took them a lot of time to even get used to that style of questioning me. I would prompt it purposefully by giving them wrong information, and they knew it was wrong, but it took them a long time to even tell me it was wrong, so it took them some time and coaxing to gain that confidence to even question my lessons. I wanted them to question it, and I think by the end of the year they were really able to think in that way, you know, so that's pretty important.

Trang had signed up to volunteer for one year and wanted to stay longer, but she left after the first year at her parents' insistence:

There was like a SARS outbreak at that point. They [her parents] had visited me when I was there for about six months, and they were really unhappy with my living conditions because I lived with the locals. I did not live in a poshy place at all. I had rats coming in all over, all day because I lived above a little street food stand, so it was disgusting. They just didn't think it was a healthy environment for me. It was also very frustrating to work with the school officials at that time, so they felt like there were too many restrictions on my coursework that I had to teach. They were very protective parents. They lived in a little bubble, and when they went back—that was the first time they went back too—so I think in a

sense they got a huge shock of like here's a country that they remember, they left it when it was really bad and now coming back it hadn't even gotten better, especially for someone like my mom who is from the North area. She knew Hanoi very well, but she hadn't been to Hanoi since she was a teenager, so you know 40 something years have passed for her to go back. It was really shocking, and she didn't want to see her own daughter, first daughter, live in those conditions...she really didn't like that and the friends that I made, the Vietnamese locals.... They even tried to get me out of my contract earlier, in the middle of the year, which I refused. And honestly, when they saw me at the Winter Retreat which we had, which was like in the, probably about five months into my volunteership, I was still trying to get settled in, and so I think I didn't understand the country enough to really convince them that I was doing well 'cause I didn't know that I was doing well there. So that's why they tried to pull me out earlier.

After VIA, Trang obtained a Masters in Public Administration. She currently serves as a clinical research manager in the healthcare field and lives in Northern California. She has not been back to Vietnam since her volunteer assignment and expresses little interest in doing so. She has remained active within VIA, however, first serving as an interviewer of new volunteers and a contact for the parents of prospective volunteers and then as a member of the board of directors.

Derek. Derek learned about VIA from a college professor who was an alumnus of the program in the 1960s. Having majored in international studies with a focus on environmental issues, Derek was attracted to VIA's Vietnam program because a specific post there offered the opportunity to pursue his interests in forest policy and sustainable

development. His participation in VIA was from 2012 to 2013 following his graduation from the University of Washington. The volunteer experience was Derek's first time in Vietnam but not in Southeast Asia; he had spent three months in Indonesia to study the country's forestry policies during his senior year of college.

In Vietnam Derek lived in Hue and was a volunteer with a Dutch NGO that does forest conservation work. He served as an English resource at the organization, and his responsibilities included producing newsletters and minor press releases, serving as a communications liaison between the Vietnam office and the headquarters in the Netherlands, and conducting literature reviews. The office was small with only five workers, and the work was at times not quite what Derek had envisioned:

I thought I'd be in the jungle all the time, and you know contributing to research, but it was a little more not boring, I don't want to say that, but it was a bit quieter, I suppose....it was just a year between the funding cycle where there just wasn't a lot happening so that meant not a lot of incoming tasks or incoming information that had to be processed so it was just unfortunate, I suppose, that I was there at a time where, you know, there wasn't a whole lot happening. I didn't feel useless very often, but there were times when I said 'What am I doing here?' I'm not contributing anything, there's nothing for me to gain from being here other than enjoying the sociocultural experience of living abroad. The work was not going anywhere at times, but that's not to say it was a constant feeling.

Derek wanted to attend a graduate program in sustainable tropical forest management in Copenhagen and Dresden after completing the VIA program in Vietnam, but his application was not accepted, and he instead became an intern at another forest

conservation NGO, this time in Indonesia. The internship had been a VIA post in the past, but due to an unsettled memorandum of understanding between VIA and the Indonesian government, the position was not an official VIA post when Derek was there. He was in Indonesia for six months and has since returned to the U.S. Derek now provides gardening and cooking classes for middle school students in the Seattle area and intends to pursue environmental education.

Ties in Vietnam since the VIA Program

The three former volunteers in this category had different types of linkages to Vietnam prior to their VIA experience. Trang, being Vietnamese American, was a cultural insider who was familiar with the language, unlike William and Derek who had no knowledge of the language and limited knowledge of Vietnamese culture. The following table shows the former volunteers’ self assessments of their cultural and linguistic knowledge prior to VIA:

Table 3: Indifferent Abstainers’ Language and Cultural Proficiencies Before VIA

Language and Cultural Proficiencies	William	Trang	Derek
Reading Vietnamese	None	Basic	None
Writing Vietnamese	None	Intermediate	None
Speaking Vietnamese	None	Intermediate	None
Understanding spoken Vietnamese	None	Intermediate	None
Knowledge of Vietnamese culture	Basic	Intermediate	None

Trang’s Vietnamese heritage, however, had not given her the opportunity to experience Vietnam firsthand, so like William and Derek, the VIA program was her initial in-country experience. While William did not have ethnic ties to Vietnam, he was

politically linked to the country through his active role in the antiwar movement at the time. Derek had neither ethnic ties nor political linkages to Vietnam prior to VIA; rather, he was hoping to develop professional linkages in Vietnam in the field of forest conservation.

For these three, the VIA experience did not result in commitments toward the socioeconomic development of Vietnam. In fact, their overall social connections in Vietnam are tenuous. Derek, who completed the VIA program in 2013, still maintains friendships with several Vietnamese nationals by way of social media and communication technology such as Skype. Aside from these personal friendships, however, Derek does not prioritize sustaining connections made through his volunteer post even though it relates to his desired profession. He reasons:

I don't plan to work in Vietnam again so staying connected for the career trajectory isn't really a priority, but yeah, my social relationships were pretty strong, and I hope to visit them someday. I plan on living in Southeast Asia for some time and imagine I'll be able to visit Vietnam in the next couple of years.

In addition to not wanting to situate his career in Vietnam, Derek expresses a sense of disconnect with the Vietnamese culture and frustrations with the Vietnamese language that make the atrophy of social ties in Vietnam a likely possibility with time:

I do love Vietnam. Living there was great, and there are many things I do enjoy about it, but some things didn't feel so right about living there and you know, especially having visited Indonesia before, I feel more comfortable in this [Indonesian] society, in this [Indonesian] culture than I did in Vietnam for certain

reasons. There are many things I miss from Vietnam, but in general, I feel like it, Vietnamese culture, wasn't a wonderful match for my personality.

Despite his recognition of the incompatibility between his personality and Vietnamese social customs, Derek treasures his friendships with Vietnamese nationals and plans to maintain them; however, it remains to be seen whether he will be able to do so given that many former volunteers in this study report that interactions with their contacts in Vietnam taper off over time.

Among those who report an atrophy of ties with Vietnamese acquaintances are William and Trang. Unlike Derek whose departure from Vietnam occurred less than one year from the time of the interview, for William it has been five decades and in Trang's case, a little over a decade. Their cases provide a glimpse of how linkages change over a longer period of time. Like Derek, both William and Trang tried to maintain friendships with Vietnamese nationals immediately following their departure; however, those relationships did not last. William recalls:

I wrote letters for a couple years and got fewer letters back, but no idea what happened to the letters or the people. There were many, many years of war and much displacement, so no contact with people. I think by and large most of the people who we knew were probably people who would have had a difficult time after the end of the war, during the war also but after.

William admits that for him, "the Vietnam experience had receded in memory and impact over the decades." His professional life was not tied to Vietnam, nor was much of his personal life, except for the continued friendships with the other VIA volunteers from his cohort. His memories of Vietnam were stirred by two events, first when a staff member

at VIA interviewed him in 2009 for a report about the initial VIA program in Vietnam and secondly when he visited the country in 2012 as part of VIA's 50th anniversary tour. These two events ignited some interest in Vietnam for William, which translated to more frequent correspondence with the VIA volunteers from his cohort and catching up on readings about Vietnam's post-war history. Beyond that, his behavior and attitude towards Vietnam remained relatively the same.

Like William, Trang's relationships in Vietnam tapered off through the years, and her professional career did not focus on serving the Vietnamese community directly. Her attempts to maintain friendships with Vietnamese nationals were hindered by limited communication technology. As she describes:

It was already hard to communicate when I came back because we didn't really have Internet, good Internet at the time and so just by that, we were able to communicate maybe over a couple of years and then by phone, maybe a couple of times, and we just grew apart.

For Trang, the VIA experience sparked a desire to pursue work with an international component, but she describes that desire as "short-lived." Instead, she found her passion in the field of healthcare administration within the U.S. context, and she prioritizes her career at home over involvement in social causes in Vietnam:

I pick my, not my battles, but I pick other volunteer work that I do because I don't have that strong passion, interest, in helping the future Vietnamese natives and also Vietnamese Americans. I don't do that through my work. You know, I'm more passionate about my work than I am about causes for Vietnamese.

Unlike William, Trang has not revisited Vietnam, and she admits, “I really don’t want to go back to that country.”

Conditions that Influence Ties

The indifferent abstainers were satisfied overall with their volunteer experience in Vietnam, and each of the three recommends international volunteering for different reasons. The following table shows the responses that these three gave to the survey question that asks why they would recommend others to volunteer internationally:

Table 4: Indifferent Abstainers’ Support for International Volunteering

William	Volunteering helps others and is good for the soul. Even with the amazing media technology, Americans are very nativist and have little actual understanding of other parts of the world, especially poor countries. The more we understand and empathize, the more good and less hard we'll do. Living in country at a basic level and working with locals is how we can better understand.
Trang	Quite simply, the U.S. is a small bubble. However, living in this world of abundant opportunity does not allow us to pursue the opportunities that promote effective change. Living and working internationally has allowed me to put my life into perspective and make impactful choices.
Derek	If you have the means to do so, you should. It puts you in someone else's shoes and makes the unfamiliar less frightening across the board. It's one of the best learning experiences you can choose to embark on. Volunteering in particular teaches you humility, patience, and brings you closer to living the way locals do. It's also a great skills-builder and can spark lifelong interest in a new topic or field of work.

These indifferent abstainers recognize that living abroad as a volunteer contributes to personal growth and produces nuanced insights about how others in the world live; yet,

these positive feelings toward international volunteerism is not accompanied by an interest in promoting the socioeconomic development of the host country. These individuals represent cases in which former volunteers become champions of international volunteerism itself but not of the country in which their service was rendered. This section discusses the factors that contribute to dwindled ties in Vietnam for William, Trang, and Derek even though they were eager volunteers who had chosen Vietnam over other destinations.

Saturation with Vietnamese culture. This theme applies particularly to Trang and Derek, who both express the sentiment that they have explored enough of Vietnamese society and that future ties are not warranted. As Trang explains, "... after living there, I was done with Vietnam, like I was Vietnamed out, I don't even know if that makes any sense, but I just didn't really feel like I needed to know more about the country after I left." Dissatisfying components of her experience in Vietnam may have contributed to the sense that she had gotten enough of the society. For one, her living conditions were not ideal, especially since she contended with a rodent problem, had limited access to the Internet, and lived in a flood-prone area. She also reports frustrating encounters with corrupt police officers and unfamiliar bureaucratic processes at the school where she taught:

Probably the other frustrating thing is not being able to work within their system, meaning working with the school administrators, it was difficult. There was a lot of like sweet-talking that had to be involved. It was very rigid, you know in what I can and cannot do. I had felt like because of those restrictions, I wasn't as effective as I could be in the classroom.

She also describes feeling like her age, sex, and race placed her at a disadvantage with the school administrators:

Dealing with the school administrators was not easy because I was a woman who was Viet Kieu, one thing, also because I was female. The other thing is because I'm younger, and so I didn't have those initial, generalized advantages as say someone who is a white, tall, Caucasian male walk into the position. And so, I mean, the administrators were generally superficially respectful, I think, but they obviously didn't treat me the same way. My students though, however, were quite respectful.

In addition to these frustrations, Trang reveals another reason for her exhaustion with Vietnam—as a Vietnamese American volunteer, she did not achieve the level of cross-cultural exposure that she had anticipated. Trang was not a novice to Vietnamese culture and language when she began the VIA program, and her position as a cultural insider contributes to the sense that she stepped into a world that was not as unfamiliar as she had anticipated. Though she encountered some unfamiliar processes in Vietnam, ultimately she feels that they were not enough to count as a true cross-cultural experience, which in her mind entails immersion into an altogether different society. The following quote reveals her thirst for a cross-cultural experience that was not quenched through volunteering in a context that was already somewhat familiar to her:

...you've been surrounded by it that I, I just don't really have a desire to learn more about it. There's always something to learn, of course, but I'd be more interested, and I think I feel more challenged actually. That's probably the root of it is I feel more challenged to maybe explore a different country and explore a

different culture and try to make impact there.... I feel like as a Vietnamese going to a Vietnamese country, it doesn't have impact or cross-cultural exchange as much as, I would say, if I were to go to, I don't know, Honduras, you know. A Vietnamese in Honduras is not as likely than a Vietnamese in Vietnam.

Trang's situation underscores the existence of cultural ties between diaspora members and the homeland, even for someone like her who was not born in Vietnam; however, rather than inculcating a desire to learn more about the country, those connections have the opposite effect of driving her away from Vietnam. She reveals that she would rather explore and perhaps support causes in other contexts less familiar than those in the country of her ethnic origins because it would be more novel and challenging. For Trang, Vietnam lacked the novelty that drives others to seek more information or visit a destination.

The sense of being "Vietnamed out" is also felt by Derek who reports frustrations with fundamental aspects of Vietnamese society. He finds the Vietnamese language to be unappealing and also hard to master:

For me Tieng Viet, the language, is VERY difficult. Tonal languages, very difficult, so I had a lot of frustrations with the language early on that really set a bad tone for my general communication. I kinda reached a plateau where I was comfortable with getting by with survival needs. I could chat with people a bit and you know, I could survive, but I sort of slacked off on studying further because I, because frankly I don't like the language, not only is it difficult, I find it unpleasant to the ear.

He contrasts the Vietnamese language to Indonesian, which he finds to be much easier to

learn. He professes that he has a better command of Indonesian after only three months in the country than he did with Vietnamese after spending fifteen months there. In addition to the language, Derek also feels that his personality was not a good match with certain elements of the Vietnamese culture. For instance, he was frustrated by the lack of structure in the workplace, including the frequent disregard for deadlines. As someone who was unmarried and who went to Vietnam to develop his career, Derek was sensitive to how family priorities sometime infringed on people's ability to meet deadlines.

Frustrations with the local culture were not unique to Trang's and Derek's accounts; even those in the committed contributors category shared perplexing experiences in their interviews. Derek underscores that his frustrations still resulted in a meaningful volunteer experience for him: "I said some negative things about Vietnam, but those were drops in the ocean compared to how wonderful an experience it was as a whole." Therefore, the perplexities that Trang and Derek expressed toward Vietnamese society must be considered in conjunction with other factors discussed in this chapter to adequately explain why these two did not become champions of Vietnam's socioeconomic development upon finishing the VIA program.

Whereas Trang and Derek expressed a sense of exhaustion with Vietnamese culture that may explain their lack of interest in Vietnamese affairs, William might have given Vietnam more priority post-VIA had his volunteer experience lasted longer. In comparison to their yearlong volunteer assignment, William was there for only three months. While the short duration of his experience may have prevented the sense of saturation with Vietnamese culture from developing, it also affected his ability to form deep ties. William reflects, "three months is not a very long time to establish

relationships, and that also was one of the things that VIA recognized.” Without a strong foundation of ties, it becomes easier for William to forsake efforts to maintain contact and to lose interest in the country with time. These three cases underscore that the duration of a program is an important variable for influencing volunteers’ attitudes and relations with the country afterwards. A program that is too short might not allow strong ties to develop whereas a program that is too long might result in cultural fatigue.

Little practicality in maintaining ties. The unwillingness of William, Trang, and Derek to participate in Vietnam’s socioeconomic development also has to do with practicality. Derek, who is seeking to establish a career in forest conservation, feels that he has little practical reasons to maintain his professional ties in Vietnam because there is more work to be done in other Southeast Asian countries. He notes that Vietnam has done a good job at restoring its rainforests, and he prefers to focus his attention on other contexts where more pressing work is needed. He explains, “I’m interested in terms of career development to work in a country that has more dire forestry issues such as Indonesia.” In other words, he finds it more practical to focus his attention on other countries with potentially more need in forest conservation than in Vietnam where efforts are already underway.

In William’s case, his interest in volunteering in Vietnam was to enrich his antiwar activities, which became obsolete with the conclusion of Vietnam’s war with the U.S. Vietnamese issues did not figure into his professional field, and though he harbored a desire to visit Vietnam, such a trip became impractical given his other priorities in life. As he explains,

I had always wanted to go back and see. I kind of felt that there was a circle that

had to be completed, and for various reasons, a lot having to do with work, money, raising kids, one of whom has a disability that requires a lot of time and attention. Plus, I had to be very confident of my health before going to a country with less sophisticated medical services and different kinds of bad things you could pick up.

Matters of practicality inhibited William's return to Vietnam, including the need to focus on his family, career, and health. The opportunity to visit Vietnam did not arise until after his retirement when there was less demand on his time and improvements made to Vietnam's healthcare system.

In regards to his relationship with people from the Rhade community with whom he worked, it was also impractical for William to maintain those relationships because of the war and its aftermath. Ban Me Thuot, which had been a relatively safe area during William's volunteer post, was captured by Communist forces in March of 1975, not long before the collapse of Saigon on April 30th that signaled the end of the war. Many indigenous groups from that area had been allies of the U.S., and William fears that those who survived would have been punished for their involvement in the war. Furthermore, communication between William and his contacts was hindered by the means of the time, which involved writing letters and sending them through the postal system. Consequently, William received few responses to the letters that he sent.

Trang's practical hurdles in the maintenance of ties in Vietnam resemble those of William and Derek. Like William and Derek, she also found it impractical to maintain connections in Vietnam when her career and personal interests are directed elsewhere. It was also logistically difficult for her to remain in contact with her Vietnamese

acquaintances; Internet access in Vietnam was not reliable at the time and talking by phone was not as convenient.

One distinction in Trang's case as compared to William and Derek is her familial ties in Vietnam, which have the potential to draw her towards Vietnam. Yet, with only two aunts remaining in Vietnam, her familial ties there are not expansive. These limited ties in Vietnam underscore the reality that her life is situated in the U.S. rather than in Vietnam. Although she is ethnically linked to Vietnam, Trang rejects a transnational life that would have positioned her within social processes in both the U.S. and Vietnam.

Conclusion

While some former volunteers in this study wanted to volunteer internationally and location was not important, the three in this category were intentional about choosing Vietnam as their destination. They sought Vietnam for personal and professional reasons—with William it was to enhance his participation in antiwar activities, for Derek it was to learn more about a field of work that was of interest to him, and for Trang it was an important context for resolving her identity issues as a U.S.-raised person of Vietnamese heritage. Rather than developing a bigger appetite for more knowledge and involvement in Vietnamese affairs, these three found other interests and moved on with their lives.

As indifferent abstainers, William, Trang, and Derek have little interest in participating in Vietnam's socioeconomic development and do not seek such opportunities. Their social ties in Vietnam are nonexistent or tenuous at best, and they do not prioritize visiting Vietnam. Additionally, their careers are not linked to Vietnam. Their indifference towards Vietnamese affairs positions them as weaker sources of social

capital for Vietnam in comparison to the other categories of former volunteers discussed in this study.

Chapter 8: Potential Contributors

Seven of the eighteen former volunteers interviewed for this project are classified as potential contributors, making it the largest category. In comparison to the other categories already discussed, potential contributors are not as decisive about what role they should have in Vietnam's socioeconomic development; they neither reject that possibility nor embrace it wholeheartedly. Given their residual interest in Vietnam but hesitation to act, these former volunteers would need external impetus to become fully engaged in Vietnamese affairs.

Profiles of Potential Contributors

Kerry. Kerry first heard about VIA from an acquaintance during college, but she did not commit to volunteering until she was 26 years old and was in the midst of a well-established career in the high tech sales industry. As a Vietnamese American who left Vietnam when she was nine months old, Kerry saw VIA as an opportunity to explore the country of her birth and to find more meaningful work. She summarizes her reasons for becoming a volunteer as follows:

Several years into my career I was just, like, feeling complacent and feeling like I had achieved what I needed to achieve. I had everything that I needed, but I felt somewhat empty, and there was nothing holding me back at that time, and I made a decision pretty much just one evening that I was going to do this and nothing was going to get in the way of me doing it...I even told my employer way ahead of time that this was gonna happen. And despite them wanting me to not leave and stay with the company, I was pretty determined to go no matter how much money they wanted to offer. And I think a part of it was me wanting to give back,

me wanting to create more meaning out of my life, and then also I think more deeply it was just wanting to find out what this country was about on my own instead of having these notions about it through all these things that my family would say about Vietnam and for the most part it was negative, I would have to say. So even as a child growing up or even at the age I was at at that time, I thought well, can this really be true, can it be all that bad, you know, and I wanted to see for myself what this country is about because I didn't get to grow up there. I was born there but I didn't get to grow up there.

Kerry's decision to volunteer in Vietnam was met with strong resistance from her parents. In addition to concerns about her safety, they feared that the trip would derail her career, turn her into a supporter of communism, or that she would marry a local communist sympathizer. As a result of the parents' disapproval and her disappointment with their lack of support, Kerry did not communicate with them for the entire year that she was in Vietnam.

Kerry's volunteer assignment was at the Foreign Trade University in Hanoi where she served from 2003-2004. She taught economics, English, and introduction to business to undergraduate students but did not enjoy teaching those topics; she would have preferred the opportunity to teach English writing or speaking. In addition to not liking the topics that were assigned to her, Kerry disapproves of the students' learning style and the teacher-centric style of teaching that she was forced to adopt, as revealed in her following statement:

They [the students] are so overloaded, they have seven classes per semester, their only way to get through it is by rampant cheating. The curriculum was given to

me through a textbook that was very old, and that was what I had to teach. They learn things by regurgitating whatever the teacher said. It's not about creativity, it's not about teamwork or projects or discussions or debates. It's simply this is the data given to you, and give it back to us the same way and pass the test or what not. And they might've learned from some of the international business pieces that I researched and presented to them, they might've learned how to pronounce things better, but maybe I was more helpful at the end of the year when they were all needing my guidance around how to apply for jobs in their resume or their applications.

Kerry tried to introduce the teaching practices from her education in the U.S. to her students, but she discovered that the student-centered approach did not work well given the students' unpreparedness to own the learning process and not be reliant on the teacher for information. She abandoned her efforts after observing that only a handful of students participated while the rest of the class was silent. Kerry reflects that the classroom culture in Vietnam "is not a culture that can be changed by one person, one moment in time," and she thinks that her contributions toward her students' learning come not from what she taught but through her presence in that she was able to dispel myths about the U.S., the Vietnamese American communities, and the U.S. educational system. According to Kerry, "they have preconceived notions about the U.S. and what we have and all that stuff, so I told them the truth."

Kerry contemplated staying another year in Vietnam to work, but she ultimately went back to the U.S. at her family's insistence. Also, the job opportunity that would have kept her in Vietnam—a paralegal position at a law firm of a VIA alumnus—was in

Ho Chi Minh City whereas Kerry wished to remain in Hanoi. Once in the U.S. she returned to her former job because it offered financial stability, but a year later she decided to change her career. She went back to school for a Masters in Counseling Psychology and now works as a psychotherapist in Northern California serving clients who receive assistance from the state. Her relationship with her parents has improved, even though there has been little discussion about what she experienced in Vietnam.

Kerry explains:

I came back and their tone changed. I don't know why or how, but when I came back they were pretty, I guess impressed or proud that I had done that. And my mom who was crying and upset with me and not supporting me in going a year before now was bragging about me having done that to people.

While her parents changed their opinions about her decision to volunteer in Vietnam, Kerry also underwent a transformation that made her feel closer to them. As she discusses in the following quote, her year in Vietnam brought greater comprehension about her parents' experiences with loss and displacement that allowed her to see why they had disapproved of her participation in VIA:

I also could see how beautiful it was there and how great the food was and how it might have been before the war and what a great loss it was for my family and therefore they felt the way they did. So I understood that, and I had a lot more empathy for my parents and my family and why they were the way they were and what they had lost. So I felt more connection and understanding of them after living there for a year.

Kerry has visited Vietnam since VIA for personal reasons, but with the recent emigration of her last relative in Vietnam, she feels that she has few reasons to go back there.

Allison. Allison became a VIA volunteer shortly after her college graduation. She was compelled to do so because of her interest in international development and her desire to obtain experience living and working in the global South. The idea to volunteer abroad was brought to her attention during college at a recruitment event held by Princeton in Asia, another nonprofit organization with a mission similar to VIA. Allison also contemplated joining the Peace Corps, but she decided to pursue her objectives through a small nonprofit organization on account of some bad publicity for Peace Corps and her unease with the Peace Corps' governmental ties. She was interested in Vietnam in particular because she had Vietnamese American friends in her hometown of Boston.

Allison was a VIA volunteer from 2008-2009, and her post was at Nha Trang University in the south central coast where she taught English conversation and writing courses along with a course on American culture. Her students were undergraduates, most of whom were preparing to enter the tourism industry. Since the courses that Allison taught were supplementary courses meant to enhance students' learning in their formal classes taught by Vietnamese faculty, Allison encountered some issues with poor attendance. She also experienced some frustrations with the administrative procedures at the school and struggled with defining her exact role at the school. The administrative issues resolved with time, however, and Allison states that her overall experience was positive:

I quite enjoyed learning how things functioned somewhere else....Mainly a couple of students of mine took me under their wings, not even my students, just

some students that were really helpful and showed me where things were. It came down to be a good experience because people were friendly and helped me, but there weren't necessarily formal structures in place.

At the completion of her volunteer assignment, Allison moved to Hue where she coordinated one of VIA's programs for the summer. She contemplated staying another year in Vietnam to work, but the opportunities that arose were related to English teaching whereas she wanted to explore other areas of development. Allison decided to devote the year following VIA to travel around Vietnam, New Zealand, and Australia. Afterwards, she attended the University of London and obtained a Masters of Science in Public Health with a concentration in nutrition. The interview for this study occurred three years after her completion of graduate school, and Allison has remained in London where she works at a research institute advocating for a stronger focus on nutrition in the international development agenda. Her work in international development has yet to take her back to Vietnam, although she remains interested in the country and the Southeast Asia region.

Deborah. Deborah does not fit the profile of a typical VIA volunteer in that she joined the program after her retirement. She was 62 years old when she began her volunteer assignment in 2008. She entertained the idea of volunteering in Vietnam after a weeklong visit to Hanoi and Ha Long Bay as part of a lifelong learning group excursion left her with a good impression of the country. She describes her feelings toward the country and the process that brought her to Vietnam as follows:

I just fell in love. There just seemed to be so much energy, and people didn't have a lot and yet were not moping around like people in the U.S., you know,

weren't bitching all the time and it just, it just felt like there was so much energy in the whole country, and I decided I wanted to go back, and [I] said on the plane coming back sitting next to this huge kid from Canada with an earring in his ear, and he had just been teaching ESL in Japan to kindergarteners for a year and I thought, "Oh yeah! I'd often thought I can do that, and that's the way I'll travel after I retire."

An Internet search for a provider brought her to VIA, and she chose the organization over others for its integrity, interesting posts in less conventional locations, and provision of support and preparation for volunteers.

Deborah volunteered for two years and had very different experiences at two separate posts. Her first year was spent in Long My, a rural town in the Mekong Delta, with another VIA volunteer named Bethany who is also a participant in this study. Deborah served as an English teacher for about 40 people in the community ages 11 to 52. Her students included people who worked for the host NGO, local students, and civil servants preparing to take their provincial English language exams. Deborah encountered several problems at her volunteer assignment. One was her students' lackluster attendance, which Deborah attributes partially to the irrelevance of the classes in the students' lives. She also had an unsupportive supervisor who she thought did not make the best efforts to utilize the skills that she and Bethany offered. Deborah recounts her dilemmas as follows:

...the post was discontinued the year after we left because the director of the NGO that was sponsoring it didn't really seem to have much commitment to making sure we were utilized, and to be really candid, my impression was that we

were sort of this trophy that he had, you know he owned the two Americans in town. We were the only two Americans, English speakers in the whole province, and so what was frustrating was we would start to teach and after a few weeks a lot of people dropped out. Part of it was probably because we weren't very good teachers, but also part of it was that English was hard and nobody really needed it, there were few students who really stuck with it and had ambitions to go on to university. Most of the time the classes were very on and off, and the second semester they didn't even schedule any classes. So then we went to another town and we taught cadre and that didn't last. It was just very frustrating because there didn't really seem to be any commitment.

Despite the negative experiences at the post, Deborah signed up for a second year with VIA because a post that matched her interests and experiences became available in Hanoi. Deborah spent her second year at Hanoi University where Bethany, the other VIA volunteer from Long My, was also posted. With Deborah's background as a software engineer before retirement, she was assigned to teach computer science courses. Deborah had a much better experience at Hanoi University compared to her time in Long My, stating that she enjoyed teaching the subject and having classes that met regularly.

Bethany. Bethany became drawn to Vietnam's history and culture when she was a student at the University of California, Riverside. In particular, a class that explored Vietnamese films and a six-weeks travel seminar to Vietnam solidified her interests in the country. The faculty member who led that travel seminar, who was an alumnus of VIA, told her about the program, and Bethany decided to join in order to acquire proficiency in

the Vietnamese language and prepare for possible enrollment in a master's program in Vietnamese or Southeast Asian Studies.

In 2008, four years after the travel seminar that first brought her to Vietnam, Bethany arrived in Long My to volunteer. Deborah, whose profile is discussed previously, was posted there with her. Bethany and Deborah shared the same English teaching responsibilities, and like Deborah, Bethany also became frustrated by the lackluster attendance and disorganized administrative procedures at the host NGO. Despite these issues Bethany enjoyed her time in rural Long My because “that was the place to really know Vietnam and to understand a little bit of Vietnamese culture....”

After the contract at Long My ended, Bethany and Deborah decided to look past the problematic post and remain in Vietnam for another year of volunteer work. They requested to be posted near each other, and their request was granted. Bethany's volunteer position at Hanoi University was at the school's International Language Center where she worked with students to help improve their English pronunciation and writing as they prepared to study abroad. In addition, she also prepared students for the Test of English as a Foreign Language and International English Language Testing System language exams. Reflecting about her experiences in Vietnam, Bethany notes that she garnered valuable insights about the country's regional differences and established deep friendships during her two years there:

I was thinking I'd come there one year, maybe two years and I'd leave with maybe a little bit of Vietnamese proficiency and then move on to grad school or something like that. What I didn't realize was that I'd leave with so many friends, especially knowing the complexity that life varies region by region.... even after

maybe three or four years I'm still getting requests from civil servants who are completing their masters or doctoral degrees to proofread their theses, and I had agreed to do it a couple of times already.

Bethany went on to graduate school after returning to the U.S., but her interest shifted from Vietnamese studies to comparative and international development education because of her work at Hanoi University. At the time of the interview, Bethany was in Thailand doing research for her thesis. She is unsure of her future plans but remains open to working in Thailand and Vietnam, although she wishes to remain in Thailand to be close to a significant other who lives there.

Thomas. Thomas was not a stranger to Asia when he decided to participate in VIA—with parents who were English teachers in Japan, Thomas spent the first eighteen years of his life in Tokyo where he attended an American school. He lived in the U.S. for the first time as a college student at George Washington University where he majored in international relations. Thomas became interested in Vietnam through his coursework and credits one particular professor of Southeast Asian history who deepened his appreciation for the country by teaching materials written by Vietnamese authors rather than focusing solely on Western perspectives. Thomas explains his fascination with Vietnam as follows:

I think one of the things that attracted me to Vietnam was learning about the very strong resilience in the culture and the people there, having gone through this very rough and tragic series of events in their history, with repeated invasions and wars and atrocities committed, and they still are able to hold to a sense of national cohesiveness and national identity and become a pretty significant regional

power, so I thought that was pretty interesting, that was something that I wanted to go see.

A newsletter from his college that discussed VIA as an option for graduating seniors caught Thomas's attention, and he applied to the Vietnam program with two major goals:

I was hoping to develop more as a person and gain some experience internationally, living in a different country, learning a new language. And I was also hoping I could make a contribution through the knowledge and skills that I picked up through my own education, sort of pass that along as well.

His volunteer assignment began in 2009, shortly after his graduation from college.

Thomas volunteered with VIA for two years in two different locations. His first year was in Thanh Hoa, a city about 93 miles south of the country's capital of Hanoi. He taught English at Hong Duc University to high caliber undergraduate and post-graduate students who were aiming to study overseas. Thomas names the deep bonds formed with his students at this first post as one of the most enjoyable aspects of his volunteer experience:

My two years were very different in the kind of work I was doing, but what was really nice about my first year was really becoming close and forming some deep bonds with my students. We would work really closely together, we were relatively close in age. In the classroom of course it was always study, study, study, but outside the classroom having conversations with them, and learning about their lives and their hopes and aspirations and where they're coming from, their outlook on the world. They would take me and the other English teachers around to their homes, and we were treated very graciously. They would show us

around the city and teach us about that, their history and their culture, and they were all very proud of their informal ambassadorial role. They really took it upon themselves to introduce these foreigners who'd come to Vietnam for the first time to teach, so that was really great.

Thomas's second year was spent in Hue as a volunteer for a Dutch NGO that promotes rainforest conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. He served as a program assistant tasked with writing reports and training forestry engineers to perform research in English.

Thomas returned to the U.S. after VIA and completed a Master of Arts in International Development and International Economics at Johns Hopkins University. He attributes his decision to attend graduate school to his experiences in Vietnam:

I think Vietnam is always talked about in development circles as this really great success story, a country that had been closed off but then liberalized its markets to tremendous growth and where the poverty rate has gone way down, quality of life has gone way up, and seeing the way people are approaching these issues on the ground in Vietnam firsthand is really interesting and made me want to get a little bit more knowledge and context for what I was seeing.

He incorporated Vietnam into his graduate studies in several ways, including taking intensive Vietnamese language courses and participating in a summer-long internship in Hanoi with The Asia Foundation. Since finishing graduate school, his career path has diverged from Vietnam and instead has returned to his familiarity with Japan; his job at the time of the interview was of a producer for a Japanese television network in Washington, D.C. Thomas is open to the possibility of returning to Vietnam for work in

the future, but for now he is focused on exploring the field of journalism as a potential long-term career.

Nandan. Unlike the other participants in this study, Nandan was not a citizen of the U.S. when he joined VIA; rather, he was living in the U.S. as an international student. Originally from India, Nandan went to college and graduate school in the U.S. He participated in VIA after completing a master's degree in political science at San Francisco State University. He first learned about VIA through a friend who had participated in its program in China, and being in San Francisco near VIA's office afforded Nandan the opportunity to investigate the organization first hand. Originally interested in both VIA's Vietnam and China programs because both offered the opportunity to experience life in emerging market economies, Nandan ultimately chose Vietnam because the program offered a post in a more rural area, which he thought would enable deeper connections to be made with the local people.

Nandan was posted at Haiphong Private University from 2009-2011. Located in the port city of Haiphong, which is about 62 miles east of Hanoi, Haiphong Private University is a relatively new institution that welcomed its first group of students at the end of 1997. Nandan's volunteer work included teaching courses on political theory and English and assisting the international relations department with its student exchange programs and reception of volunteer teachers from abroad. His students included both undergraduate and graduate students, and his administrative role brought him into contact with teacher volunteers from China, Japan, the U.S., and Germany. His second year at the university was not served in full because he opted to pursue employment at a plastics company in a nearby city. The position, acquired through a connection with a former in-

country representative of VIA, brought Nandan the opportunity to “gain a lot of experience to see what kinds of business processes are going on in that part of Vietnam and you know, it helped led me into more of a professional network.” During his employment in Vietnam, Nandan began a romantic relationship with a local Vietnamese.

After working at the plastics company for one year, Nandan returned to India where he worked as the director of marketing and sales of a construction company. He came back to the U.S. in 2012 to begin a Master of Business Administration program at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. At the time of the interview, he was contemplating his next professional endeavor. Although he is interested in working and living in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, because it would place him in close proximity to his parents in India and brother who lives in Singapore, his immediate goal is to gain more experience in the corporate sector within the U.S.

Haru. Haru came to VIA with extensive cross-cultural knowledge and international experience—he is a biracial child born to a Caucasian father and a Japanese mother who works as a consultant to the United Nations. In addition, his educational journey has taken him to several different countries; he attended an international middle school in South Korea, completed his undergraduate studies in the U.S. at the University of California, Los Angeles, and participated in a study abroad program in England for one year. During college he also spent a summer in Indonesia conducting independent research on the social implications of fuel subsidies. It was during his summer in Indonesia that he met a program director of VIA who suggested the Vietnam program to him. Haru decided to join VIA because he was already in Asia and did not have clear post-college plans. He admits to not being particularly drawn to Vietnam initially, but he

thought it would be beneficial and interesting to learn about a country that was undergoing rapid development and achieving greater influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Haru became a VIA volunteer in Vietnam after graduating from college in 2012. He was placed at Can Tho University where his main role was to improve the academic English of graduate students who were interested in studying abroad. He also taught undergraduate students in subjects such as debate and critical thinking. Reflecting upon his time in Vietnam, Haru finds satisfaction in seeing some of his former students achieve their objectives of going abroad to study:

I helped the students with their applications to study abroad, and it was really rewarding when they got accepted. I stay in touch with one group of my students who are now studying abroad at this moment. It's really exciting to see them leave Vietnam for the first time. There are several in Europe and a few in Thailand and Singapore. I'm getting these neat news updates, and it's really exciting. They're like "Hey, come visit me in Italy. We'll go hang out." I remember when I first saw them...they had difficulty with pronunciation and did not have a good range of vocabulary, so it's really great to hear they are adjusting well in a foreign country. They have to speak English at their programs, so I'm sure they're still being challenged. I think in that small scale I had an impact on these students because I was their first native English teacher.

Though he enjoyed teaching, Haru wanted to expand his skill-sets, especially to gain experience working with nonprofit organizations. He was interested in renewing his contract with VIA at the end of his year, but since the VIA posts in Vietnam primarily

involved teaching, he transferred to a post in Indonesia where he started working at a nonprofit organization.

The interview for this project occurred while Haru was serving as a VIA volunteer in Indonesia. His work there involves facilitating income-generating activities in the impoverished Muntigunung community in northeast Bali. One of his responsibilities is to seek buyers for products made by women cooperatives within the community. Haru eventually wants to attend graduate school, perhaps to study international development or conflict resolution, but for now he is happy to be in Indonesia doing work that he finds “empowering.”

Ties in Vietnam since the VIA Program

Most of the former volunteers in this category approached the VIA assignment as novices of the Vietnamese culture and strangers to the language. The following charts document their self-assessments in these two areas prior to their VIA experience:

Table 5a: Potential Contributors’ Language and Cultural Proficiencies Before VIA

Language and Cultural Proficiencies	Kerry	Allison	Deborah	Bethany
Reading Vietnamese	Intermediate	None	None	None
Writing Vietnamese	Intermediate	None	None	None
Speaking Vietnamese	Intermediate	None	None	None
Understanding spoken Vietnamese	Intermediate	None	None	None
Knowledge of Vietnamese culture	Basic	Basic	None	Basic

Table 5b: Potential Contributors’ Language and Cultural Proficiencies Before VIA

Language and Cultural Proficiencies	Thomas	Nandan	Haru
Reading Vietnamese	None	None	None
Writing Vietnamese	None	None	None
Speaking Vietnamese	None	None	None
Understanding spoken Vietnamese	None	None	None
Knowledge of Vietnamese culture	None	None	None

With the exception of Kerry who is of Vietnamese heritage, none of the other former volunteers knew the language. Almost all in the group characterize their knowledge of Vietnamese culture as nonexistent or basic. Some in the group, including Kerry, Deborah, and Bethany had made short trips to Vietnam before VIA, but those trips did more to stir their curiosity about Vietnam than providing them with opportunities to explore Vietnamese society at a deep level. The remaining members in the group—Allison, Thomas, Nandan, and Haru—had no prior experience in Vietnam when they joined VIA.

These potential contributors’ ties to Vietnam since the completion of VIA have elements in common with those of committed contributors, default actors and indifferent abstainers. Like several in the committed contributors category, Allison, Nandan, and Thomas have professional linkages to Vietnam after the VIA program ended. Allison and Nandan found employment following the VIA program, although these two did not remain in Vietnam for as long as Mike and Kent from the committed contributors category; Allison spent an extra summer and Nandan stayed for another year. Thomas did not have a job that perpetuated his linkage to Vietnam; rather, he sought and successfully garnered an internship in the country to enhance his graduate studies. If Thomas’s graduate schooling is considered to be part of his professional development, then his post-VIA linkage to Vietnam could be seen as having professional origins.

Meanwhile, elements of default actors exist in Nandan's case because his engagement to a Vietnamese national may mean remittances or a possible relocation to Vietnam in his future; however, since the marriage is yet to be finalized, Nandan lacks the definite familial ties in Vietnam found among default actors. Finally, indifferent abstainers' lack of involvement in Vietnam's development applies to all potential contributors, but potential contributors give reasons to believe that they would become involved should the right circumstances arise whereas indifferent abstainers most likely would not.

Conditions that Influence Ties

A characteristic of potential contributors is the presence of an interest in Vietnam that has not always translated to active participation in the country's socioeconomic development. This section explores why Vietnam continues to hold these individuals' attention along with what impedes their active participation in the country's development process.

Dissatisfaction with social expectations. A sense of dissatisfaction with certain structures of Vietnamese society expressed by other former volunteers in this study was also present among these potential contributors. Kerry mentioned patriarchy as a characteristic of Vietnamese society that affected how she lived her daily life in Vietnam:

...there are certain places you wouldn't hang out at or you wouldn't feel welcomed hanging out at. I remember wanting to, needing to work out and do the gym stuff, but as a volunteer I don't have the money to join the ones in the expensive hotels that all the foreigners and expats go to. Then I'm trying to go through a local gym but it's all dudes, and I guess women just don't work out like that, so I definitely was not welcomed there. Also the coffee shops, it's all guys

hanging out together. The beer places, that's usually all dudes, but if you're hanging out with other foreigners then it's ok as a female then they know....Women are definitely working really hard, they're managing everything, they're managing the businesses, their homes, their money, they're working a lot, and then the men are not doing anything but hanging out. You see that, and it does bother you, also the privileges that a man gets which doesn't look like they earned it.

Kerry notes that being a woman affected her access to public spaces such as the gym, bars, and coffee shops, which are predominantly gathering places for males in Vietnam. She found it necessary to associate with non-native Vietnamese or to seek places frequented by expatriates in order to access such places, and yet her volunteer budget prevented her from doing so.

Meanwhile, Thomas recognized unpleasant structural issues within Vietnamese society underneath the country's natural beauty and the Vietnamese people's kindness. The xenophobia and classism that he observed left negative impressions on him:

I came to have a sort of love-hate relationship with the country. There were a lot of great things about it that I really enjoyed, the generous spirit and the hospitality of the people, the food of course is amazing, it has everything in terms of natural surroundings, forests, mountains, beaches, rivers, lakes. At the same time I was a little bit bothered by, I would call it a mild xenophobia among people there. I started to feel that people are still very wary about accepting foreigners into the country and accepting foreign ideas into the country for better or for worse, and growing up in Japan that's something I was very sensitive to, because Japan is

kind of the same mentality. So that started to bother me a little bit, and I also felt a little bit of, in general, there was kind of a classism as well in Vietnam. So my students who were all around great people would take me around, maybe passing by a construction site, and they would warn me not to go near the construction site, not to talk to the workers there, because they're a dirty people and they use drugs and what not, and it seemed to me kind of a harsh thing to assume about people.

In addition to the xenophobic attitudes and class-based discriminations, Thomas also describes corruption as an issue that he finds disappointing about Vietnam. Thomas's experience with corruption has to do with university administrators charging money for the English classes that they asked him to teach that were not part of his formal responsibilities. Whereas he thought that he was contributing to a nonprofit, charitable organization that helped teachers in the area develop their English skills, in reality the administrators of the program were running it as a for-profit operation.

Long-term volunteering is often praised for providing opportunities for volunteers to develop nuanced perspectives about their host society; however, an unintended consequence of this deeper understanding is the unpleasant nature of what the volunteer learns. Kerry experienced restrictions because of her gender, although the American part of her identity could be leveraged to negotiate around them. Thomas saw the greed in the administrators' decision to charge participants for his classes and felt the manipulation enacted upon him, which resulted in mixed feelings about the country and raised doubt about how much he wants to be involved. The first hand exposure to the displeasing aspects of Vietnamese culture seems to contribute to a sense of alienation toward

Vietnam that might explain these former volunteers' hesitation to become deeply involved.

Emotional toll of further engagement. Several Vietnamese American volunteers reported strong resistance from their parents when they decided to volunteer in Vietnam, including Kerry from this category. For Kerry and those others, Vietnam is an emotionally-laden topic due to their families' struggles with displacement and loss of a homeland, and continued engagement carries the risk of further conflict within the family. Kerry explains how her family's refugee experiences continue to affect her:

...after all these years, I could really still feel the difficult emotions from my family when I left....I still experience their trauma viscerally, so like I experience it in my body and it gets triggered by images of Vietnam back then or stuff like that. Things that I had never seen before with my eyes, but for whatever reason probably through intergenerational trauma¹² I hold it in my body, and my body reacts to it, and I can feel their, all of their grief and all of their pain and all of their sufferings. They never talk about it in great detail, but what I'm saying is that it gets transmitted to the next generation indirectly, and it works in this mysterious way, and if one generation hasn't healed from it, hasn't been able to

¹² Kerry's reference to intergenerational trauma is most likely a result of her work as a psychotherapist, which gives her the vocabulary to describe her situation. As Abrams (1999) describes, intergenerational trauma is observed in clients with emotional problems who "have undergone some form of trauma from within the family or created and fostered by the social systems in which they interact" (p. 226). Citing Catherall (1998), Abrams goes on to explain that later generations experience the trauma of their ancestors "either through stories passed along or by lessons learned from the experiences. For example, a view of the world as a dangerous place can be transmitted without the patient's ever knowing the roots of the feelings of lack of safety" (p. 230). Kerry fits this pattern, as she recounts her exposure to strong, negative sentiments about post-1975 Vietnam from her parents and extended family, which she hoped to dispel by spending time in Vietnam as a volunteer who is embedded in the community.

talk about it, to process it, to metabolize it, to heal from it, then somehow it just gets passed onto the next generation, and it manifests, and it comes out in different ways, and for me I know I definitely can feel it, physically and emotionally it comes out.

As a person affected by intergenerational trauma, Kerry internalized some of her parents' negative experiences in Vietnam, and the year in Vietnam was her opportunity to explore the accounts of their lives. While in Vietnam she encountered certain situations that validate her parents' narratives and also those that contradict them, which leaves Kerry with perhaps more mixed feelings about Vietnam than before her VIA experience. In the following account, Kerry finds her parents' mistrust of the Vietnamese government substantiated after airport officials singled her out among other travelers for questioning:

...if you're white and you're there, then you have the privilege of a Westerner, you're highly regarded, you get special treatment, you get attention and positive assumptions about you and all of that, but as a Vietnamese American, as a Viet Kieu, from the moment you step off the plane you're seen as a traitor. So even at the airport the officials and the guards and stuff were looking at me differently, and they were staring me down and trying to intimidate me and as I go through customs, all my white colleagues are passing through the custom like birds. They're just going through and no issues, no problems whatsoever, and I'm held and questioned and all that stuff, and so I could feel the tension right away when I got off the plane.

Kerry's interpretation of the airport officials' actions as suspicion towards her may have roots in her parents' fears of retribution for their escape from the country and is an

illustration of the intergenerational trauma from which Kerry suffers. To be viewed as a traitor is a fear commonly echoed among Vietnamese refugees and one that keeps many, particularly those who aided America's interests in Vietnam, from visiting the country many years after the two country's official reconciliation.

While some experiences substantiated her parents' depictions of Vietnam, Kerry also came across those that challenge their interpretations. Rather than a country that is mired in poverty, "stuck" in its underdevelopment and whose people are unnecessarily impoverished, Kerry describes Ho Chi Minh City as "cosmopolitan" and Hanoi "charming." Unlike her parents who have yet to move past their wartime experiences, she discovers that the war is not a central part of many Vietnamese nationals' existence: "it was like water under the bridge and they had forgiven, not all of them, but like for the most part let go and forgiven the Americans and don't harbor a lot of grievances or bitterness." These insights have the effect of complicating her perspectives toward Vietnam, for she now has experiences that authenticate her parents' long-held beliefs but also those that challenge them. Kerry's strong physical and emotional reactions that arise in response to evocations of Vietnam provide evidence that she is still struggling to define her feelings toward the country and her family's wartime traumas. While her feelings toward Vietnam remain unresolved, her participation in Vietnam's development may not be possible because of the emotional tolls that she will experience in addition to the strain it might place on her relationships with members of her family who are still particularly affected by the war. Kerry's decision to volunteer with VIA brought a rift in her relationship with her parents that proved to be temporary, but her active involvement in Vietnam's development may result in additional contestations with her family.

Unclear knowledge of participation options. The limited participation among potential contributors could be explained by a lack of guidance about where to direct their interest and how to become involved. Many former volunteers from this study reported wanting to incorporate an international component into their career after their participation in VIA, but they had little knowledge about how to realize this objective. As Kerry states, “I definitely wanted to get in touch with international stuff after VIA and couldn’t really find my way with that even though other people have...”. The volunteer posts offered by VIA in Vietnam are predominantly oriented towards English teaching, and volunteers who want to explore other areas of work must find opportunities on their own. While VIA has an orientation program that offers some language training and cross-cultural preparations, it is beyond the mission of the organization to provide career counseling or guidance on how alumni can further pursue their interests in Vietnam or elsewhere. The burden, therefore, is placed on volunteers to figure their next steps after VIA should they have interest in further international exposure. VIA’s alumni network is an important source for participants to find opportunities, as illustrated by Nandan who obtained his job at a plastics company in Vietnam from a VIA connection, but it is an indirect way that VIA provides assistance rather than a formalized post-volunteer orientation. Besides the alumni network, some volunteers like Haru choose to stay with VIA for another year in order to gain more international experiences. Others like Allison, Bethany, and Thomas turn to graduate school programs to explore their options.

Some former VIA volunteers report a lack of time and insufficient funds as reasons for their lack of participation. As Nandan states:

That’s [participation in Vietnam’s development] again something that’s gonna

come about in the future you know, after I've finished my current degree, move on to professional life and actually have the resources to do that. So time and fiscal resources, I guess, are guiding factors in that aspect, both of which I don't have much of (laughs) sadly right now.

Similarly, Allison expresses the need to be more financially secure before she can contribute: "I haven't been in financially lucrative jobs, and I've been traveling and a student and doing unpaid internships. I think I might if I were sort of in a financial position to do so". Such statements reveal a conceptualization of involvement as an act that requires abundant time and financial resources. Consequently, former volunteers like Nandan and Allison reserve involvement for the future when they have more financial stability and free time. The postponement of involvement for the future increases the likelihood that fervor towards Vietnam would have decreased by then, thus making participation less likely. Furthermore, financial constraints and limited time are ever-present challenges to participation that do not necessarily dissipate once these former volunteers become more established. To encourage participation in the present rather than as a future endeavor, these perspectives need to be challenged by showing former volunteers those avenues of involvement that are less demanding of time and resources. A broadened view of what involvement entails can foster creative ways of engagement that work within the former volunteers' life constraints.

Conclusion

Former volunteers classified as potential contributors represent untapped sources of social capital for Vietnam. As shown by the actions of committed contributors and default actors, these seven individuals could potentially be conduits for resources like

money to flow into Vietnam, advocates for causes in Vietnam, collaborators with the diaspora communities, or employees with knowledge of the local Vietnamese context. There could also be other forms of engagement not revealed by this study. Nonetheless, these seven individuals have not transformed their interests in Vietnam into actions, in part because of dissatisfaction with certain structures of Vietnamese society and limited access to broad and flexible avenues of involvement. For this group, any impact on Vietnam is largely confined to the period of their participation in VIA.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Discussion

Revisiting the Purpose and Goals of the Study

This study acknowledged the involvement of a nonspecialized public in development practice and called it unofficial development to contrast with official development practiced by professionals. The study focused on international volunteers as practitioners of unofficial development, and a case study of alumni of the Volunteers in Asia program in Vietnam was conducted to understand how former volunteers relate to the host country and the development implications for the host country from those relationships. The study aimed to describe former volunteers' relationship with Vietnam, theorize how these relationships connect former volunteers to Vietnam's development, and explain the conditions that influence the former volunteer-host country relationship.

The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What roles do former international volunteers play in Vietnam's development?
2. What conditions affect the strength and durability of social ties between former volunteers and Vietnam?

In answering the research questions, the data reveals distinctions between unofficial development and official development, namely unofficial development's prioritization of relational over economic gains and personal transformations over structural changes. These distinctions are discussed after the next section's summary of findings. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research and concluding remarks about the importance of relationships, which is at the heart of unofficial development, for Vietnam's development.

Summary of Major Findings

One finding of the study is that alumni of the VIA program relate to the host country of Vietnam in four ways: as committed contributors, default actors, indifferent abstainers, and potential contributors. For committed contributors and default actors, the completion of the VIA program was followed by involvement in projects oriented towards the betterment of Vietnam. The distinction between these two groups is that committed contributors intentionally seek to involve themselves in such activities whereas marriage to Vietnamese nationals brought default actors into their role. Former volunteers who belong in either the indifferent abstainers or potential contributors categories are less involved in Vietnamese affairs than those in the other two categories, although potential contributors show promise of deeper involvement should the right conditions arise. Table 6 shows the participants of the study and their corresponding roles.

Table 6: VIA Alumni's Roles in Vietnam's Development

Committed Contributors (6)	Default Actors (2)	Indifferent Abstainers (3)	Potential Contributors (7)
Mike	Dan	William	Kerry
Elsa	Nathan	Trang	Allison
Kent		Derek	Deborah
Lindsey			Bethany
Tri			Thomas
Kevin			Nandan
			Haru

Although each former volunteer was placed in a distinct category, movement between categories is possible with changes in the former volunteers' life circumstances. For instance, Mike and Kent were placed in the committed contributors category because their former employment involved working in Vietnam. Now that they are no longer at

those positions, they might also be considered potential contributors. These distinct categories help to show the possible pathways that former volunteers' relationship with Vietnam might take, and former volunteers may take separate paths at different points in their lives.

The study also discussed the resulting resources from the former volunteers' relationships with Vietnam. The most concrete resources are remittances that default actors send to their Vietnamese in-laws and consumer spending in the case of Nathan who has built a house in Vietnam and plans to relocate there. Beyond these monetary gains, former volunteers also became advocates for Vietnam's social needs, as in the cases of Elsa who volunteered with a U.S.-based nonprofit organization to raise funds for charities operating in Vietnam, Kevin who continues to donate his time and energy to prevent human trafficking, and Tri who is passionate about reforming volunteer tourism at orphanages through academic research and his volunteer work with a children's shelter in Hue. Mike and Kent became advocates for Vietnam through their employment with Save the Children and USAID in Mike's case and with the Institute of International Education with Kent. Meanwhile, Lindsey's volunteer work within the Vietnamese American community helps celebrate and preserve the Vietnamese identity so that the younger generation of diaspora members can still relate to Vietnam.

A third group of findings from this study are explanations as to why some former volunteers are more active in Vietnamese affairs than others. The presence of familial obligations, not just familial ties, is one factor that encourages former volunteers to send remittances. Familial ties in Vietnam existed among volunteers either because they have Vietnamese heritage or through marriage with local Vietnamese. Interestingly, those

who send remittances are those with ties through marriage rather than by blood. The former volunteers with Vietnamese heritage were born in the U.S. or immigrated in infancy, and they do not have the same financial responsibilities toward family members in Vietnam that are more common among first-generation immigrants like the spouses of the former volunteers who send remittances. A major finding for this study is that Vietnamese heritage does not necessarily translate to interest or participation in Vietnam's development beyond the volunteer assignment although it is a major reason that brought the Vietnamese Americans to volunteer in Vietnam; yet, the concentration of Vietnamese Americans in the committed contributors category indicates that when they are interested, they tend to engage with passion and dedication.

There were three major factors that impeded involvement. First, former volunteers seemed unprepared to handle the bureaucratic process and workplace culture in Vietnam, which led to frustrations and a retreat from involvement in other projects in Vietnam for some. The former volunteers often compared workplace practices and bureaucratic procedures to those within the U.S., and they expressed frustrations over the differences, particularly with corruption and lack of structure in the workplace. These former volunteers showed cultural sensitivity for Vietnamese culture at large, but they were less willing to accept and work with corruption and lose workplace structures.

The second factor has to do with the former volunteers' personal interests and motivations. While all former volunteers interviewed for this project expressed that the VIA experience was important to them and offer their support for the program and for international volunteerism at large, for many the experience does not define who they are, meaning that they have other interests and obligations beyond Vietnam. It is not a

complete loss for Vietnam, however, in cases where former volunteers are not active in Vietnamese affairs, as is true of those in the indifferent abstainers and potential contributors categories. Even though Vietnamese issues might not be of top priority for these former volunteers, they are now informed citizens of the global North who hold a more nuanced understanding of Vietnam than the general population who has not had the opportunity to live and work there for an extended period of time.

Lastly, the Vietnamese heritage of former volunteers can be a negative rather than positive influence on involvement in Vietnamese affairs. Some former volunteers with Vietnamese ancestry experienced resistance from family members, particularly from parents, and further involvement carries the risk of disruption to family relations and emotional distress for the former volunteer, as was seen in Kerry's case. In Trang's case, Vietnamese heritage makes participation in Vietnamese affairs not as exciting as other country contexts that are more exotic for her and that present more opportunities of intercultural learning.

Development Reconsidered

There have been many critiques of how multilateral and bilateral agencies have handled development challenges, such as those expressed in Easterly (2006) and Moyo (2009). In these critiques is the recognition that aid in the form of money and technical assistance has not done enough for countries in the global South. Easterly is perplexed by the misguided objectives and cumbersome bureaucratic structures that prevent the billions of dollars in aid from going to where they are desperately needed. He criticizes the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for wandering from its original mission as a lender for projects that rectify short-term crises to the unrealistic focus on creating

utopian societies. Rather than trying to patch up problems as they arise, the IMF hopes to “engineer paradise” which has resulted in the establishment of structural adjustment programs that may not work within the local contexts (Easterly, 2006, p. 234). Moyo (2009) argues that foreign aid perpetuates dependency on the part of recipients, impedes local entrepreneurship, and engenders corruption among government bureaucrats. Her critiques are accompanied by a call for aid recipients, in particular African countries, to take ownership of their own development, and she offers market-based prescriptions for the aid that she hopes would be eliminated. Rather than critiquing official development assistance in particular, Dichter (2003) finds the development industry overall to be problematic because it seeks to control effects from history. He states that:

Development is not a set of obstinate problems the way cancer is but a historical process that cannot really be engineered or controlled. In short, development is not a “challenge,” or something we can deliberately “attack” the way finding a cure for cancer can be. Certainly, an industry set up to engineer change through a series of short-and medium-term direct interventions (“projects” and “programs”) is, to put it mildly, a gross mismatch of means and ends. (p. 9).

These critiques demonstrate a desire among development professionals for alternative approaches to development. As pointed out by Dichter, the industry tends to focus on finding new strategies and technologies to help foster development. Extending his point, I argue that the search for interventions can cause development professionals to overlook existing phenomena that affect development. The nonspecialized public’s engagement with development through international volunteering is an example of such a phenomenon. A broadened view of who constitutes an aid worker, as suggested in

Fechter (2011), was adopted in this study's focus on former international volunteers as unofficial development workers. As predicted by Fechter, this broadened view does produce new understandings of development and foreign aid, particular in two areas. The first is unofficial development's emphasis on building social relationships rather than infusing money into society as means for development. The second is the manifestation of development as transformations of individuals rather than social institutions when international volunteers are recognized as instrumental actors in development. These two points are discussed in further details below.

Social capital rather than economic capital for development. There is no denying that economic capital is vital for development; governments need money to build and maintain infrastructure, run social programs and provide basic services for its people. The economic assistance offered as ODA provides a needed resource, but as the cases of former VIA volunteers show, social relations also have important implications for development.

Bourdieu's (1986) notion of the convertibility of social capital to other types of capital was observed in this study. In some cases, former volunteers' social relations with Vietnamese nationals translated to economic resources flowing into Vietnam, as observed among those who send remittances or who financially support Vietnam-related causes. The beneficiaries of this economic capital are the acquired family members of former volunteers as well as the populations being served by the charities supported by former volunteers. In addition to economic resources, political capital for Vietnam may also arise from the social capital. The marriages and children born from the relationships connect the two countries inextricably among the individuals involved; the children

become part of the Vietnamese diaspora and could potentially use their status as citizens of the U.S. to lobby for Vietnamese interests should they feel a strong connection to Vietnam. Theoretically, similar political capital may also be available from volunteers without Vietnamese ancestry if they feel strongly enough about Vietnam. Lastly, the social capital can position former volunteers as a source of human capital for Vietnam. This conversion of social capital into human capital occurred in the instances when former volunteers used their knowledge and skills in their Vietnam-related professional, academic, and philanthropic work.

Personal rather than structural transformations. As noted in Easterly (2006) and Dichter (2003), official development often entails attempts to engineer change, and the subjects of that change are usually the people, institutions, or practices in the global South. With international volunteering, there is an implicit understanding that it is the volunteer who will change in the process. In fact, it is this potential for personal transformations that attracts individuals to volunteer and is a reason why institutions of learning encourage their students to participate in international volunteering. This focus on changing the person who is in the developer role rather than social structures in the aid recipient country is an important distinction between unofficial development and official development. It exemplifies an alternative approach to development that Giri and Ufford (2004) and Chambers (1997) encourage. For Giri and Ufford (2004), development “means not only enhancing the functioning and capacity of bonded laborers or enhancing the life expectancy of disadvantaged groups...but also self-development on the part of the free agents” (p. 28). Chambers (1997) expresses a similar idea that the onus of change rests among those in power, or those in the global North, rather than within the global

South. He explains:

To do better, we have to examine not just the normally defined agenda of development “out there,” but ourselves, how our ideas are formed, how we think, how we change, and what we do and do not do...the wealthier and more powerful people are, the greater the actual or potential impact of their actions or inactions” (pp. 1743-1744, p. 1749).

Chambers advocates a “pedagogy for the non-oppressed” to gain awareness of the privileges, power, and responsibilities of those residing in the global North. International volunteering can and has been the means for individuals from the global North to gain this awareness. The development that international volunteering fosters begins at the individual level and works its way up rather than the top-down directives from official development actors.

Policy Implications

Nation states have a tendency to recruit certain groups of outsiders based on what they have to offer. For instance, investors who want to establish businesses that will create jobs and financial flows into a country are generally welcomed, as are international students and scholars who could contribute to the diversity of the host institutions and utilize their human capital towards the advancement of the host society. Hosting international volunteers could also be strategic for global Southern countries since it allows the host country to connect with citizens from the global North who have potential access to resources. This study illustrated what Vietnam has gained by hosting one small group of international volunteers. In addition, hosting international volunteers is a very affordable mechanism for countries in the global South to benefit from soft power. To

enhance its soft power, the U.S. government must spend money through the Fulbright program to sponsor a greater number of international students and scholars to come learn about the U.S. and experience its democratic process. Similarly, hosting international volunteers allows a global Southern country to advertise itself and to develop networks with citizens from other countries but without the need for that government to subsidize the volunteers' presence as does the Fulbright program for students and scholars.

Beyond recruiting international volunteers, nation states should also consider how best to sustain their ties with former volunteers. As this study emphasized, it is not only what volunteers do during the volunteer period that is important but also what they could offer afterwards, which includes sending financial remittances, connecting organizations working in Vietnam to resources in the U.S., and applying their knowledge and skills toward Vietnam's needs. Therefore, to maximize the benefits from hosting international volunteers, nation states should consider how to maintain their ties with former volunteers. Based on some comments made by participants of this study regarding their preference for volunteering with an NGO like VIA over Peace Corps to avoid the governmental ties, overt policies from host countries to maintain ties might be counterproductive because they stem from the government. Any policies should avoid making former volunteers feel like they are being manipulated and used for purposes beyond their control.

Avenues for Further Research

This study focused specifically on former volunteers' residual interests in Vietnam, but for many the VIA experience brought interest and involvement in other country contexts. A study about former volunteers' continued engagement in social

justice and development activities beyond the host country would further understanding about how international volunteering fosters development globally rather than for the host country only.

A second avenue of research is to trace involvement with the host country among alumni of other international volunteering programs. VIA provides long-term volunteering assignments and has as its mission the promotion of intercultural understanding more so than development work. This study finds that alumni of VIA may become committed contributors, default participants, indifferent abstainers or potential contributors. Further studies could examine whether these categories also apply to alumni from other types of volunteer programs or how relations with the host country compare among alumni of other programs. A comparison of former volunteers across different types of programs would allow a better understanding of the influence of programmatic features on the post-volunteer relationship with the host country.

Another comparative study that could be undertaken is of international volunteering when it involves the South-to-South flow of volunteers rather than the focus on the North to South flow of this study. While not as prevalent, these programs do exist. Organizations such as Voluntary Services Overseas and United Nations Volunteers help facilitate volunteers from the global South to volunteer in other global Southern countries as a way to build solidarity between people of the sending and receiving countries and also to build skills and capacity for the individual volunteers. A study of how those Southern volunteers relate to the host country could be compared with findings from this study to reveal interesting dynamics between the global North and the global South.

A fourth avenue for future research could be to examine the possible negative consequences that accompany former volunteers' continued ties with the host country through a study that includes perspectives from the host organizations and locals who engage with international volunteers. The perspectives from these two stakeholders were left unexamined in this study but are important for a more complete understanding of the impact of international volunteering. At their best, international volunteers act as external resources for the host country, but that perpetuates a model of development that is based on dependency rather than self-sufficiency for the host country. At a more micro level, perpetuation of ties with former volunteers may create certain hardships for individuals in the host country. The assumption that maintenance of ties between volunteers from the global North and locals in the global South would bring mutual benefits needs further investigation.

Conclusion

By the development industry's standards, Vietnam has shown tremendous progress in its socioeconomic development since the *Doi Moi* reforms that began in 1986. Such progress is often attributed to the country's reintegration into the global community through its focus on establishing political and economic partnerships. In other words, relationship building at the bilateral and multilateral levels in the political and economic spheres has been important for Vietnam's development. This study shows that relationship building at the citizen level within the context of international volunteering is also important for Vietnam. The international volunteers discussed in this study left the volunteer program with an expanded social network that includes Vietnamese nationals and fellow volunteers and also a deeper understanding of themselves, their home culture,

and Vietnam. Those gains are examples of the outcomes of the unofficial development practiced by international volunteers. Some former volunteers from the study acted upon these personal transformations and became further involved in Vietnam's socioeconomic development. In doing so, they position themselves as a source of social capital for Vietnam. For others who have not acted upon their personal transformations from the volunteer experience, their reservoirs of knowledge and experiences from living and working in Vietnam position them as a source of latent social capital for Vietnam that awaits the right opportunities and moments to become activated. As shown by the cases of committed contributors and default participants, the activation of the social capital entails its conversion into economic capital in the form of remittances or human capital in the form of knowledge and skills applied in Vietnam-related employment and academic or philanthropic work.

Instances when former volunteers acted upon their personal transformations should be celebrated and encouraged not only because of the direct gains for the recipients of the support; in addition, these actions represent attempts to rectify the global structural inequalities that allow global Northerners to have the free time and political freedom to travel to the global South as volunteers. Former volunteers who continue to work for Vietnam can challenge critics who claim that international volunteering is a form of neocolonialism by presenting evidence of their long-term interest in the country's well-being and expenditure of time, energy, or resources for the country beyond the volunteer assignment.

The celebration and encouragement of continued engagement with Vietnam is not meant as a critique of those who have not been active. There are many practical issues

that may prevent engagement, as well as personal reasons for individuals to want to focus on another country context or activities unrelated to development. As discussed in Palacios (2010) and Kontogeorgopoulos (2014), the linkage of international volunteers to development practice carries the risk of creating unrealistic expectations of the impact that volunteers can make. The weight of the world's development problems does not rest on the shoulders of volunteers (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014), although I would add that their embodiment of a different approach to development practice should also not be taken lightly.

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Appendix A: Survey for VIA-Vietnam Alums

Informed Consent Statement

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, which is part of a research project being conducted by Lisa Vu, a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. The study seeks to understand the personal and societal impacts when a person chooses to volunteer internationally. You are invited to complete this survey because you are an alumnus/alumna of VIA's program in Viet Nam. The survey includes questions about how being a VIA volunteer in Viet Nam has contributed to your personal/professional development as well as questions about your involvement in the Vietnamese communities since your VIA experience. There are also questions about your general background. The results of the study will be shared with VIA to promote a better and deeper understanding of the program's impact on its participants. In addition, the results would help inform recommendations for the field of international service learning.

Your responses will be saved electronically and kept strictly confidential. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may skip any questions or parts of questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. This survey should take about 20-30 minutes. There are no foreseeable risks in your completion of this survey, and hopefully you will find it personally fulfilling to reflect back upon your experiences in Viet Nam.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Lisa Vu through email: vuxxx117@umn.edu, or by phone: 1-423-505-263. You may also contact the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board if you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject: 612-626-5654.

Clicking the box below confirms that you are at least 18 years old and have read and understood the consent statement. Clicking constitutes your informed consent to participate in the study as outlined above.

I agree to continue.

I. General VIA Experience

1. Year(s) as a volunteer of VIA Location of volunteer assignment in VN
 ___ to ___ _____
 ___ to ___ _____
 ___ to ___ _____
 ___ to ___ _____

2. What type of issue(s) did your volunteer work involve? (Please choose all that applies.)
 - a. Anti-trafficking
 - b. Economic/employment development
 - c. Education
 - d. Emergency relief
 - e. Environmental
 - f. Health
 - g. Orphanage
 - h. Peace/Human Rights
 - i. Other, please specify: _____

3. What were your primary responsibilities at the volunteer site(s)? (Please choose all that applies.)
 - a. Administrative tasks
 - b. Advocacy for individuals or a cause
 - c. Caretaker
 - d. English partner
 - e. Health services provider
 - f. Raising public awareness
 - g. Researching
 - h. Teaching/Training
 - i. Other, please specify: _____

4. What motivated you to volunteer internationally? (Please choose all that applies.)
 - a. Obtain international experience
 - b. Desire to improve conditions in a developing country
 - c. Opportunity to learn about my Vietnamese heritage
 - d. Gain skills
 - e. Desire to get away from the U.S. for a while
 - f. Didn't know what else to do at that point of my life
 - g. To become involved with VIA
 - h. Other, please specify: _____

5. Why were you interested in volunteering in Viet Nam specifically? (Please choose all that applies.)
 - a. No special reason; I was assigned there.
 - b. I was curious about the country.

- c. I wanted to learn Vietnamese.
- d. I already knew the language.
- e. Friends had recommended that I should go there.
- f. My family had encouraged me to go there.
- g. I thought that VIA's program in Viet Nam was better than its program in other locations.
- h. I was drawn to a particular organization or issue in Viet Nam.
- i. I have family members living in Viet Nam.
- j. I wanted to learn about my heritage since I have Vietnamese heritage.
- k. Other, please specify: _____

6. What is the biggest impact that volunteering in Viet Nam has had on your life?

II. VIA Experience and Personal/Professional Development

How would you rate your Vietnamese skills before and after VIA?

Before VIA	No Knowledge	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
7. Reading Vietnamese				
8. Writing Vietnamese				
9. Speaking Vietnamese				
10. Understanding spoken Vietnamese				

0-1 year after VIA	No Knowledge	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
11. Reading Vietnamese				
12. Writing Vietnamese				
13. Speaking Vietnamese				
14. Understanding spoken Vietnamese				

>1 year after VIA	No Knowledge	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	It has not been more than a year since my VIA experience
15. Reading Vietnamese					
16. Writing Vietnamese					
17. Speaking Vietnamese					
18. Understanding spoken Vietnamese					

How would you rate your knowledge of Vietnamese society before and after your volunteer experience?

	Limited knowledge	Average knowledge	Extensive knowledge
19. Before VIA			
20. After VIA			

21. Did the VIA experience influence your career goals?
- No, my career goals were already clear before I became a VIA volunteer.
 - No, my career goals were not influenced by my VIA experience.
 - Yes, the VIA experience influenced my career goals.
 - If yes, in what way(s) did the VIA experience influence your career *goals*? (Please choose all that applies.)
 - It led me to pursue work on international issues.
 - It led me to seek work opportunities outside the U.S.
 - It led me to pursue work related to improving social justice or human development.
 - Other, please specify: _____
22. Do you have an advanced degree or are currently pursuing one? An advanced degree is one that requires the completion of a Bachelor's degree.
- No
 - Yes
 - If yes, did your experiences as a volunteer in Viet Nam contribute to your desire to pursue the advanced degree? ___yes ___no
 - What is the focus of your advanced degree? _____

23. Do you attribute any career advancements to your involvement with VIA?
- a. No
 - b. Yes
 - i. If yes, please explain what connections you see between your VIA experience and your career.

III. Involvement with the Vietnamese Communities

24. Of the people that you met as a VIA volunteer, with whom are you most likely to maintain contact?
- a. Vietnamese citizens
 - b. Other VIA volunteers
 - c. Both Vietnamese citizens and other VIA volunteers
 - d. Neither Vietnamese citizens nor other VIA volunteers

Of those people that you continue to maintain contact, how often do you communicate with them?

0-1 year after VIA	At least once a week	A few times each month	A few times each year	A few times every few years	No contact
26. Communication with Vietnamese citizens					
27. Communication with other volunteers					

>1 year after VIA	At least once a week	A few times each month	A few times each year	A few times every few years	No contact	It has not been more than a year since my VIA experience
28. Communication with Vietnamese citizens						
29. Communication with other volunteers						

30. Which of the following statement best describes your feelings about maintaining contact with Vietnamese citizens whom you met as a VIA volunteer?
- I don't have a desire to maintain contact with local Vietnamese whom I met during the volunteer experience.
 - I have the desire to maintain contact, but I don't put much effort into it.
 - I have the desire to maintain contact, and I make an effort to maintain those ties.
31. Which of the following statement best describes your feelings about maintaining contact with other VIA volunteers?
- I don't have a desire to maintain contact with other VIA volunteers.
 - I have the desire to maintain contact, but I don't put much effort into it.
 - I have the desire to maintain contact, and I make the effort to maintain those ties.

After your VIA experience, how frequently do you engage in the following activities?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Continually
32. Donate money to a cause that benefits the people in Viet Nam				
33. Donate money to a cause that benefits the Vietnamese community outside Viet Nam				
34. Donate your time and expertise to a cause that benefits the people in Viet Nam				
35. Donate your time and expertise to a cause that benefits the Vietnamese community outside Viet Nam				
36. Travel to Viet Nam to volunteer				
37. Volunteer within the Vietnamese community in your current country of residence				

38. When deciding whether to donate your money, time, or expertise to the Vietnamese community in Viet Nam or Vietnamese immigrant communities, what factors influence your decision?

IV. Feelings about International Volunteerism

22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: Volunteering in Viet Nam was a worthwhile experience for me.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

23. Would you recommend international volunteering for others? Explain why or why not.

V. Volunteer's Personal Background

39. How old were you when you first served as a VIA volunteer? _____

40. What is your sex?

- a. Female
- b. Male

41. Which country were you born in? _____

42. Do you have Asian heritage?

- a. No
- b. Yes

43. Do you have Vietnamese heritage?

- a. No
- b. Yes

44. Had you visited Viet Nam before becoming a VIA volunteer there?

- a. No

- b. Yes
45. Have you participated in the Peace Corps?
- a. No
 - b. Yes
 - i. If yes, when were you part of the Peace Corps?
 - 1. Before VIA
 - 2. After VIA
 - ii. Which country did you serve in? _____
46. Did you study abroad during college?
- a. No
 - b. Yes
 - i. If yes, which country or countries did you study in? _____
47. Have you ever received a Fulbright award to go overseas?
- a. No
 - b. Yes
 - i. If yes, when did you receive the Fulbright award?
 - 1. Before VIA
 - 2. After VIA
 - ii. The Fulbright award provided funding for you to work or study in which country? _____
48. What was your undergraduate major(s)? _____
49. What is your current profession? _____
50. Would you like to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your VIA experience further? The interview would last no more than 1 hour, and it would provide the researcher with an opportunity to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how volunteering in Viet Nam has impacted your life.
- a. No
 - b. Yes
 - i. If yes, please provide your contact information. If you prefer not to leave your contact information, you may contact the researcher by email or phone (Lisa Vu, vuxxx117@umn.edu, 1-423-505-2632):
 - 1. Name: _____
 - 2. Email and/or phone number: _____

Appendix B: Qualitative Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to do this one-on-one interview. Your responses will help me have a deeper understanding of how VIA has influenced your life. I want to let you know that like the survey, participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and if there are any questions or parts of a question that you don't want to answer, then you don't have to. You could let me know by saying something like "I don't want to answer that question," and I will move on to the next one. You could also choose to end the interview at any time. I'd like to take some time now to answer any questions you might have about this interview process.

If it's ok with you, I'd like to record our conversation to make sure that I don't miss any important information. Only I will have access to the recording, and it will be destroyed at the completion of my research. Whether you choose to allow me to record our conversation or not, your name will not be included in any discussions of the research in order to keep this conversation confidential. Would you be okay with me recording this conversation?

I. THE APPEAL OF VOLUNTEERING IN VIET NAM

[Why are U.S. Americans interested in volunteering in Viet Nam? How does being there shape their perspectives of the country?]

- What led you to volunteer in Viet Nam?
 - What did you hope to accomplish by going abroad to volunteer?
 - Why did you choose to go to Viet Nam as opposed to another location?
 - What preconceptions about Viet Nam did you have before volunteering there?
 - Did anyone in your family try to influence your decision to go to Viet Nam?
 - What led you to choose the VIA program?
 - How did you fund your trip?

- Please describe what your volunteer work involved.
 - What views about Viet Nam and its people did you develop by being a volunteer there?
 - How did living in the country affect those preconceptions of Vietnamese society?
 - What did you particularly enjoy about volunteering in Viet Nam?
 - What was the most frustrating or difficult aspect of the volunteer experience?
 - What kinds of impact do you think your work as a volunteer had on Vietnamese society?

II. DURABILITY OF SOCIAL TIES TO VIETNAM AMONG FORMER VOLUNTEERS

[What ties to Viet Nam, if any, are created or strengthened from participation in a volunteer program like VIA? Do former volunteers continue to work for social change in Viet Nam? What explains their interests/engagement or disinterest/non-engagement?]

- Since completing the VIA program, what contact do you still have with the people and institutions in Viet Nam?
 - Probe about ties with local Vietnamese and organization where they volunteered
 - Who are the people that you stay in touch with? How often do you stay in touch with them?
 - Have you ever provided assistance (e.g., financial, technical support, additional volunteer time) for the organization since returning to the U.S.? Provide examples of the assistance that you have provided for the organization.
 - What motivates you to maintain those relationships?
 - What makes it difficult to maintain those contacts?
 - How have those relationships changed over time?

- Which issues affecting Viet Nam do you follow most closely?
 - What priority do you give to staying informed about current events in Viet Nam?
 - How did you develop an interest in those issues? What makes those issues important to you?
 - What keeps you from following current events in Viet Nam?
 - Were these interests shaped by any particular experiences or observations that you had when you were a volunteer? Provide examples of those experiences/observations.

- Since VIA, have you participated in any activities that contribute to economic, political, or social growth in Viet Nam either on a small or large scale (e.g., remittances, charitable contributions, volunteer work)?
 - Name some examples of such activities.
 - What makes those causes important to you?/ What keeps you from becoming involved in causes for Viet Nam?
 - Was your involvement in these causes spurred by any particular experiences or observations made while you were a volunteer?
 - What has been your experience navigating the Vietnamese bureaucracy in pursuit of these activities?

III. LINKAGES WITH THE VIETNAMESE DIASPORA COMMUNITIES AMONG FORMER VOLUNTEERS

[How did volunteering in Viet Nam shape former volunteers' relationships with Vietnamese diaspora communities? Does doing volunteer work abroad foster engagement with the country's diaspora communities?]

- How has your experience in Viet Nam shaped the way you understand or interact with the Vietnamese diaspora communities (living in the U.S. or elsewhere)?
 - Before becoming a volunteer in Viet Nam, what kinds of interactions did you have with the Vietnamese diaspora communities? What types of community events did you attend?
 - After the VIA program, what kinds of interactions did you have with the Vietnamese diaspora communities? Describe the community activities that have you attended.
 - What reactions from Vietnamese diaspora members have you received when you tell them that you've volunteered in Viet Nam?
- Which issues affecting the diaspora communities are you interested in/have been involved with?
 - How did you develop an interest in those issues? What makes those issues important to you?
 - What priority do you give to connecting with the Vietnamese diaspora communities?
 - Are you more likely to participate in activities that affect Viet Nam or those that affect the diaspora? What draws you to one side or the other?
 - What keeps you from connecting with the diaspora communities?

IV. CLOSING QUESTIONS

- Given your interests and subsequent experiences in Viet Nam [summarize their responses], how do you think it fosters social change, if at all?
 - Do you aspire to be a catalyst for social change either in Viet Nam, in the U.S., or elsewhere? What kind of change?
 - Which parts of your experience in Viet Nam as a VIA volunteer help shape those interests?
 - What challenges stand in the way of you acting upon those interests?