

**Investigating Country Identity and Citizen Diplomacy:  
The Case of Cultural Mediators in Vietnam**

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## **DEDICATION**

Cho người dân Việt Nam –

Mong rằng người Việt Nam và người Mỹ có thể luôn sánh vai cùng nhau trong tình hữu nghị và hợp tác để thúc đẩy hòa bình trong cộng đồng quốc tế.

To the people of Vietnam –

May Vietnamese and Americans walk together always in friendship and cooperation to promote peace in the international community.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation investigates country identity and citizen diplomacy by examining cultural mediators' perceptions of and communication about their own country during people-to-people exchanges. A cultural mediator is a non-state citizen diplomat who communicates with foreigners in business, educational, or social environments to reconcile cultural differences. The country identity constructs examined herein are physical appeal, economic appeal, culture and heritage, political appeal, human capital, social appeal, and emotional appeal.

A non-Western, one-party, postwar, developing country, Vietnam provides a rich context for exploring this dissertation's phenomena. To many Americans, Vietnam is a war. Vietnam, however, is a country undergoing economic, technological, and social change. With its progressing role in Southeast Asia and geographic proximity to China, Vietnam is critical to U.S. interests, and Vietnam's leaders favor improved trade initiatives and military-to-military ties. However, a divisive wartime history and disparate cultural values and political systems complicate U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations.

This dissertation employs a survey ( $N = 368$ ) and interviews ( $N = 27$ ) with Vietnamese cultural mediators and participation observation hours ( $N = 27$ ) of citizen diplomacy activities between Vietnamese and foreigners in Vietnam. While supporting the influence of heritage and culture, human capital, social appeal, and physical appeal on cultural mediators' positive feelings toward their own country, the results expand the country identity theoretical framework by adding a family variable to the heritage and culture scale and a work ethic variable to the human capital scale.

The results reveal economic appeal as a positive significant predictor of citizen diplomats' amount of communication with foreigners about country identity. Cultural mediators perceive mutuality in citizen diplomacy: Foreigners learn to navigate a new cultural system, while cultural mediators develop intercultural communication skills and expand their international network as a step toward integration into the global economy. This dissertation offers evidence that relational communication during citizen diplomacy acknowledges cultural differences to highlight favorable aspects of country identity.

This dissertation provides strategies for promoting the nation brand to domestic publics and stimulating collaboration with foreign publics. The theoretical implications extend beyond Vietnam with insight into how citizen-directed grassroots diplomacy networks advance cultural alliances through communication structure and synergy.

## **PREFACE**

This dissertation is the original work of the author, Lindsey M. Bier.

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville approved this research prior to data collection.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                               |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CHAPTER ONE Introduction .....                                                | 1   |
| Vietnam as the Dissertation Context.....                                      | 5   |
| Overview of Research Process.....                                             | 7   |
| CHAPTER TWO Literature Review .....                                           | 10  |
| Defining Public Diplomacy .....                                               | 11  |
| Three Frameworks of Diplomacy .....                                           | 12  |
| Scholarly Approaches to Public Diplomacy .....                                | 15  |
| International Relations Approach .....                                        | 16  |
| Marketing and Business Approach .....                                         | 17  |
| Communication Approach.....                                                   | 18  |
| Relational, Collaborative, and Network Communication.....                     | 24  |
| Non-State Actors in the Many-to-Many Model.....                               | 26  |
| Media as Non-State Actors .....                                               | 28  |
| Private Corporations and Non-Governmental Organizations as Non-State Actors.. | 28  |
| Citizens as Non-State Actors .....                                            | 30  |
| Defining Country Image and Country Reputation.....                            | 35  |
| Country Image .....                                                           | 35  |
| Country Reputation.....                                                       | 38  |
| Defining Country Identity and Nation Branding .....                           | 40  |
| Country Identity .....                                                        | 40  |
| Country Identity's Role in Nation Branding.....                               | 45  |
| Research Questions .....                                                      | 49  |
| CHAPTER THREE Methods .....                                                   | 53  |
| Mixed Methods Approach .....                                                  | 53  |
| Qualitative Data .....                                                        | 55  |
| Sample and Site.....                                                          | 56  |
| In-Depth Interviews .....                                                     | 62  |
| Ethnographic Participant Observations.....                                    | 64  |
| Considerations for Qualitative Data Quality.....                              | 66  |
| Qualitative Data Analysis .....                                               | 68  |
| Quantitative Data .....                                                       | 70  |
| Sample.....                                                                   | 70  |
| Instrument and Procedure .....                                                | 72  |
| Quantitative Data Analysis .....                                              | 80  |
| CHAPTER FOUR Results.....                                                     | 87  |
| Understanding and Communicating About Country Identity .....                  | 87  |
| Country Identity: Physical Appeal.....                                        | 91  |
| Country Identity: Economic Appeal .....                                       | 93  |
| Country Identity: Heritage and Culture .....                                  | 97  |
| Country Identity: Human Capital.....                                          | 106 |
| Country Identity: Political Appeal .....                                      | 108 |
| Country Identity: Social Appeal .....                                         | 112 |

|                                                                                |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Country Identity: Emotional Appeal.....                                        | 114 |
| Cultural Mediators' Interpretations of Citizen Diplomacy .....                 | 118 |
| Manifestations of Cultural Differences.....                                    | 118 |
| Motivations for Engagement.....                                                | 126 |
| Cultural Mediators' Experiences .....                                          | 134 |
| Perceptions of External and Internal Reputation .....                          | 141 |
| Amount of Communication About Country Identity.....                            | 143 |
| Communicating With Americans .....                                             | 144 |
| Relationships Between Perception of and Communication About Country Identity . | 145 |
| Comparing Perception and the Amount of Communication.....                      | 145 |
| Correlations Between Perception and the Amount of Communication.....           | 147 |
| Influencers of Country Identity and Communication About Country Identity.....  | 148 |
| Influencers of Feelings Toward Country Identity.....                           | 149 |
| Influencers of the Amount of Communication About Country Identity.....         | 154 |
| CHAPTER FIVE Discussion.....                                                   | 158 |
| Understanding Country Identity: Evidence From Vietnam .....                    | 158 |
| Country Identity Constructs With Positive Perceptions .....                    | 159 |
| Country Identity Constructs With Negative Perceptions.....                     | 167 |
| Expanding Country Identity.....                                                | 171 |
| Complexity of the Country Identity Constructs.....                             | 174 |
| Country Identity in Citizen Diplomacy.....                                     | 175 |
| Economic Appeal as a Predictor of Communication With Foreigners.....           | 175 |
| Communication About Country Identity in Citizen Diplomacy .....                | 178 |
| Country Image in Citizen Diplomacy .....                                       | 184 |
| Communication Networks of Cultural Mediators.....                              | 185 |
| Implications for Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding .....                    | 190 |
| Practical Contributions to Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding Strategy.....  | 190 |
| Contributions to Theory About Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding .....       | 196 |
| CHAPTER SIX Conclusion.....                                                    | 200 |
| Limitations and Future Research .....                                          | 203 |
| References.....                                                                | 212 |
| Appendices.....                                                                | 249 |
| Appendix A: Interview Instrument .....                                         | 250 |
| Appendix B: Video Transcript.....                                              | 252 |
| Appendix C: Survey Instrument .....                                            | 256 |
| Vita.....                                                                      | 303 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|                                                                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 2.1. Conceptual and operational definitions of the country identity constructs. ..   | 268 |
| Table 3.1. Demographic information of interview participants.....                          | 270 |
| Table 3.2. Record of participant observation hours.....                                    | 271 |
| Table 3.3. Principal component analysis: Heritage and culture variables. ....              | 272 |
| Table 3.4. Principal component analysis: Human capital variables. ....                     | 273 |
| Table 4.1. Participants' descriptions of places in conjunction with country identity. .... | 274 |
| Table 4.2. Participants' descriptions of regional diversity. ....                          | 275 |
| Table 4.3. High scores: Variables measuring perception of country identity.....            | 276 |
| Table 4.4. Low scores: Variables measuring perception of country identity. ....            | 277 |
| Table 4.5. High scores: Variables measuring communication about country identity. ..       | 278 |
| Table 4.6. Low scores: Variables measuring communication about country identity....        | 279 |
| Table 4.7. Emotional appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables. ....        | 280 |
| Table 4.8. Heritage and culture: Perceptions of and communication about variables....      | 281 |
| Table 4.9. Human capital: Perceptions of and communication about variables. ....           | 282 |
| Table 4.10. Social appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables. ....          | 283 |
| Table 4.11. Economic appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables.....         | 284 |
| Table 4.12. Physical appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables. ....        | 285 |
| Table 4.13. Political appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables.....        | 286 |
| Table 4.14. Correlations: Perception of and communication about country identity. ....     | 287 |
| Table 4.15. Correlations: Perceptions of variables in the heritage and culture scale. .... | 288 |
| Table 4.16. Comparison of heritage and culture scales (with/without family variable). ..   | 289 |
| Table 4.17. Correlations: Perceptions of variables in the human capital scale.....         | 290 |
| Table 4.18. Comparison of human capital scales (with/without work ethic variable). ..      | 291 |
| Table 4.19. Regression analysis: Influencers of feelings about country identity. ....      | 292 |
| Table 4.20. Multicollinearity diagnostic on the country identity constructs. ....          | 293 |
| Table 4.21. Regression analysis: Constructs as predictors of country identity feelings. .. | 294 |
| Table 4.22. Regression analysis: Influencers of talk about country identity. ....          | 295 |
| Table 4.23. Regression analysis: Constructs as predictors of country identity talk. ....   | 296 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|                                                                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 2.1. Conceptual map of public diplomacy research informing this dissertation.  | 297 |
| Figure 4.1. Family as the core of the heritage and culture construct. ....            | 298 |
| Figure 4.2. Political appeal's overlap with other country identity constructs. ....   | 299 |
| Figure 4.3. Images perceived as authentic representations in nation branding. ....    | 300 |
| Figure 4.4. Cultural mediators' perceived experiences in citizen diplomacy. ....      | 301 |
| Figure 4.5. Perception of versus amount of communication about country identity. .... | 302 |

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In April 1917, the month the United States entered World War I by declaring war on Germany, journalist Arthur Bullard published an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* to criticize traditional diplomacy. Bullard proposed a diplomacy in which governments collaborated with journalists, scholars, and private organizations to educate citizens and to provide more transparent policy reports from politicians and diplomats. He called for “democratic diplomacy,” emphasizing “popular friendship more than the good-will of the rulers at the moment” (p. 499). Despite appeals such as Bullard’s for non-governmental and informal communication with private citizens and organizations to further diplomatic objectives, the traditional diplomacy of the 20th century, with few exceptions, focused on state actors’ roles in foreign policy making and execution.

Then 9/11 happened. The attacks initiated a surge in debate about U.S. diplomatic practice to answer this question: Why do they not like us? Amid the discussion about how best to accomplish diplomatic work, the emphasis shifted from unidirectional information campaigns toward building and maintaining relationships with foreign publics. Post-9/11 diplomacy, characterized by a “rise of multiple actors in international affairs” (Melissen, 2005b, p. 24), is no longer restricted to diplomats, nor are diplomatic actions confined to foreign policy (Melissen, 2005b; Riordan, 2003; Wang, 2006a). Understanding how to inform and influence state and non-state actors in a changing global landscape is now central to public diplomacy study and practice (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Gregory, 2011; Riordan, 2003; Sandre, 2015; Seib, 2016; Zaharna, 2010).

This dissertation builds upon the idea that public diplomacy ought to promote cooperation among governments but also communication among multiple actors, including everyday citizens. This research contributes to the literature that argues countries earn a positive country reputation over time by fostering a favorable country image and by establishing trust and credibility through relationships with foreign publics (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014; Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2013; Passow, Fehlmann, & Grahlow, 2005; Snow, 2009a, 2009b). Further, this dissertation addresses the literature that contends public diplomacy is a two-step process: To foster a favorable image with foreign publics, a country must first be attractive to its own citizens who will function as unofficial government diplomats by proxy to inform and to influence foreign publics (Bátora, 2005; Che-Ha, Nguyen, Yahya, Melewar, & Chen, 2016; Fitzpatrick, 2010b, 2011; Pisarska, 2016; Zaharna, 2007).

Specifically, the purpose of this dissertation is to investigate country identity and citizen diplomacy by examining cultural mediators' perceptions of and communication about their own country during informal people-to-people exchanges. In citizen diplomacy, ordinary citizens (as distinguished from government officials and diplomats) function as "unofficial ambassadors" who represent their country during interactions with foreigners (Mueller, 2009, p. 102). Such citizens become cultural mediators when they engage in communication with individuals from different cultures and promote cultural understanding, cooperation, and reconciliation (Snow, 2009b). Through intercultural communication during citizen diplomacy activities, cultural mediators project various identities, including country identity. In this dissertation, country identity is

conceptualized as the cohesive beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that collective social actors have toward their own country (Che-Ha et al., 2016) and is operationalized as variables associated with the following constructs: physical appeal, economic appeal, culture and heritage, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005; Yousaf & Li, 2015).

This dissertation addresses theoretical gaps in the literature by empirically testing cultural mediators' perceptions of country identity and assessing how cultural mediators communicate about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. Diplomatic practices have evolved from a government-to-government model into government-to-people and many-to-many models. The “new public diplomacy” models and their associated “relational initiatives need to be more vigorously explored and documented” (Zaharna, 2009, p. 96). Public relations and public diplomacy converge conceptually and functionally to employ similar tools to accomplish similar relational objectives (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). This dissertation answers the call to demonstrate the efficacy of the public relations field to diplomatic practice by examining how communication processes in an intercultural context promote engagement and mutually beneficial partnerships with the potential to nurture a positive country image (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a).

Moreover, this dissertation contributes to the literature by examining the concept of the citizen diplomat. Sharp (2001) identifies four typologies of citizen diplomats, including the typology that is the focus of this dissertation – “the citizen diplomat as a go-between” to represent countries with differences in culture and communication norms (p. 137). The literature, however, has yet to make sense of citizen diplomats, their role in

public diplomacy, and their communication during intercultural exchanges. While official people-to-people exchanges sanctioned by the U.S. government have been deemed effective at changing individual-level opinions about a culture and promoting an ethical responsibility for tolerance and global stability (Handelman, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Payne, 2009; Schattle, 2015; Snow, 2009b), there is little research about citizen-led grassroots initiatives to communicate with foreigners.

Similarly, there is a need for research to address the processes through which intercultural interpersonal relationships advance values and interests (Fitzpatrick, 2010a; Sharp, 2005). Seib (2016) aligns the future of diplomacy with media technology but yet acknowledges the value of the face-to-face connection in public diplomacy and warns against the temptation to abandon such in favor of mediated communication. This dissertation provides insight into the face-to-face communication of citizen diplomats to generate knowledge about the potential contributions of interpersonal communication to successful long-term international relations.

Not only does this dissertation investigate citizen diplomacy from a public relations perspective, this research contributes to a theoretical understanding of internal perceptions of country identity. Although “the idea of domestic public diplomacy has gained currency as a way of nurturing public relations at home for greater image projection overseas,” (Tyler, Abbasov, Gibson, & Teo, 2012, p. 4), the domestic dimension of public diplomacy and nation branding is often neglected (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Fitzpatrick, 2010b, 2011; Pisarska, 2016; Tyler et al, 2012; Yousaf & Li, 2015). There is scant research about how internal perceptions of a country influence



communication during informal people-to-people exchanges. Thus, this dissertation broadens the scope of the new public diplomacy by investigating the intersection of country identity and communication processes during citizen diplomacy.

### **Vietnam as the Dissertation Context**

For several reasons, Vietnam was selected as the context of this dissertation. First, Vietnam and the United States represent the East versus West dichotomy in dimensions of national culture associated with power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, n.d.). There is sparse research about public diplomacy from the standpoint of non-Western states (White & Radic, 2014). Since 9/11, scholars have focused on diplomacy efforts in the Middle East (Gilboa, 2005; Seib, 2016; Zaharna, 2010), and the focus on the Arab and Islamic world has caused scholars to overlook other countries (Melissen, 2005a). Moreover, Ashwill and Oanh (2009) specify that “there is a lack of survey data on what Vietnamese think of their country and its place in the world” (p. 148).

Second, Vietnam has a socialist government founded on Leninism by Ho Chi Minh (Lawrence, 2008), and, although its economic policies have shifted toward capitalism, Vietnam’s leadership remains committed to communist ideology; Vietnam’s one-party system contrasts with the multi-party democratic republic of the United States. Although China has received considerable scholarly attention (Chang & Lin, 2014; Li, 2003; Seib, 2016; Wang, 2010) as have post-communist states in Eastern Europe (Bardan & Imre, 2012; Jansen, 2012; Kaneva, 2012b; Kulcsar & Yum, 2012; Mijatovic, 2012;

Seib, 2016; Simons, 2015; Surowiec, 2012; Szondi, 2006; Volcic, 2012), there is little research about public diplomacy based on empirical evidence from other one-party states (Melissen, 2005a). Additional research about current one-party states is necessary because they govern a significant portion of the global population and are influential political actors in the international community (Brooker, 2009).

Finally, Vietnam is the context of this research because Vietnam is critical to U.S. interests. Vietnam was the setting of a war that influenced U.S. national identity, foreign policy, and culture in an unprecedented manner. While the year 2015 marked the 20th anniversary of the normalization of U.S.-Vietnam relations, the shared wartime history yet affects diplomatic ties between the two countries (Appy, 2015).

Goscha (2016) argues the United States and Vietnam need each other to sustain international security. With Vietnam's progressing economic and political role in Southeast Asia as well as its geographic proximity to China, the United States wants to maintain strong diplomatic ties with Vietnam. Perceiving China's rise as a threat, Vietnam's leaders favor improved trade initiatives and military-to-military ties with the United States. The United States is one of Vietnam's largest export markets with approximately \$30 billion in annual bilateral trade (Manyin, 2014), and, in 2016, the United States lifted a decades-old arms embargo on Vietnam ("Joint Statement," 2016). Further, the U.S. mission to Vietnam focuses on economic, humanitarian, environmental, educational, and militaristic cooperation between the two countries (Burghardt, 2011; Manyin, 2014; Vinh, 2015). Vietnam is one of the largest recipients of U.S. aid in

Southeast Asia, mostly for healthcare development and other humanitarian projects (Burghardt, 2011; Manyin, 2014).

During a November 2014 meeting with Vietnam's prime minister, Barack Obama acknowledged that despite an improved "new phase" of bilateral partnership, U.S.-Vietnam relations are "complex and difficult" because of a divisive wartime history and human rights issues ("President Obama," 2014). Vietnam's leaders are also cautious about closer ties with the United States, particularly because of unease that the United States has failed to address war legacy issues (e.g., Agent Orange in Vietnam) and concern that the United States will seek an end to Vietnam's one-party political system (Manyin, 2015). Thus, in consideration of its unique cultural, historical, political, and economic characteristics, Vietnam poses a unique case for examination, and, to the researcher's knowledge, this dissertation is the first to explore country identity and citizen diplomacy in the Vietnam context.

### **Overview of Research Process**

To investigate cultural mediators' perception of and communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities in Vietnam, this dissertation employs mixed methods, including qualitative interviews ( $N = 27$ ) and quantitative survey ( $N = 368$ ) with a purposive sample of the populations in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang, the three largest cities by population in Vietnam. This dissertation also includes participant observation hours ( $N = 27$ ) with four citizen-led nonprofit organizations that facilitate informal exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners: two English centers (one in Ho Chi Minh City and one in Ha Noi) offering adult education courses and two

tourism groups (one in Ho Chi Minh City and one in Da Nang) providing foreigners with local experiences and guides. The quantitative approach tests the country identity constructs and assesses the relationship between cultural mediators' perception of country identity and communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. The qualitative data provides an in-depth understanding of how cultural mediators perceive and feel about Vietnam's country identity and how such perceptions and feelings influence their communication with foreign publics during informal people-to-people exchanges. Further, the qualitative data elicits themes about motivations for engaging in citizen diplomacy and the experience of being a cultural mediator.

In sum, this dissertation aims to 1) generate knowledge about cultural mediators' perceptions of the constructs associated with country identity, 2) elucidate how such perceptions affect communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities, and 3) offer insight about grassroots citizen diplomacy networks and intercultural communication processes during informal people-to-people exchanges. This dissertation will assist diplomats and scholars in understanding the internal perceptions of citizens in non-Western, one-party, postwar, and/or developing states and in understanding how such citizens form cultural alliances with foreigners through communication structure and synergy during citizen diplomacy.

The next chapter establishes the theoretical framework for this dissertation by providing an overview of the literature about public diplomacy and the concepts of nation branding, country reputation, country image, and country identity, including the constructs of physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital,

political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal. Chapter two also reviews the relevant literature about the role of non-state actors in the new public diplomacy and offers the rationale for research questions about factors that influence cultural mediators' perceptions of country identity and communication with foreigners during citizen diplomacy activities. Chapter three describes the data collection methods and data analysis procedures utilized in this dissertation research, while chapter four reports the interview, participant observation, and survey results. Chapter five integrates these results with existing theories to contribute to the public diplomacy literature from a public relations perspective and to expand knowledge about citizen diplomacy, cultural mediators, and variables affecting perceptions of and communication about country identity. Chapter five also offers pragmatic implications for promoting the nation brand to domestic publics, stimulating collaboration with foreign publics, and using grassroots citizen diplomacy networks to foster international friendships and cultural alliances. Finally, chapter six concludes this dissertation with an agenda for future research associated with citizen diplomacy, country identity, and country image as well as methodological considerations for empirical approaches to public diplomacy research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

From a public diplomacy perspective, this dissertation investigates cultural mediators' perceptions of country identity and generates knowledge about how cultural mediators communicate with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. The literature review chapter includes six main sections. This chapter begins by defining public diplomacy, including a brief history of diplomacy and an overview of the three diplomacy frameworks, including the many-to-many model of public diplomacy in which the cultural mediators in this dissertation are situated. Second, this chapter describes the various objectives and theoretical models within the study of public diplomacy and emphasizes the interplay between public relations and public diplomacy; specifically, this dissertation explains the relational, collaborative, and network approaches to public diplomacy. Third, this chapter explicates the role of non-state actors in public diplomacy and provides a rationale for research about cultural mediators' perceptions of and communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy. Fourth, this chapter defines two concepts that inform the theoretical foundation of this dissertation: country image and country reputation, including the use of hard power and soft power. Fifth, this chapter conceptualizes and operationalizes country identity, explains the relationship between country identity and nation branding, and emphasizes the domestic dimension of public diplomacy and nation branding. Finally, this chapter concludes by stating the research questions that directed this dissertation.

## **Defining Public Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is a malleable term. Conceptual confusion abounds in the diplomacy literature (Banks, 2011; Melissen, 2005a; Szondi, 2008), and the field lacks theories to explain and to predict specific diplomatic phenomena (Entman, 2008). Traditional diplomacy focuses on foreign policymaking and government-to-government communication to earn the approval of other countries and to move foreign leaders toward a desirable action that accomplishes a defined national agenda (Kelley, 2009; Seib, 2016). Diplomacy, however, evolved from a government-to-government model into government-to-people and many-to-many public diplomacy models. The word “public” signals the difference between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy: The former was secretive while the latter is open and communicative. The new public diplomacy involves engagement with state and non-state actors to promote national values and foreign policies and to foster a positive country image through political, militaristic, economic, cultural, and/or educational collaborations (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a; Gregory, 2011; Seib, 2016). Thus, understanding how to inform and to influence foreign publics in a changing global landscape has become central to the study and practice of public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Melissen, 2005b; Zaharna, 2010).

Scholars trace diplomacy back to the fifth century in Greece and to the sixth century in China (Nicolson, 1977; Sandre, 2015). Public diplomacy, however, may actually be older than traditional diplomacy: The governments of ancient China, India, and Arabia, emphasizing oratorical presentation, conducted diplomatic exchanges in public (Zaharna, 2012). Prior to the 21st century, almost every government practiced

some form of public diplomacy through dialogue, advocacy, international broadcasting, educational and cultural exchanges, and/or psychological warfare (Cull, 2010).

In the United States, diplomacy began in the early years of the republic as sailors ventured to foreign lands to spread goodwill and, at times, to facilitate treaties (Sandre, 2015). Thereafter, U.S. diplomatic history runs parallel to the history of war and conflict (Zaharna, Fisher, & Arsenault, 2013). Szondi (2008) outlines three phases of U.S. diplomatic history: the persuasion-based approach of the Cold War era, the apathetic approach of the 1990s, and the post-9/11 muddle to find a new approach to diplomacy.

First, during the Cold War, the United States utilized persuasion techniques to spread American values throughout Eastern Europe. Second, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the United States devoted few efforts and resources to public diplomacy. U.S. diplomats assumed “their democratic system and their motives required no special rhetorical defense” (Pilon, 2008, p. 133). Hindered by overconfidence in the appeal of American exceptionalism, the United States lacked a clear diplomatic communication strategy. The attacks on 9/11 initiated a conceptual shift in U.S. diplomacy from communicating at publics to communicating with publics (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Gregory, 2011; Peterson, 2002; Seib, 2016; Szondi, 2008; Wang, 2006a; Zaharna, 2007).

### **Three Frameworks of Diplomacy**

Within the absence of strategy and theory, three frameworks emerge in the diplomacy literature. First, there is traditional diplomacy, which is one-way asymmetrical government-to-government communication. In this framework, diplomacy is the dissemination of information from diplomat to diplomat to advance national interests and



to influence attitudes and behaviors toward support of national policies and ideals (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Seib, 2016; Zaharna, 2010).

Traditional diplomacy generates three problems. First, although government officials remain the most credible sources in some contexts, public trust of government has decreased and the persuasive influence of government communication can no longer be taken for granted (Cull, 2010; Nye, 2004; Zaharna et al., 2013). Second, from the invention of the telegraph to the arrival of the internet and smartphones, new communication technologies and subsequent mass adoption have made it impossible for governments to control all messages (Seib, 2016). Third, traditional diplomacy is often unidirectional and assumes foreign diplomats will readily receive and accept messages. Communication, however, is a receiver phenomenon; thus, as Entman (2008) argues, the approach and goals of traditional diplomacy are incommensurable, for merely providing information does not equate persuasion.

Increased participation in foreign affairs, fostered by communication technology, changed diplomacy; further, the attacks on 9/11 demonstrated the United States had a serious image problem (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Gregory, 2011; Peterson, 2002; Seib, 2016; Wang, 2006a; Zaharna, 2007). While maintaining the foreign policy and information components, diplomats replaced the unidirectional government-to-government model popularized during the Cold War with models focusing on dialogue and the exchange of values rather than solely on the dissemination of messages (Fitzpatrick, 2010a; Peterson, 2002; Seib, 2016; White, 2015; Zaharna, 2010). Further, cultural initiatives became more

prominent in diplomacy agendas (Huijgh & Warlick, 2016; Melissen, 2005b; Riordan, 2003; Schneider, 2005).

Today traditional diplomacy in which government-appointed diplomats communicate with other government-appointed diplomats remains (Seib, 2016). However, the “new” diplomacy paradigm incorporates multidirectional, symmetrical communication to emphasize intercultural understanding and collaboration (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2011; Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005; Melissen, 2005b; Riordan, 2003; Seib, 2016; Snow, 2009a). Thus, the second framework that emerges in the diplomacy literature is the one-to-many model, or government-to-people communication, and the third is the many-to-many model, or people-to-people communication.

Public diplomacy, like traditional diplomacy, seeks to promote national goals and to influence attitudes and behaviors. Unlike traditional diplomacy, however, public diplomacy connects state and non-state actors through relational networks with the objective of developing trust and mutuality (Cull, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2007; Gregory, 2011; Melissen, 2005a; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Wang, 2006b; Zaharna, 2007, 2010). An extension of foreign policy (Sevin, 2015; Wang, 2006b), public diplomacy is “an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes and behaviors; to build and manage relationships; and to influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values” (Gregory, 2011, p. 353). Nye (2004) defines three dimensions of public diplomacy: daily communication explaining policy decisions, political campaigns built on strategic themes, and long-term relations with key publics.

## **Scholarly Approaches to Public Diplomacy**

One of the criticisms of diplomacy is that it is synonymous with propaganda (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005). The idea of diplomacy as propaganda is rooted in the activities of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) during World War I. Purposing to influence support of U.S. policies, the CPI targeted domestic and foreign audiences (Zaharna et al., 2013). While not a propaganda organization per se, the CPI applied persuasion tactics to direct information campaigns. This information orientation continued during World War II through the Office of the Coordinator of Information, and during the Cold War through the U.S. Information Agency (Zaharna et al., 2013).

Following World War II, U.S. government-sponsored communication and mass media research converged with experimental psychology to investigate public opinion and persuasion techniques (Glander, 2009; Zaharna et al., 2013). Throughout the Cold War, scholars and practitioners applied persuasion theories to communication activities related to traditional diplomacy and statecraft. Such theories incorporated human judgement, source credibility, message diffusion, and communication flow and shaped the content of unidirectional government communication and the practice of foreign public engagement (Baran & Davis, 2015; Glander, 2009; Lowery & DeFleur, 1995).

While Cold War diplomacy may have included propaganda elements, globalization and modernization have changed the political and communication landscape. Thus, labeling the new public diplomacy as mere propaganda is erroneous for two reasons. First, while propaganda is unidirectional, impersonal, and often adversarial and manipulative, public diplomacy centers on engagement rather than on information

dissemination (Zaharna et al., 2013). Second, while governments managed propaganda, public diplomacy involves collaborative partnerships between state and non-state actors (White, 2015). Public diplomacy comprises creating and sending messages through various media and relational networks – and receiving messages back; dialogue and mutuality, not manipulation, provide the strategic foundation for influencing publics (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005; Zaharna, 2007; Zaharna et al., 2013).

Various scholarly approaches contribute to public diplomacy theory and practice. For example, public diplomacy scholarship emerges from political scientists who study international relations, marketing and business scholars who investigate the nation brand, and communication scholars who focus on mediated diplomacy in journalism and on relational strategies in public relations. Diplomats themselves also contribute to the theoretical and conceptual understandings of public diplomacy. The contributions of international relations, marketing, and communication scholars as well as diplomats are distinct, yet such approaches also reveal theoretical overlap.

### **International Relations Approach**

From an international relations approach, diplomacy encompasses the globalization of world politics; dyadic relations among states, including hard power and soft power; global actors' decision making and behaviors; strategic intelligence and negotiation amid peace and conflict; international political economy; the role of culture in the international system; and the effects of mass media image on foreign policy (Atkinson, 2014; Kinsella, Russett, & Starr, 2013; Nye, 2004; Peterson, 2002; Riordan, 2003; Sandre, 2015; Sharp, 2001). For example, Peterson (2002) argues effective public

diplomacy must contain a coherent strategy, two-way dialogue, private sector involvement, sufficient resources, and the efficient use of such resources. Atkinson (2014) examines political socialization to explain how the social institutions of a state (e.g., family, community organizations, religion, education, etc.) affect political actors' behaviors and, thus, state behaviors. Political socialization further explicates how changes in country identity influence state behaviors within the international community.

Diplomats have also contributed to the international relations approach to the study of diplomacy. For example, a former diplomat, Riordan (2003) focuses on the nature of public diplomacy and the role of state and non-state global actors. Sandre (2015) presents evidence from former and current diplomats to show the internet is the “where” of the new public diplomacy and, thus, anyone with an internet connection can participate in diplomatic communication. A commonality among concepts examined by international relations scholars and diplomats is the advancement of strategic collaboration between state and non-state actors through effective face-to-face and mediated communication networks.

### **Marketing and Business Approach**

Anholt (2010) contends business and marketing practitioners as much as diplomats and scholars influence the conceptualizations of country image, place marketing, place branding, and nation branding. Further, scholars employ marketing and branding theory to explain phenomena related to diplomacy, including the function of global organizations in promoting a country image, the relationship between country image and exports, the impact of the nation brand in attracting foreign direct investment,

and the influence of civil society networks on the internationalization of corporations (Martin, 2007; Papadopoulos, Hamzaoui-Essoussi, & El Banna, 2016; Reinhard, 2009; Sun, Paswan, & Tieslau, 2016; Turker & Konakli, 2016; Wang, 2006c). For example, through an examination of the institutions and resources in 24 countries over a 12-year period, Sun et al. (2016) show country image, influenced by economic development and communication infrastructure, affects exports. In an analysis of the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey, Turker and Konakli (2016) show non-governmental organizations, through the collaboration of politicians and business professionals, effectively use public diplomacy to create a nation brand.

The amalgamation of diplomacy and business is important, since today in most countries there are more U.S. business professionals than there are U.S. diplomats. Some multinational corporations yield more in annual profits than some countries return in gross national product, and the advertising budget of some multinational corporations exceeds the communication budget of some countries (Reinhard, 2009; White, 2015; Zaharna, 2010). Global business ventures are increasing, and the U.S. Department of State has summoned business professionals to seek ways to promote values through their products because there is a positive correlation between the acceptance of a country's products and positive attitudes about that country (Martin, 2007; Reinhard, 2009; Wang, 2006c; White, Vanc, & Coman, 2011).

### **Communication Approach**

Although communication scholars have worked alongside diplomats since the 1940s, public diplomacy research from a communication perspective is a nascent

academic field (Gregory, 2008). After World War II, U.S. diplomats who worked for the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) garnered a global reputation as culturally insensitive. Linguistic training in a foreign language was insufficient preparation for work in a foreign country. Rather, diplomats needed to understand how culture influences verbal and nonverbal communication norms. Thus, infusing the study of communication into the practice of diplomacy, E. T. Hall trained FSI officers to communicate in intercultural contexts (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). Communication scholars' examination of diplomacy extends into journalism and media studies as well as public relations.

**Journalism and media studies.** Research about public diplomacy from a journalism and mass media perspective focuses on mediated diplomacy and media diplomacy. This approach investigates relationships among governments, journalists, and international media, particularly broadcasting, and examines media effects and the role of information technology in communicating a national agenda. The journalism and mass media approach is also concerned with the manipulation and measure of public opinion.

The assumptions of mediated diplomacy are 1) media are tools to shape public opinion and to resolve conflict and 2) journalists are mediators in international negotiation (Gilboa, 2001). Entman (2008) distinguishes between media diplomacy and mediated diplomacy in that the former involves temporal governmental efforts to employ mass media to bolster support for specific foreign policy objectives. Gilboa (2002) defines media diplomacy as the long-term use of “media by leaders to express interest in negotiation, to build confidence, and to mobilize support for agreement” (p. 741).

Journalism and media studies scholars and public relations scholars apply agenda-setting theory and framing theory to public diplomacy research (Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016). For example, using content analysis and survey methods, Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) show the presence, position, and recurrence of media coverage about a country affect U.S. audience perceptions; the more coverage a country receives, the more audiences view the country as vitally important to U.S. interests. Similarly, Semetko, Brzinski, Weaver, and Willnat (1992) identify a relationship between news coverage of foreign countries and U.S. audience opinions about these countries; specifically, attention to television news predicts increased sympathy toward foreign publics.

In public diplomacy, framing theory investigates which attributes of a country and/or a foreign policy issue are presented by journalists; this theoretical perspective includes the gatekeeping role of media. Entman (2005, 2008) argues governments construct a complex network with politicians, media, and elites to exert as much control as possible over the framing of their country. Thus, while agenda-setting theory posits that media tell audiences about which countries and foreign policy issues to think, framing theory posits that media ascribe characteristics to countries and foreign policy issues. Both agenda-setting and framing studies within the public diplomacy context support the notion of a global imbalance of power as determined by which countries receive international media attention (Entman, 2008; Jones, Aelst, & Vliegenhart, 2013).

Beyond agenda-setting and framing, other theories in journalism and mass media are relevant to public diplomacy. For example, Entman (2008) proposed the cascading network activation model based on the assumption that governments harness media to



promote a national image and/or foreign policy agenda. The model examines how media and culture interact to influence foreign publics through mediated messages. The model predicts that levels of cultural congruence and media congruence between two countries determine message influence and, thus, the success of diplomatic activities.

Another theory relevant to the journalism and mass media approach to public diplomacy is the CNN effect, which contends media influence policymakers by garnering attention for a particular issue. If there is public outcry about an issue, policymakers must respond or face unpopularity (Robinson, 1999). In this way, media function as either an accelerant or a deterrent for policy decisions. The reality of the CNN effect, however, is debatable per the challenge of isolating effects in an environment with multiple competing messages from multiple sources (Gilboa, 2005; Robinson, 2011).

Mass media scholars also investigate the influence of U.S. popular culture on foreign audiences. Schiller (1976) proposed cultural imperialism theory to contend Western countries such as the United States dominate the global media environment, force their values on foreign audiences via media, and, consequently, destroy local cultures. Through interviews with more than 300 media producers, media consumers, and diplomats in 11 countries, Bayles (2014) further criticizes the role of U.S. cultural exports as de facto ambassadors: “American popular culture is often the lens through which individuals make sense of social change” (p. 31).

Beyond message content, some journalism and mass media scholars focus on the character of diplomats and on information technology. For example, Seib (2009) argues that diplomats ought to follow the same ethical guidelines as journalists in order to

maintain professional credibility. Further, other research examines the direction of information flow through channels such as radio, television, and now the internet and social media (Entman, 2008; Seib, 2016). The problem with the information technology approach to public diplomacy is the existence of technology does not guarantee access, and access to technology does not guarantee effect toward a desired diplomatic objective. Moreover, media at times can harm the desired effect (Melissen, 2005a).

**Public relations.** Fitzpatrick (2007) calls scholars and diplomats to shift from a journalism-based approach toward a relational approach to public diplomacy focusing on mutuality and collaboration. While the literature distinguishes between public diplomacy and public relations (Yun, 2006), public diplomacy and public relations converge in concept and in function (Cull, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a; Fitzpatrick, Kendrick, & Fullerton, 2011; Kim, 2016; Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005; L'Etang, 2009; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; White, 2015; Zaharna, 2007, 2009, 2012; Zaharna et al., 2013).

Embracing the convergence of public relations and public diplomacy, however, requires abandoning old ways of thinking about public relations and about diplomacy: Public relations is more than managing publics and handling problematic situations as they arise (Kent & Taylor, 2002), and public diplomacy is more than unidirectional information disseminated through government sources and media (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a).

Public relations involves engaging external and internal stakeholders to further an organizational mission and to increase organizational survivability and growth. Building, nurturing, and maintaining key relationships around common interests and goals is the foundation of public relations (Hutton, 1999; Ledingham, 2003, 2015; Kent & Taylor,

2002). Public relations practitioners facilitate two-way dialogue through interpersonal relationships and mediated channels; dialogic communication allows for messaging from an organization to stakeholders but also permits stakeholders to communicate back to an attentive organization. Kent and Taylor (2002) define dialogue in terms of mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment; dialogue's value derives from equality of perspectives and opportunity for understanding. Through strategic planning, public relations fosters relationships that serve both organizational and public interests. Further, public relations involves the systematic evaluation of the efficacy of a communication campaign to ensure enduring mutual satisfaction.

Whether long-term and proactive or short-term and reactive and whether situated in public relations or public diplomacy, a strategic communication campaign purposes to influence the attitudes and behaviors of a target public for the benefit of a client, organization, or country (Rice & Atkin, 2012; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). From a public relations approach, public diplomacy links a foreign policy agenda to relational communication by engaging domestic and foreign publics, fostering strategic collaborations to promote a positive country image, and creating an interconnected network (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Taylor & Kent, 2013; Zaharna, 2007). The public relations approach to public diplomacy builds trust through communication (Fitzpatrick, 2010a; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Governments employ a two-way dialogic model by listening to foreign publics and seeking understanding, if not agreement, between their policies and values and the values of foreign governments and publics (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Seib, 2016).

Therefore, public relations and public diplomacy utilize similar objectives, strategies, and tactics to accomplish similar long-term goals such as facilitating mutually beneficial relationships, generating goodwill, reducing misconceptions and stereotypes, exchanging information, and advancing a favorable image (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2013; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). The public relations approach to public diplomacy is similar to the international relations approach to public diplomacy in that public relations acknowledges mass communication is not the only tool or even the best tool for engaging in relationships with key publics, fostering a positive country image, and influencing policymakers (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Melissen, 2005a; Zaharna, 2007).

### **Relational, Collaborative, and Network Communication**

In public diplomacy research by public relations scholars, three themes emerge to describe the new public diplomacy. First, public diplomacy is relational. Fitzpatrick (2010a) posits that the core of public diplomacy is “to help a nation establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with strategic publics that can affect national interests” (p. 105). Thus, the relational approach to public relations is transferable to the scholarship and practice of public diplomacy (Cull, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a, 2013; Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005; Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016; Yun, 2006). The relational approach is antithetical to the diplomacy-as-propaganda view of the past (Cull, 2009). In relational public diplomacy, publics are active participants in the communication process, not merely receivers of information (Lee & Ayhan, 2015). Thus, relational public diplomacy employs communication initiatives to build relationships among governments, foreign publics, and domestic publics (Fitzpatrick, 2010b; Pisarska, 2016; Yun, 2012).

Characterized by tailored messages, feedback, and readjustment, such initiatives result in increased intercultural understanding, trust and accommodation, and transnational productivity (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a; Storie, 2015; Zaharna et al., 2013).

Second, public diplomacy involves collaboration, which Cowan and Arsenault (2008) define as initiatives in which citizens of different countries work together to accomplish a joint project, achieve a common goal, or advance a common vision. Whereas the primary function of traditional diplomacy is “conducting negotiations between governments” (Deutsch, 1966, p. 81), the core of the relational approach to public diplomacy is collaboration: Negotiation is to traditional diplomacy what collaboration is to the new public diplomacy (Zaharna et al., 2013). While collaboration is often discussed in terms of working with foreign publics, Pisarska (2016) posits that collaboration between governments and domestic publics is also beneficial for strengthening public diplomacy objectives and improving information flow; collaboration with domestic publics will in turn support foreign publics’ perceptions of the credibility of public diplomacy initiatives. Cowan and Arsenault (2008) suggest collaboration as “the most important form of public diplomacy,” since it emphasizes commonality and promotes intercultural learning and respect (p. 22).

Third, public diplomacy involves network communication. Whereas collaboration is a process, network is a structure designed with purpose for relational dynamics through face-to-face and mediated communication (Zaharna, 2013b). Networks foster an environment in which individuals choose to collaborate, feel a sense of belonging, and engage in strategizing and decision-making (Arsenault, 2013; Fisher, 2013; Zaharna,

2013b). Zaharna (2005) further addresses the relevance of networks for public diplomacy: “Yesterday, the communicator with the most information won. Today, the one with the strongest and most extensive networks wins” (p. 3). Since network communication is more effective than mass communication (Zaharna, 2005, 2007), networks are “the new model of global persuasion” (Zaharna, 2005, p. 3). Mass communication focuses on information production and dissemination, while network communication focuses on information exchange (Lee & Ayhan, 2015).

Zaharna (2007) identifies three dimensions of network communication: network structure, or linking individuals to exchange messages; network synergy, or building relationships to multiply energy; and network strategy, or using information to co-create identity and master narratives. Noting the potential for network communication to fuel soft power, Zaharna (2005, 2007) calls upon diplomats to identify and explore potential networks, reinforce existing networks, and create new networks. Taylor and Kent (2013) acknowledge the importance of networks of individuals but also assert “successful public diplomacy means building up communication ‘networks of networks’ consisting of people who share common values” (p. 103).

### **Non-State Actors in the Many-to-Many Model**

While the previous section discussed how scholars and diplomats approach public diplomacy, this next section explains the “who” of public diplomacy with emphasis on the role of non-state actors, particularly citizen diplomats, in the government-to-many and many-to-many models of public diplomacy. Whereas the traditional diplomacy of the 20th century focused on state actors, there has been a “rise of multiple actors in

international affairs” (Melissen, 2005b, p. 24). Diplomacy is no longer restricted to official diplomats nor are diplomatic actions confined to foreign policy (Melissen, 2005b; Riordan, 2003; Wang, 2006a). Riordan (2003) refers to public diplomacy as “national promotion” amid a complex network of state and non-state actors (p. 120).

Non-state actors include corporations, non-governmental organizations, educational exchange programs, media, and citizens because each of these entities has the ability to promote national interests by informing and influencing foreign publics (Bayles, 2014; Cull, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2007; Gregory, 2011; Melissen, 2005a; Mueller, 2009; Reinhard, 2009; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Snow, 2009b; Wang, 2006a; White, 2015; Yang & Taylor, 2014; Zaharna, 2010). In the literature, this diversity of actors in multiple spheres of diplomacy, distinct from conventional state-centered diplomacy, is at times referred to as multi-stakeholder diplomacy (Hocking, 2006; Saner, 2006).

The many-to-many model of public diplomacy, however, does not invalidate the role of diplomats. Rather, the strategy and structure of the new public diplomacy, including network communication, provide opportunities for synergy between state and non-state actors (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Hocking, 2006; Riordan, 2005; Zaharna, 2007, 2013b). Thus, diplomats are useful and necessary, but state actors must now work alongside and sometimes compete with non-state actors to gain the attention of foreign publics (Bayles, 2014; Fitzpatrick, 2007; Zaharna, 2007) and domestic publics (Pisarska, 2016). In the relational approach, state and non-state actors simultaneously engage publics, and publics have the ability to respond and to contribute in the communication process and in the communication network.

## **Media as Non-State Actors**

Both news media and entertainment media are salient to public diplomacy in that they have the ability to promote a country image in the international community (Schattle, 2015). Countries as politically distinct as the United States and China have sought to foster a favorable country image through foreign media (Chang, & Lin, 2014; Entman, 2008), and some governments have hired public relations consultants to strengthen their country image through media coverage (Manheim & Albritton, 1984). Scholars have identified a close relationship between news organizations and government agendas (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 1998; Brewer, 2006; Chang & Lin, 2014; Entman, 1991; Gilboa, 2005; Hook & Pu, 2008; Lee & Yang, 2005; Novais, 2007; Ruigrok & van Atteveldt, 2007). Thus, on the one hand, media are considered non-state actors and are often private sector corporations (unless in a state-run media system); on the other, media are governmental apparatuses that continue the unidirectional communication approach of traditional diplomacy (Wang, 2006b).

## **Private Corporations and Non-Governmental Organizations as Non-State Actors**

Amid the non-state actors in the many-to-many model of public diplomacy, both for-profit and nonprofit organizations have the potential to influence country image and to shape diplomatic outcomes. White (2015) defines corporate diplomacy as “the role of private-sector corporations as non-state actors in public diplomacy” (p. 306).

Globalization expands opportunities for influence through corporate social responsibility initiatives, or addressing environmental and social problems in the international community. However, since corporate strategists must answer to shareholders, they may



hesitate to align directly with governments in public diplomacy activities (White, 2015). Nevertheless, corporations through product brands can affect the image of their home country, and, conversely, country image can affect the product brand (Holtbrügger & Zeier, 2016; Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006; Riordan, 2003; Roth & Romeo, 1992; White & Kolesnicov, 2015). For example, White and Kolesnicov (2015) examine the re-branding of ROM candy in Romania to illustrate how a commercial branding campaign became a national branding campaign.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work apart from governments to promote causes such as peacemaking, human rights, education, and healthcare. International NGOs such as Doctors without Borders, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch and international organizations such as the United Nation and World Bank create networks that influence foreign policy and international norms (Seib, 2016; Taylor & Kent, 2013). Zhang and Swartz (2009) contend NGOs have become “increasingly effective in advancing their agendas and disseminating their messages in international affairs” (p. 47). Touted by some as the solution to broad global issues, NGOs are capable of shaping diplomatic agendas because they are adept at maintaining credibility, demonstrating goodwill, and promoting understanding through relational communication (Betsill & Corell, 2007; Gass & Seiter, 2009; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Wang, 2006a). NGOs readily manufacture goodwill because they are neither burdened by a history of propaganda as are governments nor motivated by increasing profits and serving business needs as are corporations.

## **Citizens as Non-State Actors**

In the many-to-many model of public diplomacy, everyday citizens are “unofficial ambassadors” who interact with foreigners (Mueller, 2009, p. 102). Such interactions can happen through face-to-face communication in citizen diplomats’ home country or in a foreign country and through digital communication via the internet and social media (Mueller, 2009; Ross, 2011; Sandre, 2015). Such people-to-people exchanges are facilitated through either formal or informal structures (Mueller, 2009).

Thus, citizen diplomacy is the idea that anyone can be a diplomat who facilitates mutual understanding among cultures and shapes foreign relations (Nye, 2008). Citizen diplomats include investors, tourists, refugees, and international students and professionals and other foreigners as well as those who engage with investors, tourists, refugees, international students and professionals and other foreigners. In the international relations literature, citizen diplomacy is also called second track diplomacy in which governments are track one and citizens are track two in a multi-track diplomacy system that affects international peace (Davies & Kaufman, 2003; Diamond & McDonald, 1991; McDonald, 1991, 2003).

By initiating and maintaining relationships with foreign publics through both official and unofficial people-to-people exchanges, citizen diplomats contribute to the new public diplomacy objectives of “building relationships” and “facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad” (Melissen, 2005b, pp. 22-23). Citizen diplomats reflect the country image (Blitchfeldt, 2005; Nye, 2008; Snow 2009a). Ashwill and Oanh (2009) assert that “citizen diplomats are equipped with the worldview

and knowledge to reflect objectively and critically upon their country's strengths and shortcomings, along with its place in the world" (p. 142).

Government-sponsored exchanges such as those through the Peace Corps and Fulbright Program have become the foundation of citizen diplomacy (Atkinson, 2010; Bhandari & Belyavina, 2011; Pisarska, 2016; Snow, 2009b), but citizen diplomacy extends beyond official government efforts to reach foreign publics (Mueller, 2009; Seib, 2016). For example, technological advancements and the mass adoption of social media have heightened the role of non-state actors, particularly citizen diplomats, in innovative public diplomacy through digital interactions, also called digital diplomacy (Bisogniero, 2015; Mueller, 2009; Ross, 2011; Sandre, 2015). The distinguishing characteristic between digital diplomacy and other forms of diplomacy is the former allows for rapid, almost instantaneous, relational communication (Sandre, 2015). Further, connection technology has changed diplomatic engagement by empowering the disenfranchised such as women and political dissenters (Ross, 2011). In this way, public diplomacy now includes perspectives beyond those of governmental elites (Fletcher, 2015).

**Citizen diplomats as cultural mediators.** Since 9/11, U.S. public diplomacy strategy has supported transnational community-building through citizen diplomacy with the purpose of forming trust, promoting democratic values, and fostering a positive country image (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005). People-to-people exchanges are effective at changing individual-level opinions about a country because such exchanges stimulate communication that results in interconnectedness and tolerance; moreover, foreign publics perceive communication within people-to-people exchanges as more credible

than government communication (Fitzpatrick, 2013; Lee & Ayhan, 2015). Mogensen (2015) shows people trust foreign people before they trust foreign governments. Similarly, Payne (2009) asserts international trust is best constructed by establishing meaningful and authentic channels of open communication among citizens at the grassroots level. While Bhandari and Belyavina (2011) posit citizen diplomacy complements traditional diplomacy, Snow (2009b) argues unofficial relational communication fosters mutual understanding and affects behavior in a way that traditional public diplomacy does not.

Sharp (2001) presents four typologies of citizen diplomats: the citizen diplomat as a go-between; the citizen diplomat as a representative for a sectoral, regional, or local economic interest; the citizen diplomat as a lobbyist or advocate for a particular cause; and the citizen diplomat as a subverter or transformer of existing policies and/or political arrangements, domestic and/or international. The typology of the citizen diplomat as a go-between is defined as private citizens, unaffiliated with the government, who help to facilitate open communication with citizens of another country, especially when open communication is difficult (Sharp, 2001). This definition aligns with the definition of a cultural mediator. Snow (2009b) examines the role of a cultural mediator as “a link or bridge between cultural systems who exhibits an ability to accurately represent and reconcile difference between two or more cultures” (p. 238).

Engaging with the personality and psychology of individual members of a foreign public, cultural mediators generate positive or negative images of their country and make lasting impressions on foreigners (Scott-Smith, 2009; Snow, 2009b; Wanjiru, 2005).

Though cultural stereotypes are difficult to change (Szondi, 2006), intercultural communication within people-to-people diplomatic exchanges has been deemed effective at changing opinions about a culture (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Handelman, 2012; Payne, 2009; Schattle, 2015; Snow, 2009b). Scott-Smith (2009) argues cultural allegiances and prejudicial barriers decrease as intercultural contact increases as long as the communication is perceived to be open and honest. Thus, people-to-people exchanges are “peacemaking interactions and negotiations among ordinary people” that produce global communities (Handelman, 2012, p. 2).

Yun (2012) asserts citizen diplomacy warrants investigation as a part of relational public diplomacy, including communication among individuals, groups, and communities. However, Yun (2012) cautions that citizen diplomacy is temporal because the “initiation and nurture of the exchange...requires conscientious, lasting efforts from the actors concerned” (p. 2200). Conversely, Lee and Ayhan (2015) argue non-state actors such as citizen diplomats have potential to achieve long-term goals because, unlike diplomats or politicians, they are not accountable in the short-term to governments and to constituents who elected them.

**Previous research about citizen diplomacy.** Previous research suggests cultural and educational exchange programs foster mutual understanding across countries and cultures (Boxer, 2002). Since the 1950s, scholars have investigated experiences with people-to-people exchange programs from the perspective of U.S. citizens in foreign countries (Wilson & Bonilla, 1955) and from the perspective of foreigners in the United States (Bennett, Passin, & McKnight, 1958; Kelman & Bailyn, 1962; Watson & Lippitt,

1958). Many scholars have evaluated the efficacy of various educational exchange programs (Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe, & Hewstone, 1996; Sunal & Sunal, 1991).

Kim (2016) conducted 12 in-depth interviews with U.S. staff and foreign scholars in the Humphrey Fellowship Program and found exchange programs need a strategic network to maximize their public diplomacy potential. Sevin (2010) employed a survey of 59 Foreign Fulbright Program scholars in the United States and concluded exchanges are effective in overcoming challenges in intercultural communication processes. Through an ethnographic investigation of cultural exchanges between university students, Holmes and O'Neill (2012) found that stereotypes are revised in the lived experience as intercultural relationships are formed. Hayden (2009) analyzed a "grassroots public diplomacy" exchange between university students from the United States and Saudi Arabia and argued dialogue-oriented activities in both face-to-face and online communication empower individuals to confront cultural differences and overcome misunderstandings (p. 533). Olberding and Olberding (2010) surveyed 50 direct participants (8th grade students from Europe) and 219 indirect participants (parents, teachers, and chaperones from Europe and the United States) in a "Friendship Project" that brought European youth to the United States for one week; they found exchanges enhance participants' knowledge, understanding, and perceptions of other countries and, in some cases, have a multiplier effect on indirect participants. While such research confirms intercultural exchange programs influence perceptions and facilitate understanding, empirical research about informal, unofficial people-to-people exchanges from the perspective of foreign hosts and apart from educational exchanges is sparse.

## **Defining Country Image and Country Reputation**

The previous section examined the role of non-state actors, particularly cultural mediators, in public diplomacy and reviewed previous research to show the value of people-to-exchanges. This dissertation investigates cultural mediators' perceptions of and communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. To understand country identity, however, it is important to understand two related concepts that emerge in the public diplomacy literature: country image and country reputation.

Scholars have utilized public relations theories associated with country image, also called national image, to explain phenomena in diplomatic exchanges (Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016). Such theories operate with assumptions similar to those put forth by Blumer (1969) and Mead (1934) about social behavior: Humans ascribe meanings and then continuously modify meanings through social interactions. For example, Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2005) propose a model in which a country is a part of an intricate global social system. The expectations for and meanings of diplomatic gestures, or what Anholt (2010) terms "symbolic actions," are ascribed and negotiated through exchanges within the global social system (p. 13). The forthcoming section defines country image and country reputation and explains how they are formed in the global system.

### **Country Image**

The image encompasses the "totality of perceptions, beliefs, ideas and feelings that a person or more people have towards something" (Kleining, 1969, p. 24). Country image refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that people have toward a foreign country (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014; Che-Ha et al., 2016). The development of a

country image is similar to the development of an image by an individual or organization (Passow et al., 2005). Promoting a favorable image is a public relations function (Hutton, 1999). Various theoretical perspectives associated with promoting an image (e.g., image building theory, image cultivation theory, image repair theory, image restoration theory) are prominent in the public relations and public diplomacy literature (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2013; Ledingham, 2003; Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016; Yang, Klyueva, & Taylor, 2012).

Previous research identifies various components of country image. For example, Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2014) identify functional, normative, aesthetic, and sympathetic dimensions that influence country image. Kotler and Gertner (2002) and Kubacki and Skinner (2006) contend geography, media, tourism, art and music, famous citizens, and commercial products influence a country's image. Kunczik (1997) avows that history affects a country's image, for images are "harden prejudices, as they are not suddenly there, but often have grown in long historical processes" (p. 39).

Country image occurs in the perceptions of foreign publics within the global social system and according to perceivers' own value systems and cultural expectations (Anholt, 2010; Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005). Thus, the image of the United States does not occur in the United States. Rather, the image of the United States exists in foreign countries, and the image is contextualized within the culture of each foreign country. For example, the image of the United States in Vietnam exists according to Vietnam's value system and cultural expectations. In this manner, country image is an external, cultural phenomenon that happens within the country that holds the perception.



While country image cannot be managed directly, a positive country image can be fostered by the behaviors of a country, including communication behaviors (Anholt, 2010; Yang et al., 2012). The various, and perhaps contested, facets of a country image are constructed and negotiated through substance, strategy, and symbolic actions and interactions (Anholt, 2010). Governments use public relations strategies “to cultivate a certain image of their nation for international publics” (Yang et al., 2012, p. 653). Country image is cultivated most often through mediated messages and direct interpersonal contacts (Anholt, 2010; Rice & Atkin, 2012; Yang et al., 2012). For example, governments use media as public diplomacy tools to reach audiences with messages designed to improve the favorability of their countries (Chang & Lin, 2014).

Public diplomacy is concerned with the impact of a country image on foreign publics. Country image has implications, positive or otherwise, for a country’s diplomatic relations as well as its tourism sector and economy; perceptions of country image have the potential to explain and to predict the behaviors of publics (Buhmann, 2016). For example, the country image could influence other governments’ relations toward the country as well as consumer behaviors toward products from the country (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann, 2016; Hurn, 2016; Nebenzahl, 2001; Yang et al., 2012). Moreover, country image is enduring and difficult to change. Nebenzahl (2001) asserts cultivating a more favorable country image is better accomplished by creating new, positive associations than by refuting existing negative associations. While media are primary tools for improving a country image (Wang & Chang, 2004), Dinnie (2004) argues that a country’s culture in particular affects its country image.

## **Country Reputation**

The concepts of country image and country reputation are related yet distinct. Just as an organization's reputation develops over time from its unique attributes and strategic practices, country reputation is the synthesis of the images of a country established over time (Buhmann, 2016; Passow et al., 2005). Since traditional diplomacy has shifted toward public diplomacy, "a nation's reputation and relations with foreign publics have become a critical part of a nation's ability to carry out its foreign affairs' objectives" (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 194). Country reputation is one indicator of the global strength of a country and, as such, is pivotal in engaging foreign publics and maintaining diplomatic relationships (Nye, 2004; Wang, 2006b, 2006c). Thus, country reputation is among a country's most important assets (Anholt, 2010).

While country image can be cultivated, country reputation, or "having a good name in the world of nations," is earned (Wang, 2006b, p. 91). Whereas country image is contextualized within the culture of a foreign country, country reputation is the synthesis of images over time in the international community. Stereotypes and prejudices as well as historical events influence country reputation. Thus, time and strategic, long-term efforts are required to build or change a country reputation. Diplomats function as communicators with objectives for establishing a country's reputation as politically reliable and economically credible (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Media are common channels for constructing a country reputation (Szondi, 2009). Anholt (2010) asserts that country reputation is built on trust and that trust is best established through foreign publics'

positive direct experiences with the country, its citizens, and its products – or through the vicarious positive direct experiences of trusted others.

**Hard power and soft power.** The concepts of hard power and soft power emerge in the public diplomacy literature because forms of power affect country image and country reputation. Hard power is political power that uses economic and militaristic means to influence another country's behaviors, although some military activities such as goodwill missions and educational exchanges can be employed as soft power (Atkinson, 2014). Soft power, also referred to as cultural power, is the ability to influence another country through attraction rather than coercion. Such appeal derives from a country's foreign policies, diplomatic initiatives, and political ideals (Nye, 2004) and is fostered by symbolic actions, popular media, and interpersonal communication among foreigners (Anholt, 2010; Snow, 2009a). The distinction between hard and soft power is the latter is based on attraction while the former requires coercion and sometimes militaristic force.

Nye (2004) argues a country must use both hard power and soft power to bolster its country reputation and to achieve its foreign policy objectives. However, Seib (2016) contends soft power is more effective than hard power. According to Snow (2009a), hard power and soft power combine to make smart power that affects country image and over time country reputation. Forms of power influence the extent to which a national agenda is accepted in the international arena (Anholt, 2010; Wang, 2006b). Countries vie for soft power and hard power as well as competitive advantage in the global economy through trade and tourism (Anholt, 2010; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Szondi, 2009).

## **Defining Country Identity and Nation Branding**

Identity is “the backbone of reputation” (Fombrun, 1996, p. 28). This dissertation examines country identity, also called national identity, while making the theoretical argument that country identity influences country image, which over time influence country reputation (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005). The following section conceptualizes and operationalizes country identity and explains the relationship between country identity and nation branding. While country identity, country image, and country reputation are something a country has, nation branding is something a country does to build, change, or maintain a reputation (Anholt, 2010; White & Kolesnicov, 2015). Both domestic publics and foreign publics have parts in nation branding.

### **Country Identity**

Country identity refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that people have toward their own country (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014; Che-Ha et al., 2016). Previous research identifies seven specific constructs associated with country reputation: physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal. While these constructs are associated with country reputation, including country image, country identity is a key component of country reputation, since citizens’ communication about their beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings toward their own country has the potential to change foreigners’ attitudes and feelings toward the country. Thus, this dissertation adapts and refers to the country reputation constructs as country identity constructs to measure internal perceptions in the

same manner that Yousaf and Li (2015) examined Pakistan's country identity and Che-Ha, Nguyen, Yahya, Melewar, and Chen (2016) examined Malaysia's country identity.

**Operationalizing country identity.** Physical appeal is the attractiveness of the country's geographic features such as mountains and rivers as well as man-made physical elements such as infrastructure (Anholt, 2006; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; De Vicente, 2004; Passow et al., 2005). Physical appeal has been measured by perceptions that the country has beautiful landscapes and scenery (Anholt, 2006; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005) and efficient infrastructure, including housing, healthcare, and transportation infrastructure as well as communication infrastructure (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005). Further, physical appeal has been measured by perceptions that the country is a safe place (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Passow et al., 2005) and free of natural disasters (De Vicente, 2004).

Economic appeal is the attractiveness of the country's economic development and prosperity level as well as its investment environment (Anholt, 2006; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Grincheva & Lu, 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Li, Wang, Li, & Zhang, 2016; Passow et al., 2005). Economic appeal has been measured by perceptions that the country has quality goods and services (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015), a developed industrial sector (Passow et al., 2005), an inviting business environment (Passow et al., 2005), a low tax rate (Passow et al., 2005), competitive advantage over other countries (Gudjonsson, 2005; Li et al., 2016), and strong prospects for future growth (Che-Ha et al., 2016).

The heritage and culture construct includes the country's history and cultural products as well as the citizens' belief systems, traditions, and behaviors (Anholt, 2006; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Grincheva & Lu, 2016; Passow et al., 2005; Yun, 2015). History and culture are interconnected, and each has lasting influences on a country image (Anholt, 2005; Dinnie, 2004; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Kubacki & Skinner, 2006; Riordan, 2003; Wanjiru, 2005). Thus, heritage and culture has been measured by perceptions of the country's historical past (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005). Further, heritage and culture has been measured by perceptions that the country has unique cultural traditions and culinary experiences (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015), appealing philosophical and/or religious belief systems (Che-Ha et al., 2016), plentiful leisure activities (Passow et al., 2005), and original entertainment media such as movies, television shows, and music (Yun, 2015). Finally, heritage and culture has been measured according to perceptions that the country is socially and culturally diverse (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Passow et al., 2005) and perceptions that the country is a leader in the fashion and beauty industry (Yun, 2015).

Human capital is one of the most powerful communication tools in the international arena (Anholt, 2005; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Johansson, 2005; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Kubacki & Skinner, 2006; Yousaf & Li, 2015) and involves the abilities and skills of the country's citizens (Anholt, 2006; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005). Human capital has been measured by perceptions that the country's citizens are well-educated (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005), innovative in research and technology (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015), artistic

(Anholt, 2006), considerate and tolerant (Anholt, 2006), and friendly and welcoming (Anholt, 2006). Finally, human capital has been measured by perceptions that the country has celebrities such as singers and athletes (Anholt, 2006).

Political appeal is the attractiveness of the country's political system and leadership (Anholt, 2006; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Grincheva & Lu, 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Passow et al., 2005). Political appeal has been measured by perceptions that the country has charismatic leaders (Passow et al., 2005), leaders who communicate an appealing vision of the country (Che-Ha et al., 2016), and leaders who uphold international laws (Passow et al., 2005). Further, political appeal has been measured by perceptions that the country is well-managed (Passow et al., 2005) and politically stable (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Gudjonsson, 2005).

Social appeal is the attractiveness of the country's social and environmental programs and its responsibility in the international community (Anholt, 2006; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005). Social appeal has been measured by perceptions that the country has a high standard of living (Beerli & Martin, 2004) and abundant educational opportunities (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). Further, social appeal has been measured by perceptions that the country supports good causes (Passow et al., 2005) and is responsible in the areas of environmental protection (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005) and international peace and security (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005). Finally,

social appeal has been measured by perceptions of the country as an overall responsible member of the international community (Anholt, 2006; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015).

The last country identity construct is emotional appeal, which involves the feelings people have toward the country (Anholt, 2006; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005). Emotional appeal has been measured by perceptions of the country as likable, respected, and trustworthy (Anholt, 2006; Passow et al., 2005). Emotional appeal has also been measured by overall positive feelings toward the country (Che-Ha et al, 2016).

Table 2.1 displays the conceptual and operational definitions of the constructs used to measure country identity in this dissertation. (Note: all tables and figures in this dissertation are located in the appendix.)

**Previous research about internal perceptions of country reputation.** The literature establishes a precedent for applying country reputation constructs to domestic publics. Passow, Fehlmann, and Grahlow (2005) developed the Country Reputation Index to examine the concept of reputation. In the Lichtenstein study, they analyzed survey responses about Lichtenstein from foreign publics in six countries, but they also conducted an “identity audit” by using country reputation constructs to survey domestic publics in Lichtenstein to reveal internal perceptions of Lichtenstein (p. 317). The results indicate variables associated with physical appeal, social appeal, and economic appeal are the drivers of domestic publics’ perceptions of Lichtenstein.

Building upon the research of Passow et al. (2005), Yousaf and Li (2015) employed country reputation constructs to survey Pakistanis about their internal perceptions of Pakistan. The results show cultural appeal, physical appeal, and economic



appeal are the most salient constructs in domestic publics' perceptions of Pakistan. Similarly, Che-Ha et al. (2016) used country reputation constructs to survey Malaysians about their perceptions of and feelings about the cultural, social, political, economic, and human features of their own country. The results indicate variables related to culture are particularly influential, while political appeal and human capital variables also affect domestic publics' perceptions of Malaysia.

Further, Kemp, Williams, and Bordelon (2012) administered a reputation survey to residents of Austin, Texas, to explore the feelings that internal stakeholders associate with a destination brand image – in this case Austin. The results show internal stakeholders align the brand image with personal identities as they begin to function as “evangelists” for the brand and promote the destination (p. 122). Thus, reputation constructs have been applied to research about internal perceptions in the United States, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Lichtenstein, but there is no research about internal perceptions of country reputation from the perspective of cultural mediators engaged in grassroots citizen diplomacy in a non-Western, one-party, postwar, developing country.

### **Country Identity's Role in Nation Branding**

Public diplomacy is distinct from nation branding, but the two concepts are related and often used in the same context (Gudjonsson, 2005; Szondi, 2008; Youde, 2009). Nation branding, also called country branding or state branding, highlights special and unique feature of a country and utilizes products and attractiveness to cultivate various aspects of a country image (Hurn, 2016; Szondi, 2008). Youde (2009) aligns public diplomacy with nation branding because both contain policy goals and are aimed

at foreign publics. Szondi (2008) suggests public diplomacy and nation branding converge because relationship building is central to both.

Country associations that influence a nation brand include culture, history, language, geographic features, natural resources, political and economic systems, social institutions, infrastructures, tourist attractions, exports, and, most importantly, people (Anholt, 2005, 2006; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Kaneva, 2012a). Szondi (2008) defines nation branding as “the strategic self-presentation of a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political and social interest promotion at home and abroad” (p. 5). Anholt further establishes that countries function like brands:

It’s clear that countries...behave, in many ways, just like brands. They are perceived – rightly or wrongly – in certain ways by large groups of people at home and abroad; they are associated with certain qualities and characteristics. Those perceptions can have a significant impact on the way that overseas consumers view their products, and the way they behave toward those countries in sport, politics, trade, and cultural matters; it will affect their propensity to visit or relocate or invest there; their willingness to partner with such countries in international affairs; and whether they are more likely to interpret the actions and behaviors of those countries in a positive or a negative light. In short, the image of a country determines the way the world sees it and treats it. (2003, p. 109)

While linking the concept of country image to the nation brand, Anholt (2003) also connects “people at home” to the nation brand (p. 109). Szondi (2008) links country reputation to the nation brand and indicates nation branding involves “promotion at

home” (p. 5). Szondi (2008) further emphasizes that “nation branding is successful when the brand is lived by the citizens” (p. 5).

While nation branding is a manner by which countries gain the attention, respect, and trust of foreign publics to maintain international viability and security (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003; Passow et al., 2005; Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2012), the nation branding literature emphasizes the relationship between country identity and the nation brand: A country must have a clear positive country identity before a country image can be projected into the global social system (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

Understanding the perceptions of domestic publics has implications for nation branding because a country cannot promote a credible, positive brand without a clear sense of country identity (White & Kolesnicov, 2015).

Further, a nation brand has the potential to elicit positive or negative feelings (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Gilmore (2002) and Wanjiru (2005) argue nurturing emotional responses in nation branding produces strong bonds among citizens. Positive emotions toward country associations related to culture, history, politics, and economics correlate with a positive country identity (Passow et al., 2005). Anholt (2010) contends that a country’s citizens must first respect and admire themselves before citizens of other countries will respect and admire them.

Thus, diplomats and nation branding experts must consider the domestic publics who will live the country brand (Anholt, 2002; Hurn, 2016). Nation branding should begin with a country’s most important stakeholders – its own citizens – by establishing a clear and consistent country identity (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Morgan et

al., 2003; Olins, 2004; Yousaf & Li, 2015). Understanding citizens' perceptions of and feelings toward their own country is essential for understanding how they will behave toward foreigners, and such behaviors are essential for developing a credible nation brand and could affect country reputation over time (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Grincheva & Lu, 2016; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Anholt (2006) proposes the nation brand is promoted during people-to-people diplomacy in which a country's citizens, feeling proud of their country's values and qualities, tell foreigners about their country's values and qualities.

Zaharna (2013a) further identifies five roles of domestic publics in public diplomacy. First, domestic publics determine whether the nation brand succeeds: A country cannot promote itself if citizens do not buy into the characteristics being promoted. Second, domestic publics extend reach and credibility through strategic partnerships. Third, domestic publics who migrate to other countries build bridges between countries and cultures. Fourth, domestic publics have a greater perceived credibility than the government and, thus, the ability to advance as well as threaten public diplomacy initiatives. Fifth, foreign policy influences domestic publics and as such countries ought to educate domestic publics and engage in dialogue with them. Pisarska (2016) argues domestic publics are critical to public diplomacy; governments ought to engage in nation branding toward domestic publics to define the country identity, explain foreign policy to domestic publics, and align non-state actors in public diplomacy efforts.

Thus, appraising the perceptions of domestic publics is fundamental to public diplomacy and nation branding, and domestic perceptions ought to be included in theoretical frameworks (Huijgh & Warlick, 2016; Hurn, 2016; Pisarska, 2016).

Employing a public relations approach to understanding domestic publics' perceptions of public diplomacy and the nation brand is useful because communication with internal publics (e.g., organizational employees) is a key area of practice in the public relations field (Welch, 2012). Further, the relational approach to internal communication is useful for strategic decision-making and enhancing trust, satisfaction, performance, and innovation (Jiménez-Castillo, 2016).

### **Research Questions**

Scholars have written about public diplomacy from a variety of standpoints, including traditional government communication, educational exchange programs, media campaigns, and various cultural activities. Assessing the scope and status of public diplomacy research, Vanc and Fitzpatrick (2016) identified 120 diplomacy-related articles written by public relations scholars in peer-reviewed journals published between 1990 and 2014. Many of the articles focus on governments' use of communication strategies to influence foreign publics. However, people no longer rely solely on governments or media for information; now people can seek out and disseminate their own views about their own country or a foreign country through social media, face-to-face communication, or otherwise (Seib, 2016).

Thus, at its core, diplomacy is about people (Seib, 2016). This dissertation is based on the assumption that successful public diplomacy now requires "diplomacy by the people" (Hocking, 2005, p. 32). Non-state actors, especially domestic publics, are central to understanding public diplomacy and the perceptions of and feelings toward the dimensions that affect country image and country reputation (Che-Ha et al., 2016;

Passow et al., 2005; Pisarska, 2016; Zaharna, 2013a). In consideration of the literature, a prudent area of underdeveloped research is non-state cultural mediators' perceptions of and communication about country identity during informal citizen diplomacy activities. Figure 2.1 displays a conceptual map of the research related to this dissertation and the gap in the literature this dissertation addresses.

Answering the calls to demonstrate the efficacy of the public relations field in public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a) and to engage in research examining the process through which interpersonal relationships advance public diplomacy goals (Fitzpatrick, 2010a; Sharp, 2005), this dissertation adds depth to a theoretical understanding of how building and maintaining relationships within people-to-people exchanges promotes intercultural understanding. Employing the relational approach to public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a; Szondi, 2010), this dissertation investigates the often-neglected domestic dimension of public diplomacy and nation branding (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Fitzpatrick, 2010b, 2011; Pisarska, 2016) and offers pragmatic insight into promoting the nation brand to domestic publics.

Thus, this dissertation investigates the following research questions in the context of a non-Western, one-party, postwar, developing country:

RQ1a. How do cultural mediators perceive the constructs associated with country identity – physical appeal, economic appeal, culture and heritage, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal?

RQ1b. About which constructs associated with country identity do cultural mediators communicate with foreigners during citizen diplomacy?

RQ2. How do cultural mediators perceive citizen diplomacy and interpret their experiences interacting with foreigners during citizen diplomacy?

RQ3. How does cultural mediators' perception of overall external reputation in the international community compare with their perception of internal reputation as measured by variables within the country identity constructs?

RQ4a. How often do cultural mediators communicate with foreigners about variables within the country identity constructs during citizen diplomacy?

RQ4b. How often do cultural mediators communicate with Americans about the American War, diplomatic relations, and cultural differences?

RQ5. What is the relationship between cultural mediators' perceptions of the country identity constructs and cultural mediators' amount of communication with foreigners about the country identity constructs during citizen diplomacy?

RQ6a. Which aspects of country identity influence cultural mediators' overall feelings toward country identity?

RQ6b. Which aspects of country identity influence cultural mediators' amount of communication with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy?

RQ6c. Which characteristics of cultural mediators (e.g., previous travel abroad and attitudes about international friendships) influence how often they communicate with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy?

These research questions foster a deeper understanding of the country identity theoretical framework. The literature defines and operationalizes the country identity constructs (physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital,

political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal) primarily from Western research. By exploring these research questions in an unexamined context, this dissertation allows new variables to emerge in the data to reveal additional salient layers of country identity from the perspective of cultural mediators in a non-Western, one-party, postwar, and developing country. These research questions are not limited to country identity theory but rather expand scholarly knowledge by investigating relational communication about country identity. Thus, these research questions elicit theoretical dimensions of citizen-directed grassroots diplomacy networks, including opportunities for international collaboration, and the experiences of cultural mediators who communicate about country identity with foreigners. In this manner, these research questions expand theory about the domestic dimension of public diplomacy and internal perceptions of the nation brand.



## **CHAPTER THREE METHODS**

This dissertation investigates public diplomacy from a public relations approach by examining relational communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy through qualitative and quantitative methods in the under-studied context of Vietnam. The methods chapter includes three main sections. This chapter begins by explaining the suitability of a mixed methods approach to investigate this dissertation's phenomena. Second, this chapter describes the methods for qualitative data collection, including in-depth interviews and ethnographic participant observations, and subsequent data analysis. This section also explicates how the researcher addressed challenges in an international research context and maintained qualitative data quality. Finally, this chapter describes the method for quantitative survey data collection and analysis.

### **Mixed Methods Approach**

The public diplomacy field is methodologically diverse, ranging from political science and international relations, which favor a post-positivistic approach with comparative methods and case studies, to journalism and public relations, which utilize post-positivistic, interpretive, and critical paradigms and a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods to test hypotheses and to develop theories related to public diplomacy (Henrikson, 2005). Country identity has been studied through media content analysis (Grincheva & Lu, 2016), where case study and other qualitative methods have been used to study country image (Gertner, 2011). Country identity has also been examined through quantitative survey of domestic publics (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005; Yousaf & Li, 2015). Vanc and Fitzpatrick (2016) conclude that public

relations scholars have examined public diplomacy through conceptual essays and have generated knowledge about public diplomacy using network analysis, content analysis, case study, survey, and interviews. Further, Vanc and Fitzpatrick (2016) call for additional empirical research in public diplomacy, including research about domestic publics and research that examines relational communication.

To maximize findings about the relational aspects of public diplomacy, specifically cultural mediators' perception of and communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities in Vietnam, this dissertation answers the aforementioned research questions by triangulating rigorous, systematic qualitative and quantitative methods, including qualitative in-depth interviews, ethnographic participant observations, and quantitative survey research. Mixed methods are multidimensional and useful for situating statistical analyses in the appropriate culture context (Banks, 2011; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). "The most effective research includes a number of methods that can be used to investigate different aspects of the phenomenon and to improve the likelihood of accuracy" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p. 110) because mixed methods allow for a "richer and stronger array of evidence" (Yin, 2014, p. 66). Harzing, Reiche, and Pudelko (2013) contend the complexity of researching in an international context benefits from combining qualitative and quantitative methods, and Banks (2011) avows that in public diplomacy research, "a mixed methods approach, incorporating the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, produces the truest and best evaluations" (p. 30).

This empirical public diplomacy research focuses on cultural mediators, individuals who engage in intercultural communication with individuals from a foreign culture to promote cultural understanding, cooperation, and reconciliation (Snow, 2009b). The qualitative approach provided an in-depth understanding of how cultural mediators perceive and feel about their country identity and how such perceptions and feelings influence their relationships with foreign publics in people-to-people exchanges. Participant observations allowed direct observation of how cultural mediators communicate with foreigners about the constructs associated with country identity, while interviews procured unobservable details about country identity and the experience of being a cultural mediator. The qualitative approach further established pragmatic implications about the value of citizen diplomacy and promoting the nation brand to domestic publics. The quantitative survey approach more broadly assessed country identity from the perspective of cultural mediators engaged in citizen diplomacy, tested the salience of new variables related to country identity, and expanded the country identity theoretical framework to investigate predictors of communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy. The Institutional Review Board approved this dissertation research prior to data collection.

### **Qualitative Data**

This dissertation answers the call for qualitative research to investigate the multifaceted aspects of country identity and to reveal the importance of the domestic dimension of public diplomacy, including nation branding toward a country's own citizens (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Pisarska, 2016). Thus, to understand the country identity of

non-state cultural mediators from their own perspective and the influence of country identity in relational communication during citizen diplomacy, qualitative data was used with the purpose of “thick description” by procuring “the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers” (Geertz, 1973, p. 16). As such, the first step of this dissertation involved collecting and analyzing qualitative data through in-depth interviews and participant observations to assess the meaning of country identity for cultural mediators in Vietnam.

### **Sample and Site**

Vietnam was selected as the research context because of its unique cultural, historical, political, and economic characteristics. Furthermore, Vietnam was selected because complex yet strengthening U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations provides a rich context for exploring this dissertation’s phenomena.

The researcher traveled to Vietnam in October 2015 and December 2015 for five weeks total to conduct preliminary dissertation research, including meetings with diplomats, communication scholars, business professionals, and university students in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang. Vietnamese culture values relationships. Thus, during preliminary research, relationships were established with contacts who became cultural informants, translators, and interpreters during data collection. The researcher returned to Vietnam for four weeks in July and August 2016 to collect data through interview and participant observation methods.

The College of Communication and Information at the University of Tennessee partially funded travel for preliminary research. The Center for International Education at

the University of Tennessee and the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication funded travel for data collection. The United States Department of Education funded Vietnamese language training from June to August 2014 at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. The ability to speak and read basic Vietnamese helped with traveling logistics, gaining trust among participants, accessing organizations, and maintaining greater control over research instruments.

This dissertation examines how cultural mediators perceive the constructs associated with country identity and how cultural mediators interpret their experiences interacting with foreigners during citizen diplomacy activities. Thus, it was important to conduct research in cities in Vietnam with high populations of foreigners and cultural mediators. Three research sites were selected: Ho Chi Minh City (population = 8.2 million), Ha Noi (population = 3.6 million), and Da Nang (population = 1 million). Not only are these cities representative of the three main historical, cultural, and geographic regions of Vietnam (i.e. Ho Chi Minh City is in the South, Ha Noi is in the North, and Da Nang is in the central region), they also represent major urban areas in Vietnam, which has a total population of 95.2 million (“Vietnam,” 2016).

Ha Noi is the capital city and home to the central government of Vietnam as well as many foreign embassies, including the United States Embassy. Ho Chi Minh City is Vietnam’s economic center, but Ha Noi and Da Nang are second and third, respectively, in terms of economic growth rate and urbanization ratio; the U.S. Agency for International Cooperation ranked Da Nang as the most business-friendly city in Vietnam

("Da Nang Unbeatable," 2016). In 2016, more than 10 million international tourists visited Vietnam, a 26% increase from 2015, including nearly 553,000 U.S. citizens; Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang are popular destinations for international tourists ("Destinations," 2015; "Tourism Statistics," 2016). Thus, it is logical to assume that Vietnamese in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang are most likely to come into contact with foreign tourists, diplomats, investors, and other expats.

Theory-driven purposive sampling guided data collection and resulted in 27 participants from the populations of Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang. Samples for qualitative methods are often strategic and purposive and emerge as research progresses (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Patton, 2002; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Banks (2011) makes a case for focusing on young populations in public diplomacy research because they are the "successor generation," the leaders of tomorrow (p. 35). The median age of Vietnam's population is 30.1 years ("Vietnam," 2016). As such, the research participants herein included Vietnamese citizens, ages 18 to 40, who interact with foreigners and, thus, are characterized as cultural mediators. In addition to interviews, 27 hours of participant observation were conducted in four organizations that facilitate informal exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners: two English centers (one in Ho Chi Minh City and one in Ha Noi) that offer adult education courses and two nonprofit tourism groups (one in Ho Chi Minh City and one in Da Nang) that provide foreigners with local experiences and guides.

The initial interview participants were those known to the researcher from preliminary research, and they recommended other interview participants. Similarly, the

researcher came into contact with the first organization for participant observation during preliminary research in Ho Chi Minh City, and then the organization's leaders put the researcher into contact with leaders of similar organizations throughout Vietnam. Each organization is comprised mostly of university students but also includes some high school students and young professionals. Frequenting tourist locations such as parks and cafes, group members initiate conversations with people who appear to be foreigners for the purpose of learning English and teaching foreigners about Vietnam; thus, they engage in informal citizen diplomacy. Qualitative data were collected in each city until the point of saturation was reached when data were redundant and nothing new was generated in interviews and participant observations. Table 3.1 displays the demographic information of interview participants, including age, education, gender, region of origin, and current city of residence, in the order of interviews from July 23, 2016, to August 16, 2016. Table 3.2 displays the record of each participant observation, including city, date, duration, organization type (tourism group or English-language school), and nationalities represented, in the order of observed exchanges from July 23, 2016, to August 14, 2016.

**Challenges in international research.** After traveling to Vietnam five times prior to collecting data for this dissertation and completing a fellowship in Vietnamese studies at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, including language training, the researcher was familiar with Vietnamese culture. During data collection, the researcher stayed in homes with Vietnamese families. By staying in local homes, eating meals with host families, and using public transportation, the researcher removed from the tourism sphere and became engrossed in Vietnam's culture. This was the first time the researcher

collected data in Vietnam, and the researcher acknowledges several factors that influence the quality of qualitative data collection in international and intercultural contexts.

During data collection in Vietnam, the researcher engaged in the process of reflexivity to maintain data quality. Yin (2014) contends the researcher's perspective influences interview participant responses and, in turn, those responses influence the researcher's questions. To make participant observation a scientific pursuit, DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) urge researchers to engage in reflexivity before and during data collection and analysis to limit observer bias: "We need to be aware of whom we are, understand our biases as much as we can, and understand and interpret our interactions with the people we study" (p. 37). During interviews and participant observations, the researcher was sensitive to the existence of bias. For example, the researcher interrogated interpretations and meanings through bridling, wrote memos about developing understandings during data collection, and maintained an open mind by scrutinizing self-involvement with the dissertation's phenomena (Vagle, 2009). Bridling was particularly useful when interview participants discussed cultural practices, political views, and historical perspectives that might be uncommon in the United States.

Participants were interviewed in as neutral a way as possible as described by Rapley (2001). However, participants could easily identify the researcher as racially distinct from Vietnamese. Further, participants were aware of the researcher's U.S. citizenship and affiliation with a U.S. university. The researcher's identity influenced data collection. For example, participants were eager to talk with the researcher but, prior to an interview, wanted to learn more about the researcher, often while sharing a meal or



coffee together. Some participants asked the researcher to visit their rural homes and to meet their families for reasons such as “my daughter has never met an American.”

Moreover, participants resisted the assistance of an interpreter and often asked for feedback about English proficiency. In Da Nang, a rumor emerged that the researcher was conducting English proficiency tests to determine who was eligible to attend a U.S. university. These challenges were addressed by ensuring an interpreter was available, even if unnecessary, and by stating clearly to each participant that there were no direct benefits for research participation other than the opportunity to share their perspectives of country identity and their experiences in communicating with foreigners. After data collection, though, the researcher assisted two participants in completing assignments to prepare for the International English Language Testing System.

In the participant observation method, the researcher intended to have passive participation in which the researcher is at the scene but functions more as an observer than as a participant. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) explain the challenges of gaining entry and establishing rapport in a group for participant observation, but in the case of this dissertation, the organizations welcomed the role of the researcher: The researcher is a native English speaker and, thus, is exactly the type of foreigner with whom the organizations’ members seek interactions. The researcher soon realized it was impossible to function as a pure observer, especially in Ho Chi Minh City where crowds multiply around foreigners, and so the researcher engaged in moderate participation as described by DeWalt and DeWalt (2011). The researcher was present at the scene of the action, was identifiable to participants as a researcher (each participant signed a consent form), and

was a peripheral member of the group who occasionally interacted with Vietnamese and other foreigners. Participants referred to the researcher as “the writer from America” as they became accustomed to the researcher writing field notes during exchanges. The researcher shared information with participants who asked personal questions. Most often such questions related to the researcher’s nationality, family, and career as well as the geography, economy, and leisure opportunities within the researcher’s home state. The researcher also engaged in reciprocity by explaining the research goals and agreed to share research results with participants who requested them.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

Interviews unearth cultural phenomena (McCracken, 1988). To unearth the dominant aspects of and feelings about country identity from the perspective of cultural mediators engaged in citizen diplomacy in Vietnam, 15 interviews were conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, 6 interviews in Ha Noi, and 6 interviews in Da Nang. The researcher conducted all interviews in person in July and August 2016 at locations that provided convenience and privacy for participants. The interviews totaled 30 hours and ranged from 20 minutes to 2.75 hours with a mean interview time of 67.1 minutes per participant. Data were collected using a voice recorder app on an iPad. A Vietnamese interpreter assisted with 12 of the interviews. While an interpreter was offered to all interview participants, some participants spoke English fluently and had earned degrees in English, which made an interpreter unnecessary. The researcher ended a 20-minute interview because of a language barrier and the unavailability of an interpreter.

**Instrument and procedure.** An interview instrument composed of open-ended questions about Vietnam's country identity was developed. In anticipation of cultural differences between the researcher and participants, the interview instrument was tested with two Vietnamese Americans. The instrument was modified prior to interviews based on responses received during pretesting and feedback from three scholars experienced in the interview method who reviewed the instrument. The modifications included question order and the wording of questions about sensitive topics such as Vietnam's wartime history and political leadership. See Appendix A for the complete interview instrument.

At the beginning of each interview session, participants signed a consent form and then answered basic demographic questions. Then the interview began with questions that gave each participant a chance to talk effortlessly without cognitive taxation about motivations for and experiences in communicating with foreigners during citizen diplomacy activities. While the interview instrument prompted discussion and ensured the consistent inclusion of important concepts (McCracken, 1988), each participant directed the conversation. Participant-directed interviews in intercultural contexts are important so that participants can describe their culture without prior categories and without constraint (Holliday, 2011).

As each interview progressed, a funneling technique was used to probe for deeper understanding of the meaning and feelings the participants assigned to country identity as a cultural mediator engaged in citizen diplomacy. Moreover, the open-ended questions in the interview guide allowed the researcher to wait for information to emerge organically during the interview and to assess indirectly the relevance of physical appeal, economic

appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal with consideration of unique characteristics of the Vietnam context. The researcher noted consistent comments and probed for a clearer understanding of any inconsistent comments. A video, produced by Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote Vietnam as a destination to foreign publics, served as a stimulus for discussion about emotions toward country associations in nation branding (Thanh, 2015). Discussion about the video was reserved for the end of the interview so that a participant's comments about the country identity constructs were not unduly influenced by the video content. Due to difficulties with internet connection, 21 out of the 27 interviews included the stimulus. See Appendix B for a transcript of the video content.

The researcher transcribed the interviews and cleaned the data to remove identifying information, which resulted in approximately 262 single-spaced pages of data. The data were stored and later analyzed in NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis software program. The researcher gave business cards to participants in case they wanted to submit additional information or to follow up via email. Ten participants contacted the researcher to elaborate on their answers to interview questions. This resulted in an additional six single-spaced pages of data. These data were cleaned for misspellings and identifying information before adding them to NVivo.

### **Ethnographic Participant Observations**

Ethnography is the process of closely observing, recording, and engaging with another culture and then writing descriptive, detailed accounts of the culture (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). In this dissertation, the ethnographic participant observation method was

used to uncover in a naturalistic setting a deeper understanding of country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. As a primary benefit of employing interview and participant observation, what cultural mediators say they do was compared and contrasted with what cultural mediators actually do.

Four nonprofit organizations gave the researcher access to observe interactions between members and foreigners: 1) a tourism organization in Ho Chi Minh City, 2) an English-language school in Ho Chi Minh City, 3) a tourism organization in Da Nang, and 4) an English-language school in Ha Noi. Each organization facilitates exchanges to provide opportunities for members to learn English from native speakers and to teach foreigners about Vietnam. Although these cultural mediators distribute information to foreigners in oral and print formats and at times function as tour guides and even accompany foreigners to tourism sites, they are unpaid volunteers unaffiliated with the government. Volunteering to talk with foreign tourists is a common phenomenon in Vietnam, especially in Ho Chi Minh City; for example, university students and young professionals often approached the researcher at various locations multiple times in a single day to initiate conversation. These Vietnamese citizens serve as non-state cultural mediators in informal people-to-people exchanges. Since the organizations facilitating exchanges connect Vietnamese with English-speaking foreigners and organizational leaders are fluent in English and were on site, a formal interpreter was unnecessary during the participant observation activities for this dissertation.

Using the elements of the participant observation method proposed by DeWalt and DeWalt (2011), the researcher informally observed during exchange activities,

recorded observations of patterned interactions as well as unusual interactions in field notes, and used both tacit and explicit information in analysis and writing. The researcher participated minimally in the exchanges but answered questions related to nationality, home state, education, and career. The researcher spent 27 hours engaged in participant observation during eight occasions in July and August 2016. The mean observation time was 3.4 hours. All observations occurred in parks or at heritage sites. Initial impressions were recorded in the form of field notes in a notebook. Once typed, field notes resulted in approximately 31 single-spaced pages of data.

### **Considerations for Qualitative Data Quality**

Social phenomena are in constant flux, which makes achieving reliability in social research difficult (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). This dissertation, however, was designed to minimize errors and bias and to preserve data quality by documenting the research protocols and then maintaining consistency throughout data collection so that another researcher in principle could repeat the procedures and arrive at similar results (Yin, 2014). In addition to methodological triangulation to increase data quality and objectivity, reliability was sought through data triangulation, including multiple observations in different cities for a convergence of evidence about Vietnam's country identity (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Yin, 2014).

Furthermore, three strategies identified by Yin (2014) were followed to ensure reliability and validity in research involving qualitative data. First, evidence was obtained from multiple sources. Interviews provided explanations and revealed perceptions, meanings, and feelings about country identity, while participant observations gave insight

into communication behavior during citizen diplomacy activities. Further, use of the nation branding video as a stimulus during interviews provided additional insight into cultural features salient to Vietnam's country identity.

Second, to ensure trustworthy and credible qualitative data, a chain of evidence was established by maintaining an audit trail, including a record of the types and quantity of data collected, coding sheets, and analysis procedures. The researcher also jotted initial impressions that emerged during interviews and participant observations and wrote memos after each data collection experience and during data analysis to document reflections and the thinking process about the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This resulted in approximately 25 single-spaced pages of memos and allowed for research transparency as a marker of data quality (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Finally, four scholars reviewed the evidence and the resulting conclusions presented within this dissertation and provided another layer to confirm data quality and credible results aligned with existing theory.

Third, member checks were conducted throughout the data collection and analysis process and a draft report was offered to key informants. Member checks involve reporting research products back to participants to check for accuracy (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The first member check occurred in Da Nang with six university students who had participated in an observed exchange. Three emergent themes from the data collected during 11 interviews in Ho Chi Minh City and 25 participant observation hours in Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang were shared with the students. This member check resulted in confirmatory and explanatory discussion as well as additional examples

to clarify emergent themes. The second member check occurred in Ha Noi with an organization's leader and three university students, also a group that had participated in an observed exchange. Initial findings were shared, including those about regional differences, based on the data collected from 17 interviews in Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang and 27 participant observation hours in Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, and Ha Noi. This member check resulted in confirmatory discussion. Finally, to strengthen the research conclusions, a draft summary report was offered to two key cultural informants, one in Ho Chi Minh City and another in Da Nang. The confirmatory feedback reduced the likelihood of falsely reporting an observation or misrepresenting cultural phenomena (Yin, 2014).

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

In this dissertation, qualitative data collection and data analysis were intertwined and iterative according to the systematic process suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. For interview data, the unit of analysis is the individual: Each transcription was compared and contrasted to the transcriptions of the other interview participants. For participant observation data, the unit of analysis is the observation: Each set of field notes from a particular observation was compared and contrasted to the other sets of field notes. Consistent levels of analysis among topics within the interview transcriptions and field notes also were identified. The verbal responses in interviews and the communication during participant observations were analyzed for context and internal consistency as well as for extensiveness, intensity, and specificity.



Case-oriented and variable-oriented approaches were integrated to analyze the qualitative data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In the data condensation phase of analysis, the researcher engaged in repeated readings of the data and then moved toward answering the research questions by creating a list of provisional primary codes based on the country identity constructs (physical, economic, heritage/culture, human capital, political, social, and emotional). In this way, the data were coded deductively. Variables within each construct functioned as second-order codes and followed the primary code with a colon (e.g., physical: safety, heritage/culture: art, social: environment, etc.).

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) call for iterative cycles of deductive and inductive coding. While data condensation was situated in prior country identity research, new variables also emerged progressively during data analysis. In particular, emotion coding was used to label the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher (e.g., fear, pride, etc.). Emotion coding allowed themes about emotions to emerge in the data. In addition to researcher-generated descriptive codes, *in-vivo* codes were used to honor participants' own language and to reveal an emic perspective of country identity in questions summoning specific responses about Vietnamese characteristics (e.g., "hard workers," "friendly," "time for family," etc.). As data analysis advanced, codes were revised, added, and dropped, as necessary.

After the data were summarized with codes, the researcher looked for patterns and grouped the codes into categories and then into distinct themes that explained the country identity constructs, relationships between cultural mediators and foreigners in citizen diplomacy, and perspectives of and feelings about country identity and citizen diplomacy.

Intermixed with data condensation, data display strategies were used to organize codes and themes in compact form to move toward understanding Vietnam's country identity and to draw and verify conclusions pertinent to the research questions. Themes were refined according to data coherence and prevalence within each unit (each interview and each observation) and across the qualitative dataset (all interviews and all observations combined). Throughout this process, NVivo 11 was used to manage, code, organize, retrieve, and display data segments in transcripts and field notes.

### **Quantitative Data**

To assess more comprehensively non-state cultural mediators' perceptions of and feelings toward Vietnam's country identity and to understand the relationship between country identity and communication with foreigners during informal citizen diplomacy activities, a quantitative survey of a purposive sample of cultural mediators in Vietnam was conducted. Survey method is ideal for exploring relationships and for investigating perceptions and opinions (Colton & Covert, 2007; Hocking, Stacks, & McDermott, 2003; Nardi, 2006), and a self-administered form produces less social desirability bias (Fowler, 2014). Moreover, this survey has practical implications for developing appropriate communication strategies to engage domestic publics in promoting the nation brand.

### **Sample**

Survey participants ( $N = 368$ ) were a purposive sample of the populations in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang. Participants were Vietnamese citizens who were at least 18 years old and who interact with foreigners and are characterized as cultural mediators in informal people-to-people exchanges, since they reconcile cultural

differences in business, educational, or social environments. Participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling type, but is appropriate for the survey in this dissertation because, according to Fowler (2014), purposive sampling allows the selection of participants based on particular traits or characteristics of a population – in this case, participants who are cultural mediators.

To initiate survey data collection in the three distinct regions of Vietnam, the researcher contacted the leaders of the four organizations in which participant observations occurred during qualitative data collection. The leaders agreed to assist in identifying cultural mediators to participate in the survey research and in distributing the survey. Moreover, the leader of an additional organization, a nonprofit tourism organization in Ha Noi, agreed to assist in distributing the survey.

The survey was an electronic online form using Qualtrics survey research software. Electronic online surveys save time and money and are suitable for international research (Harzing, Reiche, & Pudelko, 2013). Since cultural mediators in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang, based on the experiences of the researcher during qualitative data collection, were interested in the research and motivated to participate in the research, the internet was suitable for a self-report survey of a purposive sample of cultural mediators. Moreover, the literacy rate in Vietnam is 94.5% and internet connectivity is increasing with 53% of Vietnam's population classified as internet users ("Vietnam," 2016). From 2015 to 2016, the number of active social media users in Vietnam grew by 33%, and there are now more than 40 million active social media users in Vietnam (Kemp, 2016). The most popular social media platform in

Vietnam is Facebook, and 66% of Facebook users in Vietnam are between the ages of 18 and 34 (Kemp, 2016). The organizations assisting with survey recruitment for this dissertation often organize members through a communication network via Facebook. Thus, Facebook was used to administer the survey. Data were collected in November 2016. As a personal touch, the survey introduction gave participants the researcher's email address for questions. One participant emailed to inquire about the researcher's age. With the knowledge that Vietnam is a hierarchal society exhibiting a high degree of power distance based on age among other factors (Hofstede, n.d.), this information was provided to the potential participant.

### **Instrument and Procedure**

A quantitative survey was developed based on the instrument construction process suggested by Colton and Covert (2007), including articulating the purpose of the survey, formulating items, and pretesting the survey. The survey's goals were 1) to investigate cultural mediators' overall perceptions of and feelings toward Vietnam and the variables related to physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, and social appeal and 2) to uncover the relationship between country identity and communication with foreigners during informal citizen diplomacy activities.

The survey design included a title (Vietnam's Country Identity), an introduction to explain the purpose of the instrument and the intended use of the data, directions for completing the survey, the survey items, demographic questions, and a closing section to thank participants (Colton & Covert, 2007). The Country Reputation Index (CRI) developed by Passow et al. (2005) to measure country reputation as perceived by foreign

publics as well as domestic publics provided the basis for the survey items in this dissertation. Public relations and marketing scholars have exemplified the multidimensionality of this scale in public diplomacy and nation branding research to provide insight into factors that influence country image (Fullerton & Holtzhausen, 2012; Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017; Holtzhausen & Fullerton, 2013; Seo & Kinsey, 2013; Yang, Shin, Lee, & Wrigley, 2008). Further, the reliability and validity of this scale in assessing internal perceptions of domestic publics (i.e. country identity) have been established in previous studies, including those in Lichtenstein (Passow et al., 2005), Pakistan (Yousaf & Li, 2015), and Malaysia (Che-Ha et al., 2016).

Thus, country identity was assessed based on the CRI scale but measures from other public diplomacy and country reputation research were adapted based on their relevance in constructing a realistic depiction of Vietnam's country identity. Consistent with the CRI scale, the survey included one item to rate Vietnam's overall reputation and then included validated measures of the seven constructs – physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal. First, physical appeal (Anholt, 2006; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Passow et al., 2005) was measured with eight items such as “Vietnam has beautiful natural landscapes and scenery” and “Vietnam is free of natural disasters;” the CRI scale includes the item “[Country] has a good infrastructure of roads, housing, services, health care, and communications” as an indicator of physical appeal, but this item was divided into five items to distinguish among roads, housing, services, healthcare, and communication infrastructure. Second, economic appeal (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Passow

et al., 2005) was measured with seven items such as “Vietnam tends to outperform its competitors” and “Vietnam’s businesses provide high quality goods and services.” Third, heritage and culture (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005; Yun, 2015) was measured with nine items such as “Vietnam has a rich historical past” and “Vietnam is socially and culturally diverse.” Fourth, human capital (Anholt, 2006; Passow et al., 2005) was measured with nine items such as “Vietnamese are friendly and welcoming to others” and “Vietnam has notable celebrities such as singers and athletes.” Fifth, political appeal (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Passow et al., 2005) was measured with five items such as “Vietnam is a politically stable country” and “Vietnam has charismatic leaders.” Sixth, social appeal (Anholt, 2006; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Passow et al., 2005) was measured with six items such as “Vietnam behaves responsibly in the areas of international peace and security” and “Vietnam has a high standard of living.” Lastly, emotional appeal (Anholt, 2006; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005) was measured with four items such as “I have good feelings about Vietnam” and “I respect Vietnam.”

An example of a measure adapted for relevance in the Vietnam context is “Vietnam has a well-developed agricultural sector.” The CRI scale includes “[Country] has a well-developed industrial sector” in its economic appeal scale. In this dissertation, while keeping the item about industry, an item about agriculture was added because 48% of Vietnam’s labor force works in agriculture and Vietnam is one of the world’s top exporters of rice, coffee, rubber, tea, and pepper among other agricultural products (“Vietnam,” 2016). Vietnam has a long history as an agrarian society (Taylor, 2013).

Items about human capital and culture and heritage were added based on themes that emerged in the qualitative interview and participant observation data. For example, the items “Vietnam has strong families with a family support system,” “Vietnamese are hard-working,” and “Vietnamese are creative and critical thinkers when solving problems” were added to reflect variables in the qualitative dataset. Finally, items such as “It is important to establish relationships with foreigners” from Kim and Ni (2011) were added to measure attitudes and feelings about engaging with foreigners.

The survey items were divided into two sections. In the first part of the survey, the country identity constructs were adapted to reflect the communication activities of citizen diplomacy. For example, “Vietnam’s businesses provide high quality goods and services” was adapted into the item “I talk with foreigners about the quality of Vietnam’s goods and services” and “Vietnam has a well-developed agricultural sector” was adapted into the item “I talk with foreigners about agriculture in Vietnam.” Items for physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal were all revised in this manner to answer the research question about the relationship between the country identity constructs and cultural mediators’ communication with foreigners. Items to align with the historical characteristics of Vietnam and U.S-Vietnam diplomacy were also added to the survey (e.g., “I talk with Americans about the American War in Vietnam”).

In this first section, responses were given on a 5-point scale with the following options: “rarely,” “occasionally,” “sometimes,” “frequently,” and “usually.” Other scales in the communication field use these types of responses to indicate the frequency of

communication and/or the frequency of the presence of particular feelings about communication. For example, the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey, 1992) and the Intercultural Willingness to Communicate Scale (Kassing, 1997) use “always” to “never” responses and are applied in international research (Campbell, 2016; Ulu, Weiwei, & Yu, 2015). However, previous research indicates East Asian samples avoid selecting “always” and “never” options. Thus, “usually” and “rarely” were used as anchors rather than “always” and “never,” which is consistent with other survey research that elicited responses from East Asian samples about how frequently a behavior occurred (Lee, Jones, Mineyama, & Zhang, 2002).

The first part of the survey focused on the communication behaviors of cultural mediators during citizen diplomacy activities; in the second part of the survey, participants completed measures that assessed their perspectives of each of the country identity constructs. Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale with the options “disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “somewhat agree,” and “agree.” Other questionnaires administered in East Asia used the 5-point Likert (Hamamura, Heine, & Paulhus, 2008; Harzing, 2006). However, unlike samples in the United States, East Asians, avoiding extremes, show moderacy in survey responses (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995) and prefer the middle of the scale (Lee et al., 2002); this preference is related to a high degree of power distance, collectivism, and a low preference for avoiding uncertainty (Harzing, 2006). The reliance on midpoints is more likely to occur when option labels are missing or difficult to understand such as when numerals are used instead of words (Kulas & Stachowski, 2009). Thus, in this



dissertation, extremes such as “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree” were avoided and each option was clearly labeled.

The final part of the survey included demographic questions that functioned as moderating and control variables (age, gender, level of education, city of residence, and region of origin). Demographic questions such as the eight distinct regions of origin were based on categories used in census research by the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam and by the World Values Survey. The final part of the survey also included questions asking participants to report in which contexts they have communicated with foreigners (business, education, or leisure), if they have lived and/or studied abroad, and if they purposefully seek out interactions with foreigners. See Appendix C for the survey instrument in English and Vietnamese.

**Translation.** The survey was first developed in English. Although the purposive sample of cultural mediators engaged with English-speaking foreigners and, thus, spoke English, the survey was administered in Vietnamese to avoid language bias; further, surveys that are translated into the native language have higher response rates (Harzing et al., 2013). To establish conceptual equivalency (Gudykunst, 2002), the back-translation process was employed. Although survey research is often situated in an etic perspective, the back-translation process acknowledges the intrinsic cultural distinctions embedded in language (Harzing et al., 2013). The researcher hired a translator from Ha Noi who studied in the United States and earned a bachelor’s degree in English to translate the survey from English into Vietnamese. Then the Vietnamese survey was back-translated into English by a Vietnamese American originally from Ho Chi Minh City and fluent in

both Vietnamese and English with a bachelor's degree in communication. Variations in wording between the original English survey and the back-translated English survey were identified in items about Vietnam's communication infrastructure and political stability as well as the name of the American War. These variations were reconciled by a translator in Da Nang who has taught at a university in the United States and holds a master's degree in linguistics. This back-translation process involving three bilinguals has been used in previous research with surveys administered in East Asia (Harzing, 2006). In this dissertation, the researcher took care to involve bilinguals from the three regions of Vietnam (South, North, and Central) in consideration of regional dialects and vocabularies to ensure the survey wording was accessible to all participants.

**Pretesting items.** Through various means, the survey items were pretested and revised during the instrument development phase. First, feedback on structure and construct validity was obtained from three scholars with expertise in public diplomacy and/or quantitative survey research. The modifications involved question order, response options, and item wording. Next, the bilingual pretesting method as described by Harpaz (2003) was employed: A bilingual Vietnamese American completed the Vietnamese survey translation and then one week later the English translation. Variations in responses were identified and, thereafter, examples of natural disasters in the item about natural disasters were added. Colton and Covert (2007) suggest receiving feedback from potential participants as part of pretesting. Thus, one potential participant in Ha Noi and later one potential participant in Ho Chi Minh City completed the survey with the opportunity to ask the researcher questions, which assisted in the wording of the items

based on variables that emerged in the qualitative data about Vietnam's heritage and culture and human capital. The Vietnamese translation was then sent to a scholar in the United States who is originally from Vietnam. Based on feedback, two additional changes involving the translation of the concept "work ethic" and the word pairing "adaptable and tolerant" were made. Upon finalization of the Vietnamese translation, the researcher entered the survey items into Qualtrics and ensured the formatting was appropriate for a variety of screen sizes and internet browsers.

The survey was pretested in October 2016 with a sample of Vietnamese living in the United States ( $N = 59$ ). Thereafter the data were cleaned according to the methods proposed by Hayes (2005). Little's test demonstrated missing data were missing completely at random. Thus, the missing variables were replaced with predicted values via multiple imputation in SPSS 24 to produce a complete dataset. Then the data were tested for reliability of measurement using Cronbach's alpha, which is a suitable estimate of reliability for constructs with multiple indicators (Hayes, 2005). For each scale used to measure a country identity construct (physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal), the composite reliability ranged from .625 to .799. For the scales altered to measure communication about the country identity constructs during citizen diplomacy activities (talk about physical appeal, talk about economic appeal, talk about heritage and culture, talk about human capital, talk about political appeal, talk about social appeal, and talk about emotional appeal), the composite reliability ranged from .739 to .845. Bagozzi and Yi (1988) established a recommended composite reliability value of .60; thus, the

reliability of the scales was confirmed as each of the values obtained during pre-testing was higher than the recommended value.

For survey data collection in November 2016, participants ( $N = 368$ ) were recruited via the Facebook private group pages of five nonprofit organizations that facilitate exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang. In some cases, the organizational leader posted the recruitment statement on the Facebook page; in other cases, the organizational leader gave the researcher access to post the recruitment statement. Afterward, the researcher posted twice on each Facebook group page as a reminder to complete the survey. After participants acknowledged consent to participate in the research, they answered the survey items.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

After a detailed codebook with the variable labels was created, the quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 24. Data were cleaned following the methods established by Hayes (2005), including data screening and managing missing data. Cases with majority missing data, likely from participant fatigue, were removed from the dataset before analysis. The final sample was  $N = 368$ , which provides sufficient cases for statistical analyses, including correlations, factor analysis, and multiple regression with up to 73 independent variables (Comrey & Lee, 1992; Field, 2005; Hayes, 2005). The remaining missing data were managed through listwise deletion, which is a common method in communication science research (Hayes, 2005).

For a general overview of the data, measures of central tendency and measures of variability were conducted. Skewness and kurtosis values as well as boxplots, Q-Q plots,

histograms, and normal probability plots were used to determine normality; the few outliers did not skew the forthcoming statistical results and, thus, remained as legitimate observations. During analysis, ordinal measures were treated as interval measures, which is standard practice in communication science research (Hayes, 2005).

Frequency tests were used to analyze demographic items. In this dissertation, 80.3% of the survey participants lived in Ho Chi Minh City, 14% lived in Da Nang, and 5.7% lived in Ha Noi. The region of origin for participants was 36.5% from the Southeast, 25.3% from the South Central Coast, 13.3% from the North Central Coast, 9% from the Mekong River Delta, 8.2% from the Central Highlands, 5.6% from the Red River Delta, 1.7% from the Northeast, and .4% from the Northwest. Participants consisted of more women (59.7%) than men (38.2%); 2.1% of participants opted not to share their biological sex. The majority of participants (54.3%) had earned a bachelor's degree or more. Others had completed some university courses (44%), earned a high school diploma (1.3%), or completed some high school (.4%). The age group distribution was 18 to 24 (54.9%), 25 to 34 (39.9%), 35 to 44 (4.3%), and 45 to 54 (.9%).

Most participants (80.9%) had never traveled to nor lived in a foreign country, whereas 19.1% had either traveled to or lived in at least one foreign country. Regarding the contexts in which participants communicated with foreigners, 88% indicated they had talked with foreigners in the course of their daily activities (other than school or work); 79.6% indicated they had talked with foreigners in a school, university, or other educational setting; 78% indicated they had talked with foreigners in their business; and 73.4% indicated they had gone to places for the purpose of talking with foreigners.

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the data for reliability. For each scale used to measure perception of a country identity construct (physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal), the composite reliability ranged from .750 to .919. For the scales used to measure communication about the country identity constructs during citizen diplomacy activities (talk about physical appeal, talk about economic appeal, talk about heritage and culture, talk about human capital, talk about political appeal, talk about social appeal, and talk about emotional appeal), the composite reliability ranged from .887 to .930. Thus, the composite reliability of each scale was sufficient (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Since the survey item "Vietnam has strong families with a family support system" was added to the heritage and culture scale, a principal components analysis (PCA) was performed on the items within the heritage and culture construct. Similarly, the items "Vietnamese are hard-working" and "Vietnamese are creative and critical thinkers when solving problems" were added to the human capital scale; thus, PCA was also performed on the human capital construct. The other constructs (physical appeal, economic appeal, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal) were measured with scales validated in previous literature (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005; Yousaf & Li, 2015) and did not require factor analysis of item correlation and combination.

The purpose of PCA is to discover which variables in each construct form coherent subsets and are relatively independent from each other; PCA extracts both unique and overlapping variance (Beavers et al., 2013). Measures of sampling adequacy revealed no issues with the factorability of the heritage and culture construct. For the nine

variables that measured perceptions of heritage and culture, Bartlett's test of sphericity to confirm the linear combinations of variables was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value to measure sampling adequacy was .848, which surpassed the sufficiency value of .60 (Bartlett, 1954; Beavers et al., 2013; Kaiser, 1974).

Moreover, all of the coefficients on the correlation matrix were .431 or higher, which further confirmed the factorability of the items (Beavers et al., 2013). PCA, using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization to enhance the spread of variance and, thus, make the results more interpretable, revealed two solutions with eigenvalues of greater than one. The two solutions, one with a solution of six components and the other with a solution of four components, were tested. The cultural events and traditions variable was deemed a complex item, which is an item that loaded on more than one component; thus, it was deleted. The component matrices showed the other eight items loaded strongly:  $\lambda = .877$ ,  $\lambda = .813$ ,  $\lambda = .809$ ,  $\lambda = .772$ ,  $\lambda = .744$ ,  $\lambda = .743$ ,  $\lambda = .724$ ,  $\lambda = .672$ , and  $\lambda = .644$ .

PCA was employed on the remaining items, and each item loaded at least .672 on one of the components. Cronbach's alpha was satisfactory for the five items in the first component, which was categorized as variables associated with the deep structure of culture ( $\alpha = .813$ ); Cronbach's alpha was satisfactory for the three items in the second component, which was categorized as variables associated with cultural products ( $\alpha = .732$ ). Overall, the rotated eight-component solution, including the new family variable, explained 61.570% of the variance and had an internal consistency of .788. Table 3.3 shows the loadings and scale items.

Then PCA was performed on the nine items that measured the human capital construct. Measures of sampling adequacy revealed no issues with the factorability of this construct. For the nine variables that measured perceptions of human capital, Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .846. Moreover, all of the coefficients on the correlation matrix were .525 or higher, which further confirmed the factorability of the items. PCA, using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization, revealed one solution with an eigenvalue of greater than one. Four complex items were deleted, including the new "Vietnamese as creative and critical thinkers" item. The component matrices showed the other five items loaded strongly:  $\lambda = .751$ ,  $\lambda = .728$ ,  $\lambda = .727$ ,  $\lambda = .661$ , and  $\lambda = .651$ . PCA was employed on the remaining items, and each item loaded at least .687. Cronbach's alpha was satisfactory for the five items in the solution, which included the new hardworking variable ( $\alpha = .795$ ). Overall, the rotated five-component solution explained 55.341% of the variance. Table 3.4 shows the loadings and scale items.

With the legitimacy of the new family variable in the heritage and culture construct and the new work ethic variable in the human capital construct confirmed through PCA, all variables that formed a scale to measure perception of a particular country identity construct were merged into one composite variable (e.g., the eight variables that measured perception of physical appeal merged into one variable, etc.). Similarly, variables that measured communication about a particular country identity construct were merged into one composite variable (e.g., the seven variables that measured the amount of communication about economic appeal merged into one



variable). For the seven constructs that measured perception of country identity (physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal), all of the coefficients on the correlation matrix were .717 or higher; the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .643, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). For the seven constructs that measured the amount of communication about country identity (talk about physical appeal, talk about economic appeal, talk about heritage and culture, talk about human capital, talk about political appeal, talk about social appeal, and talk about emotional appeal), all of the coefficients on the correlation matrix were .639 or higher; the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .897, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ).

Then the data were analyzed to answer the research questions. Descriptive statistics were used to provide summaries about the sample, and t-tests were used to test for difference between independent variables. Correlation analyses were conducted to quantify significant relationships among variables. Regression analyses were used to examine which variables exert predictive influence on perception of country identity and which variables contribute to the amount of communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy. A multiple regression model, one of the most widely used statistical techniques in communication science research, calculates the influence of a set of predictor variables in explaining variability in an outcome variable (Hayes, 2005). Multiple regression is also useful for examining the relationships between a predictor variable and the outcome variable after controlling for demographic variables (Hayes, 2005). Thus, multiple regression is a suitable statistical test to apply in this dissertation.

To evaluate the appropriateness of regression models for the survey data in this dissertation, variables were checked for linearity through scatterplots with superimposed regression lines. The normality of the residuals was checked through Q-Q plots and the independence of the residuals by a Durbin-Watson statistic ( $\sim 2$ ). Cook's distance measures were also checked to ensure no cases exerted undue influence on the model. Moreover, scatterplots of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values were checked to ensure the variables met the assumption of showing homoscedasticity; there were no studentized deleted residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations. Finally, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were checked to ensure the variables met the assumption of not showing multicollinearity; since tolerance values were all above .10 and the VIF values were all below 10, multicollinearity was not a problem.

## **CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS**

This chapter reports the interview, participant observation, and survey results. The chapter includes six main sections; each section corresponds to a research question. Overall, the results suggest cultural mediators perceive Vietnam as having a low external reputation based on a wartime past and poor economic development. Cultural mediators' feelings about their own country are rooted in their perceptions of the heritage and culture, human capital, social appeal, and physical appeal constructs. During citizen diplomacy, cultural mediators communicate about favorable characteristics of their country identity, especially those related to heritage and culture, but they also help foreigners to understand unfavorable characteristics. Cultural mediators who perceive international friendships as important are more likely to communicate with foreigners. Economic appeal also influences cultural mediators to engage in citizen diplomacy, since they want to develop intercultural communication skills and expand their international network, which they identify as steps toward integration into the global economy. Finally, when highlighting aspects of their country identity during citizen diplomacy, cultural mediators acknowledge cultural differences between themselves and foreigners.

### **Understanding and Communicating About Country Identity**

Research question 1a asks how cultural mediators perceive the constructs associated with country identity – physical appeal, economic appeal, culture and heritage, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal. Further, research question 1b asks how cultural mediators communicate about the constructs associated with country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. To answer these research

questions, participant observation hours ( $N = 27$ ) were conducted with four organizations that facilitate exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners and in-depth interviews ( $N = 27$ ) were conducted with Vietnamese citizens who interact with foreigners. Herein, interview data are marked as undated quotes; each participant is referred to as P and a corresponding number (e.g., P7 is the seventh participant interviewed). Participant observation data are marked with the city of the observation and the date of the observation. Member check data are marked as personal communication with a date.

Interview participants reported communicating with foreigners from Australia, Cambodia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, South Korea, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, the United States, and Wales. They reported exchanges with foreigners in business, educational, and social environments. Some participants previously lived in Australia or the United States to study (P5; P19; P25; P26) or to work (P13), while others had visited other countries (P4; P8; P20; P27). During participant observations, the researcher observed informal exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners from Denmark, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, the United States, and Wales.

The interview instrument was developed to uncover internal perceptions of and feelings about the country identity constructs (physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political leadership, social appeal, and emotional appeal) as operationalized in previous literature. However, open-ended questions and participant observations allowed new variables, particularly family in the heritage and culture

construct and work ethic in the human capital construct, to emerge in the data. Further, the qualitative data show constructs overlap and intersect to explain country identity.

The following section offers the results of research question 1 by describing the communication protocols observed during citizen diplomacy activities, expanding the country identity constructs identified in previous literature, and providing new themes about country identity and citizen diplomacy that emerged in the qualitative dataset.

### **Communication During Citizen Diplomacy**

During participant observations of informal citizen diplomacy activities facilitated by four organizations, participants approached foreigners and asked them to engage in a discussion. While participants in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi connected with foreigners in parks and cafes, participants in Da Nang identified foreigners at tourist destinations. Participants appealed to foreigners with the assertion that talking with local people is the best way to learn about Vietnam. If a foreigner agreed to converse, a cluster of 7 to 10 participants gathered around the foreigner at a nearby location. In Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi, more than 40 participants formed multiple groups that simultaneously engaged in exchanges with foreigners, whereas participants in Da Nang remained in one group. Groups fluctuated as participants and foreigners came and went.

Participants in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang offered two general reasons for engaging in exchanges with foreigners. First, participants wanted to influence Vietnam's international reputation. One of the organizational leaders said, "This is an opportunity for us to introduce the tourism, culture, and country of Vietnam. Hopefully, the group will give our visitors a good impression about friendly and hospitable

Vietnam” (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016). Second, participants wanted to improve their communication skills and to become more confident in listening and speaking English because “you must speak English for a good job” (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016).

Although participants requested 10 minutes from foreigners, the mean time of observed exchanges was 77 minutes. In the beginning of each exchange, participants introduced themselves by talking about their majors, jobs, families (either spouse/children or parents/siblings), and hobbies such as soccer, swimming, and martial arts. They also described their experiences in learning English and talking in English. Then participants asked each foreigner questions about his or her country, age, career, family, and travel experiences. They asked questions such as “Where have you been in Vietnam?” and “What do you like best about Vietnam?” Such questions initiated discussion about Vietnam. Nearly every exchange included participants teaching foreigners some Vietnamese words such as hello, goodbye, thank you, and how much. At the conclusion of most discussions, participants and foreigners took photographs with each other and then exchanged Skype, Facebook, and/or Instagram information.

While this general protocol occurred in observations among the four organizations in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang, variations existed among cities, organizations, and groups. In Ho Chi Minh City, participants from one organization carried maps of the United States, Europe, and Australia and asked foreigners to identify their home state, territory, region, and/or city. They also distributed a 32-page booklet titled “How to Survive in Saigon” and used the booklet to discuss Vietnamese culture, food, and tourist destinations and activities; the booklet also included information about

cultural misunderstandings and inappropriate behaviors for foreigners to avoid. In Ha Noi, participants held signs inviting foreigners to talk with them about the “history, food, places, directions, and culture in Vietnam” (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016); participants in Ha Noi also carried papers with discussion prompts such as the role of family and religion in Vietnam. While participants in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi allowed foreigners more control of the communication content, participants in Da Nang offered foreigners a rehearsed 5-minute presentation about Vietnam, including images on an iPad.

Participants in Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang often invited foreigners to schedule a tour to nearby destinations. The participants arranged transportation, dining, and other plans associated with the tour. They did not charge for the tours; foreigners needed to pay only the fees for entrance to attractions. Also, at the end of exchanges in Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang, participants regularly presented foreigners with a gift such as a fan, scarf, or stuffed animal. In Ha Noi and Da Nang, members sometimes asked foreigners for permission to video record the discussion with the explanation that watching mouth movement would assist in practicing English pronunciations.

### **Country Identity: Physical Appeal**

In relation to country identity, the physical appeal construct is associated with the attractiveness of a country’s natural elements such as geographic features as well as its man-made elements such as infrastructure. Every observation and every interview except for one included discussion of physical features. Beautiful landscapes are central to Vietnam’s country identity, for they are the “treasures” of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016) and places “suitable for foreigners to do a selfie” (P6). Participants in Ha

Noi and Da Nang talked about geographic features near them such as Hạ Long Bay and Marble Mountain, respectively (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P13; P14; P15; P17; P18; P20; P21; P22; P24), while participants in Ho Chi Minh City discussed rivers, mountains, caves, and islands throughout the whole country (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P2; P6; P8; P9; P10; P11; P12; P27).

During exchanges, participants infused cultural, historical, and religious traditions into discussion about physical features. For example, in a discussion with a foreigner about Phan Xi Păng, the tallest mountain in Vietnam, a participant recommended climbing the mountain but exemplified a Confucian approach to fate and destiny by relaying the pursuit is dangerous but “if it is your destiny to die, you will die no matter where you are” (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). In a discussion about Marble Mountain, participants emphasized its beautiful scenery alongside its significance as a sanctuary for Buddhists and its functionality as a hiding place for Viet Cong during the American War (Da Nang, August 11, 2016). Similarly, participants highlighted man-made infrastructure such as buildings and bridges while explaining the cultural significance of the design (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; P2; P5; P14; P15; P16). For example, at times the Dragon Bridge crossing the Han River emits “lucky water” to symbolize Vietnam’s power and prosperity (Da Nang, August 11, 2016). Table 4.1 lists examples of places, including geographic features, man-made infrastructure, and heritage sites, discussed during citizen diplomacy activities and the country identity construct participants used to describe the places to foreigners.



While participants discussed landscapes and scenery as well as climate (P9; P11) in positive terms, two variables detracted from Vietnam's physical appeal: infrastructure and safety. First, participants described infrastructure, especially in Ho Chi Minh City, as prohibitive of the safe and efficient transport of people (Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P3; P5; P8; P10; P11; P15; P19; P20; P24). Second, safety concerned participants. While participants pointed out Vietnam does not have terrorism, guns, or public protests like some other countries (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P11; P15; P27), participants identified theft as a pervasive crime and pleaded with foreigners not to judge Vietnamese by the actions of a few criminals (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016). A few participants also criticized Vietnam's healthcare infrastructure and said some Vietnamese rely on folk remedies rather than seek treatment from traditional healthcare workers (Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016; P11; P27).

### **Country Identity: Economic Appeal**

In relation to country identity, economic appeal is associated with the attractiveness of a country's economic development and prosperity level as well as its investment environment. During exchanges with foreigners, participants in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City, but not in Da Nang, discussed Vietnam's economic development and prosperity level (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 7, 2016). Moreover, the majority of interview participants indicated they communicate about Vietnam's economic development with foreigners (P1; P2; P5; P6; P7; P10; P11; P13; P14; P15; P18; P23;

P24; P25; P26; P27). One participant indicated, “Our economy is just like in the U.S. because we open the economy here,” but most participants described Vietnam as a “developing country” or “poor country” amid change (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P5; P6; P9; P10; P11; P13; P14; P15; P17; P18; P23; P24; P25; P27). One participant explained, “Our economic growth in 20 years is very impressive. We were a very poor country with no technologies and today Vietnam is like a baby growing – every day you see new things” (P25). Some participants situated Vietnam as an economic leader in Southeast Asia, although not yet a leader in the international economy (P2; P7; P11; P13; P15).

Despite perspectives of economic growth, communication about Vietnam’s development and prosperity level disclosed that participants retain the mindset of an underdog, lacking confidence when dealing with foreigners from developed countries in business contexts (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P5; P8; P9; P13; P25; P26; P27). For example, one participant attributed awkward interactions with foreign colleagues to Vietnam’s economic position: “We are not as developed as China or Japan. We never have the thinking that we can be a dominant country” (P27). Another participant said, “We know that Vietnam is just a very small country and we are a weak country compared with other countries” (P13). Participants cited lack of access to technology and education opportunities, especially in rural areas, as prohibitive of even faster economic development (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P25). Some participants fear Vietnam’s recent economic growth is unsustainable because of lack of resources and overdependence on foreigner investment (P5; P9).

**Jobs.** Some participants praised Vietnam's government for upholding labor laws to protect workers (P25; P26) and for maintaining a low unemployment rate (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). Participants perceived jobs, especially in Ho Chi Minh City, as plentiful but distinguished between securing a job to survive and securing a job for career development and mobility; jobs in the latter category are sparse (P2; P6; P8; P9; P11; P13; P14; P17; P18; P22; P27). The most desirable jobs are those in the financial, medical, and tourism sectors (P2; P6; P8; P11; P13; P14; P15; P17; P18; P22; P27), but "blue collar workers are the main labor in Vietnam now" (P8). Multinational corporations offer better salaries and advancement opportunities than Vietnamese corporations (Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016; P2; P6; P8; P11; P13; P14; P15; P18; P22; P27). Participants acknowledged some Vietnamese seek economic opportunity in other countries (Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016).

The data reveal three factors that influence participants' perceptions of their ability to secure a job in Vietnam: education, family, and money. First, participants viewed earning a university degree as necessary for a job that pays a high salary. Moreover, acquiring computer skills, English language skills, and soft skills for teamwork and interpersonal communication provide opportunities for better employment (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P7; P8; P11; P13; P14; P15; P17; P18; P19; P22; P25; P26; P27). Some participants, however, asserted multinational corporations prefer graduates with degrees from universities outside of Vietnam because these graduates have more developed soft skills (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016; P2; P13; P17; P19). The

second factor that participants viewed as influential in acquiring a job is family. For example, participants indicated individuals with family members who work for the government or for a large corporation are more likely to be hired (Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016; P6). Conversely, one participant indicated individuals from a Christian family are less likely to be hired for government positions (P19). The third factor that participants viewed as influential in acquiring a job is money. According to participants, the best government jobs are reserved for those who can pay the highest bribe (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016; P6; P17).

**Foreign investment.** Overall, participants expressed optimism about Vietnam's prospects for economic growth through foreign direct investment (Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016; P1; P2; P7; P8; P10; P11; P13; P14; P15; P25; P26). Participants perceived Vietnam as an inviting business environment for investors with two warnings: 1) Westerners<sup>1</sup> must understand familial piety and 2) Westerners must understand how to offer a bribe (Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016). For some participants, however, the presence of Western corporations signified an unattainable level of economic prosperity. For example, one participant said four days of work is required to pay for one meal at a McDonald's restaurant (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). Others recognized the yin and yang, both the positive and negative consequences, of Vietnam's shift from a centralized planned economy to a mixed economy. Another participant asserted, "If you want to make money, you have to have selfishness. Greed is good in capitalism, but if

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<sup>1</sup> While the Western Hemisphere contains various cultural groups and some of these cultures are in fact collectivistic and value group and family identification more than individualism, the researcher uses "Western" and "Westerner" because this is the word most often used by Vietnamese in discussions about cultural differences: Vietnamese versus "Westerners."

you have too much greed you have to scale it back and think about ethics and do more charity and give back to society. It's balance" (P25).

### **Country Identity: Heritage and Culture**

In relation to country identity, the heritage and culture construct is associated with the appeal of the country's history and cultural products as well as of the citizens' belief systems, traditions, and behaviors. In Vietnam, culture is the most salient country identity construct in citizen diplomacy (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P2; P4; P5; P8; P10; P11; P12; P13; P14; P15; P18; P20; P21; P22; P23; P24; P25; P26; P27). While participants communicated rarely about some of the heritage and culture variables established in previous literature (e.g., entertainment media produced in Vietnam), other variables such as religion, food, and history emerged richly in the data. Further, a new variable, absent in previous country reputation and country identity literature, emerged in the data as central to Vietnam's culture – family.

**Family.** Interview and participant observation data reveal family as the core of Vietnamese culture. For example, one participant elucidated,

Family is very important to Vietnamese. In Vietnamese culture, family is the place you can go when you feel tired or disappointed in your life and whenever Vietnamese have holiday or a day off, Vietnamese who live far from their family, they try to go back to their home to meet their parents and other people in their big family... We live in a big house with two or three or four generations together. And

this is a good thing that many foreigners admire about the traditions of the Vietnamese family. (P13)

While communication about family centered on respecting and caring for elders, the data also reveal the struggle to maintain familial traditions amid globalization. In Vietnamese custom, “the father is like the king of the family” (P1), and the firstborn son and his wife live with his parents and function as caregivers. For this reason, Vietnamese parents historically preferred their first child to be a son rather than a daughter; although there is now more gender equality in Vietnam, firstborn sons still feel responsible for caring for their parents (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P2; P4; P11; P25). During an exchange with a foreigner, one firstborn son explained, “I need to atone my parents. It is a circle of caring” (Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016). Children, even as adults, respect parents, including accepting parental input into matters such as selecting a university, a career, and a spouse (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016; P1; P2; P11; P15; P22), and “parents care about their children for the rest of their lives” (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016). Such respect transcends death as Vietnamese worship their ancestors and honor death anniversaries (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016; P14; P18; P20; P23).

Participants, however, indicated some Vietnamese in the young generation yearn for if not outright abandon the custom of living with their parents in favor of a more independent, Western approach to familial relationships (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; August 7, 2016; P6; P13; P16; P18; P19; P20; P22; P24; P25; P26; P27). Though some participants reported

they choose to live separately from their parents – and even to live with partners to whom they are not married – their communication showed they do not reject Vietnamese ideas about collectivism and hierarchy. For example, one participant who is rearing his children with his wife in a house apart from yet near to his parents, said, “We must preserve social hierarchy such as respecting teachers and respecting parents and respecting elders” (P25). Moreover, in exchanges with foreigners, participants who live away from their parents cited family as their motivation to study and work hard (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P15).

Communication about happiness, leisure activities, and future plans further highlighted the Vietnamese emphasis on family and community (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P2; P4; P11; P15; P16; P20; P24; P25). For example, participants explicated the priority of family and friends over tasks and economic gain. One participant stated, “When Vietnamese have breakfast or lunch or dinner together, we don’t care about the duration of the time. The longer, the better” (P13). In an exchange with foreigners, participants explained workers in Ho Chi Minh City often meet their friends for coffee before going to their offices, but such meetings are not about the coffee as much as they are about the relationships (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016). One participant stated, “Vietnamese might not have a rich budget, but we have a lot of time to spend with our family” (P16).

Figure 4.1 illustrates how family is the core of the heritage and culture construct through which cultural mediators communicate about other country identity constructs.

**Religion and tradition.** During citizen diplomacy activities, participants often equated culture with religion when foreigners asked about Vietnamese culture. In communication with foreigners, Buddhist pagodas and temples, places Vietnamese go “to find peace in their hearts” (P18), functioned as symbols to illustrate Vietnam’s belief system. In addition to Buddhism, participants talked with foreigners about Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism as well as indigenous religions such as Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016; P1; P2; P3; P4; P11; P14; P15; P18; P19; P20; P22; P23; P25; P26). One participant reasoned Vietnamese have a unique spiritual strength apart from religion because Vietnam “has gone through wars, wars, and wars” (P25).

Participants evinced ancestor worship as a part of Vietnamese religious practice and yet as a cultural tradition distinct from religion, since Vietnamese of every religious background honor their elders and make sacrifices to their ancestors (P14; P19; P20; P23; P25; P26). One participant noted, “We practice our own religion by respecting the past, respecting the hierarchy, and respecting the goodness because we believe goodness will bring back goodness” (P26).

Further, in exchanges with foreigners, participants related festivals and celebrations to family. For example, the data reveal the most important festival in Vietnamese culture is Tết, which coincides with the Lunar New Year. Tết is a time for wearing the traditional Vietnamese dress (the áo dài), visiting family, worshiping ancestors at the pagoda, and presenting children with lucky money in a red envelope (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016; P1; P2; P4; P8; P11; P13; P14;



P15; P18; P20; P23; P27). Participants also indicated Vietnamese beliefs and practices associated with celebrations. For example, families schedule weddings on days determined to be “lucky” by a fortune teller, and families organize parties to commemorate when a child is born, when a child turns one month, and when a child is old enough to sleep in a crib (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016, August 14, 2016; P27). Often such celebrations include extended family as well as the entire neighborhood.

**Food.** In every interview and participant observation, participants linked food to culture. For example, one participant explained, “Our country is an agricultural country. Food is the number one priority. So if your most important priority of the day is food, then food is the most important aspect of life” (P25). Participants conveyed pleasure that, during his May 2016 visit to Vietnam, Obama ate the food of the common people (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 7, 2016, August 14, 2016; P10; P19). Participants encouraged foreigners to eat in the traditional way local people eat, even street food, including nước mắm (fish sauce), bánh canh, bánh chưng, bánh dày, bánh mì, bánh ướt, bún chả, bún mắm, bún thịt nướng, chè, and phở as well as fruit such as chôm and coffee drinks such as cà phê sữa đá (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016; P1; P2; P4; P5; P6; P8; P10; P11; P13; P15; P18; P19; P21; P22; P24; P25; P26; P27). Moreover, participants blurred the line between food and medicine in discussion about traditional Vietnamese healthcare; for example, participants told foreigners that foods such as bitterroot melon heal the body (Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016, August 7, 2016; P27).

**Diversity.** During citizen diplomacy activities in Ho Chi Minh City, participants emphasized Vietnam is more than metropolitan areas and foreigners must visit rural areas to understand Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016). Interview participants also emphasized the diversity of Vietnam from urban to rural areas and from region to region (P1; P2; P4; P5; P8; P11; P13; P19; P20; P21; P25; P26; P27). One participant said, “The beauty of Vietnam is it’s not one country: We have different cultures in different provinces. You can see it through the language, the tone, the dialects, and the food” (P26). However, another participant explained, “The differences aren’t that much because we are still all Vietnamese” (P8).

Participants noted that in addition to the Kinh ethnic majority, Vietnam has a plethora of minority groups. While adding to the cultural diversity of Vietnam, such groups have a disadvantaged position in Vietnamese society: “The ethnic minority groups are really poor. They don’t have lots of facilities. They don’t have a very good houses and their life is miserable” (P13). Most participants have not interacted with minority groups beyond charity work (P3; P4; P13; P27). In addition to ethnic diversity, participants celebrated Vietnam’s regional diversity while also depicting animosity toward Vietnamese from other regions. For example, a participant in Ho Chi Minh City claimed Vietnamese in the South do not want to marry Vietnamese from the North (P2), while another indicated, “Some of the northern people hate the southern people” (P1). Table 4.2 displays characteristics of Vietnam’s regional diversity (North, Central, South, and the MeKong Delta regions) as described by participants.

**A history of war.** During citizen diplomacy activities, communication about Vietnam's history focused on war (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P5; P6; P7; P8; P11; P13; P15; P18; P19; P20; P21; P22; P25; P26; P27). Communication about war emphasized conflicts with China, France, and the United States, although a few participants also discussed the Mongol invasions of Vietnam (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; P20; P25; P26). When asked about Vietnam's history, one interview participant elaborated about Nguyễn Ánh, who served as the first emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty and built the Citadel in Hue (P17). Generally, though, participants treated "history" as synonymous with 20th century war; for example, one participant stated, "Vietnam's history is just war" (P7).

During observed exchanges, participants in Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang relayed to foreigners the wartime significance of various tourism sites (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016). For example, in Ho Chi Minh City, participants discussed the war against the United States in association with the Củ Chi Tunnels and the War Remnants Museum; in Da Nang, participants discussed the war against France in association with Bà Nà Hills. Participants in both Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang, however, elaborated on attitudes about Vietnam's wartime history only when foreigners probed for such information. Participants in Ha Noi did not mention war or the shared wartime history among Vietnam, France, and the United States, even when highlighting the French colonial architecture in the city (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P19; P20).

Two perspectives about war emerge in the data. First, Vietnamese take pride in Vietnam's resilience to defeat powerful countries. For example, one interview participant expressed Vietnamese pride, "We stand out. We stand strong through wars, through foreign invaders. Who defeat the Chinese? Only Vietnamese" (P25). Second, some Vietnamese harbor doubts about the realities of the American War but not resentment toward Americans (P8; P21). During one exchange in Ho Chi Minh City, for instance, participants exemplified the intense emotions associated with Vietnam's wartime history as they talked among each other. One participant claimed high school teachers presented falsehoods about the American War to "hide the bad" about North Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). Another participant confirmed this perspective and added that details about war heroes in textbooks are fictitious. Some participants agreed and indicated foreign media are less biased sources for facts about the war. Other participants, however, interjected to defend the truthfulness of curricula in Vietnam's schools. One participant settled the dispute by clarifying the information presented in Vietnam is not true or false but rather what is "suitable" for the country to protect its reputation (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). During another exchange in Ho Chi Minh City, participants expressed regret about North Vietnam's victory and avowed South Vietnam would mirror South Korea's development if the United States had won the war (Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016). Interview participants depicted similar perspectives about the accuracy of information and the outcome of the war (P8; P21; P25; P26).

The data reveal Vietnam's wartime past does not affect how participants live their lives, including their interactions with foreigners. Participants alleged they talk with

Americans and French about war in the same way they talk with other Vietnamese about war (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P5; P7; P8; P11; P13; P19; P25; P26; P27). According to participants, modern Vietnam is a peaceful country and war is a topic contained in a museum. For example, one participant began to cry during an exchange with a foreigner when recalling the “terrible” images in the War Remnants Museum but quickly regained composure and stressed the war is in the past (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). Moreover, participants indicated the young generation is uninterested in Vietnam’s wartime past and expressed disbelief at American interest in war (Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016; P8; P9; P15; P19; P21). One participant questioned an American, “Have the Americans not gotten past the war? Vietnamese look forward to the future instead of looking back to past history” (Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016). While participants indicated they do not talk about negative aspects of the past, the burden of wartime suffering is burrowed in the depths of Vietnam’s heritage and culture where it is tempered by a spirit of pride and forgiveness (P8; P14; P15; P17; P25; P26; P27). For example, one participant said,

For the rest of my life, I must remember the suffering of war that the U.S. government brought to this country, but many American people when they come to this country, Vietnamese people are very friendly to them. This is the first big surprise to them. They think we will hate American people. But I think this point makes us so different from other countries. Compared to Japan, Korea, and China, we are the people who suffer from war the most. (P26)

While participants do not focus on the wartime history, they do care about the current conflict with China in the East Sea, and they fear a future war between China and Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016; P5; P7; P8; P13; P19; P25; P26; P27).

### **Country Identity: Human Capital**

In relation to country identity, human capital comprises perceptions about the abilities and skills of the country's citizens. This construct emerged in the data as interview participants discussed celebrities from Vietnam such as singers (P8; P9; P15; P20; P21), while others highlighted the artistic abilities of Vietnam's citizens (P1; P5; P22). During the 2016 Rio Olympics, which coincided with data collection, Hoàng Xuân Vinh, a pistol shooter, won Vietnam's first gold medal; thereafter, participants used the victory as an example of the athleticism of Vietnam's citizens (P16; P18).

The human capital construct emerged most richly in interview data as the majority of participants used the following words to describe Vietnamese: "friendly," "open-minded," and "hard workers" (P1; P2; P4; P5; P6; P7; P8; P9; P10; P11; P13; P15; P16; P18; P19; P20; P22; P25; P26; P27). Participants described Vietnam's citizens as welcoming to foreigners, even inviting them into their homes (P4; P11; P10; P19; P22). Participants further described Vietnamese as intelligent, diligent, innovative, and adaptable, embodied in Vietnam's agrarian history and the farmers who toiled with limited resources against harsh weather conditions (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P8; P22). One participant asserted even today Vietnamese work hard and are entrepreneurial because hard work is the sole option for survival; life is not easy in Vietnam, but "if we are in a difficult situation, we fight

any way we have to because we are smart” (P27). During an exchange with foreigners, a participant called the women of Vietnam “the image of the Vietnamese people” because they are hardworking and sacrifice greatly for their children (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016).

According to participants, familial loyalty motivates Vietnamese to work hard in school and in their occupations: Parents work hard and make sacrifices to send their children to school, while children work hard to take care of their parents in the future (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016; P2; P22). However, the lack of resources and opportunities hampers their eagerness to gain knowledge and to improve their position in society. One participant said, “The people have so much energy but they don’t have enough places to spend their energy. But this is not the problem of the people – it is the problem of the government. We have full potential but this is not enough. We have ambition without resources. You need supportive conditions to be the best” (P25).

Despite the strain of limited financial resources, as one participant explained, Vietnamese university students put effort toward studying to secure a future career that pays enough to support their parents; their parent’s retirement is dependent upon their forthcoming graduation and salary (P2). Although participants portrayed determination to achieve their goals, they underscored their prioritization of relationships with family and friends over tasks. For example, participants indicated they are never too busy to be friendly and to help foreigners (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14; Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P2; P6; P7; P8; P9; P15; P27).

### **Country Identity: Political Appeal**

In country identity, political appeal is associated with the attractiveness of the country's political system and governmental leaders. This construct received the most varied responses of any of the country identity constructs. Some participants praised the government, some criticized the government, some would not answer questions about the government, some would answer questions but only with the voice recorder off, and some, fearing government retaliation, would not do an interview. For example, one woman in Ho Chi Minh City met the researcher for an interview but then declined to begin the interview; she indicated that she worked for government-controlled media and felt she could not share her opinions about Vietnam with a foreigner. Only two observed exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners included discussion about Vietnam's political system (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016, August 7, 2016), and only three interview participants indicated they talked about politics in exchanges with foreigners (P1; P5; P13). One interview participant reasoned, "Most people in Vietnam don't care about politics because no matter who is elected, they are the same and the positions are already set" (P11). Most interview participants, however, shared their perspectives during interviews (P1; P5; P6; P7; P8; P10; P11; P13; P14; P15; P16; P17; P18; P20; P22; P25; P26; P27), and the data reveal the complexity of political appeal in the Vietnam context.

Interview participants in Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City highlighted positive aspects of Vietnam's political system and governmental leaders more so than participants in Ha Noi, the capital city (P7; P8; P11; P13; P14; P15; P16; P17; P18). The mediating factor is the popularity of local leadership. For example, nearly every participant in Da



Nang mentioned the late Nguyễn Bá Thanh, who served as President of the People's Committee of Da Nang; participants commended his leadership in economic development and anti-corruption (P14; P15; P16; P17; P18). Participants in Da Nang also praised governmental social programs that assist the poor (P13; P15). Likewise, some participants in Ho Chi Minh City praised Nguyễn Thành Phong, the Chairman of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, for his work to improve infrastructure and to maintain social programs for the disadvantaged (P7; P8). Participants in both Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang applauded Vietnam's political leadership for their strategy and tactical execution and credited them for keeping Vietnam safe from terrorism and political violence (P7; P8; P11; P15).

One participant applauded Vietnam's one-party system and communist ideology (P16). Others expressed less optimism because of government corruption (P1; P6; P8; P10; P17; P22; P25; P26; P27). During an observed exchange, two participants called the government "bad" and "terrible" for perpetuating a corrupt system based on bribes (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). In another exchange, participants indicated political policies suppress Vietnam's economic development (Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016).

While participants' perspectives of Vietnam's current political leadership varied, the data show participants are more aligned in their perceptions of national heroes such as Võ Nguyên Giáp, who led the Vietnamese in defeating the French at the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ, and Ho Chi Minh, who was the first prime minister and president of a unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Calling him "Bác Ho" or "Uncle Ho," participants extolled Ho Chi Minh (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016,

August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016; P6; P7; P8; P13; P15; P17; P22; P26). During observed exchanges, participants in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi, but not Da Nang, talked with foreigners about Ho Chi Minh. For example, participants in Ho Chi Minh City indicated the city's name changed after reunification to honor the new president; when they suggested that foreigners visit the Ho Chi Minh Museum, they emphasized that Ho Chi Minh borrowed from the Declaration of Independence (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016) and that he spoke seven languages (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016).

Interview participants generally commended Ho Chi Minh and his accomplishments. One participant explained, "He is still the hero of Vietnam, and when the teacher teaches the young students, they always talk about Uncle Ho and he always lives in our hearts. And for Vietnamese the image of Uncle Ho is very good, the best image" (P13). Even in contemporary university curricula, according to one participant, "students have to write essays about Ho Chi Minh and what we can learn from him" (P8). Another participant avowed that Ho Chi Minh is the reason Vietnam has a favorable reputation in the international community (P17). Four participants seemed hesitant to criticize Ho Chi Minh and his legacy as a freedom fighter but expressed doubt about his image (P8; P16; P20; P25). One participant said, "Ho Chi Minh is a great man but the government makes him like a god. I don't know what to believe anymore" (P20).

According to one participant, such varied opinions about Vietnam's political system and national leaders are "a sign of a budding democracy" (P25). However, interview and participant observation data show dichotomous perceptions and behaviors related to freedom of speech among participants. In some cases, participants hesitated to

share their opinions about politics by either stating explicitly that they fear the government or stating simply, “I don’t talk about that” (P1; P8; P10; P15; P22; P27). Conversely, other participants publically criticized the government during exchanges with foreigners (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016).

In communication about variables associated with the political appeal construct, participants talked about human rights, especially freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and revealed a range of perspectives about the current state of human rights in Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016; P1; P5; P19; P25; P26). For example, one participant alleged, “Today people have more freedom. We can go to the internet and to Facebook and talk about anything, even the sensitive topics about politics” (P25). Another participant expressed a more cautious viewpoint: “The first human right we need is to say what we think. Currently, we cannot do it. The government controls the media so it’s just their side, not our side” (P1). He later clarified, “You can talk about our feelings about the government, but when you publish it and many people try to know your ideas, then the government will look after you” (P1). Figure 4.2 illustrates overlap between political appeal and other country identity constructs and suggests another layer of political appeal – human rights – currently absent from the Country Reputation Index.

Some participants indicated change to Vietnam’s one-party communist system is imminent but will take time: “The young generation has a different education and mindset than the old generation because the old generation still have relations to the past. My children in 20 years – I’m sorry but they don’t give a shit about communism and this is better for all of the nations of the world. Ideologies only bring people to disaster”

(P25). Participants cited education as the primary means to reform individuals who will then reform society (P25; P26). The data further reveal participants distinguish between Vietnam's government and Vietnam's people. For example, one participant said, "Put aside the politics and you will see that every nation is beautiful" (P25).

### **Country Identity: Social Appeal**

In country identity, social appeal involves the attractiveness of the social programs and environmental causes that a country supports as well as the country's position in the international community. A few participants touched upon issues that affect quality of life such as lack of affordable housing (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P8; P15). However, communication related to the social appeal construct focused on environmental issues and international cooperation and even more so on educational opportunities. Regarding policies associated with environmental protection, participants criticized Vietnam's government for its lack of effort in reducing and preventing pollution and in promoting sustainability (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016; P10; P11; P22). For example, one participant exclaimed, "Pollution is everywhere! Pollution in industry parks, pollution in agriculture! Our food and drink have toxic chemicals – but the government does nothing to control pollution!" (P11). Alternatively, participants supported the government's efforts toward global integration, although they could identify neither specific initiatives that furthered such integration nor roles that Vietnam has played in intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations. Nevertheless, during exchanges with foreigners, participants applauded efforts to improve diplomatic relations with Japan, South Korea, and the United States (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho

Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016), and one participant avowed, “Vietnam is always open to new things and wants to make friends with other countries” (P23).

**Educational opportunities.** Interview and participant observation data denoted educational opportunities as the most salient element within with social appeal construct. The majority of participants talked about education in Vietnam (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P2; P5; P7; P8; P9; P11; P13; P14; P15; P16; P17; P18; P19; P21; P22; P25; P26; P27). Participants reported improvements in Vietnam’s educational opportunities (P1; P13) but noted a university degree is unattainable for some because of their mindset and because of cost (P1; P6; P9; P11; P13; P14; P18; P22). One participant revealed that some Vietnamese, especially in rural areas, “do the same thing the parents do, so they don’t need any knowledge. So if their parents are farmers, they will be the same. It’s difficult to change their mind about education” (P13). Moreover, some participants specified the disparity between Vietnam’s public and private foreign universities such as RMIT Vietnam: Private universities have better facilities and some have better opportunities (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P11; P15; P16; P19; P22).

Finally, during interviews and observed exchanges, participants talked in a manner that criticized educational opportunities because of limitations on academic freedom (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P8; P11; P14; P17; P18; P21; P25; P26; P27). According to participants, Vietnam’s government directs curricula; during class, the teacher reads from the textbook. Students avoid approaching teachers because in Vietnam “you respect the hierarchy, you avoid

conflict, and you give face to the older people” (P25). Further, participants indicated that teachers focus on theoretical content and provide students with little opportunity to collaborate, to discuss ideas, or to apply content to real-world situations; the result is that Vietnamese lack creativity and critical thinking (Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016; P1; P5; P8; P11; P14; P18; P22; P25; P26; P27). However, participants relieved Vietnamese students from culpability in any educational shortcomings: “Vietnamese students and foreign students have the same levels and the same knowledge” (P1), but rather associated the problem with Vietnam’s educational system, which is limited in scope and does not value the multiple talents of students (P8; P17; P25). For example, one participant said, “If you can talk to Vietnamese students, you will realize that they are really, really good, maybe perfect with good knowledge and good behavior. But if you are not good at math, it means you are not a good student” (P17).

### **Country Identity: Emotional Appeal**

In country identity, emotional appeal has to do with the feelings citizens have toward their own country. Interview and participant observation data reveal participants’ feelings of love and pride. For example, during an exchange with a foreigner about Vietnam’s mountains, a participant proclaimed, “I love my country!” (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). Toward the conclusion of one interview, a participant was asked to identify other important characteristics of Vietnam not previously discussed; the participant exclaimed, “I love Vietnam!” (P3). Other participants expressed similar sentiments, explicitly and implicitly, during interviews and observed exchanges (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; P1; P8; P11; P15).

In terms of pride, Vietnamese are proud of their wartime victories (P8; P13; P14; P25; P27). For example, one participant said, “America is the strongest country, the richest country, the greatest – and we won them before so we feel so proud” (P8). Another participant explained, “I am proud we have defeated big countries like France and the United States. I am proud of our history. We don’t surrender. We keep fighting until we win” (P27). While participants expressed pride in success in past conflicts, participants also showed pride in Vietnam’s recent record as a safe, peaceful country without terrorism and violence (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P11; P15; P27).

Though one participant asserted, “We show our patriotism when we talk about our history with the foreigner” (P13), for some participants, patriotic expression in citizen diplomacy is hampered by dissatisfaction with the government (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P11; P14; P17; P18; P19; P25; P26; P27). Nevertheless, participants expressed hope that foreigners will tell their friends back home positive things about Vietnam, for promoting Vietnam’s favorable country image is one of their motivations for engaging in citizen diplomacy (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016).

### **Overall Perceptions of Country Image and Country Identity**

The data show participants fear Vietnam has a negative country image in the international community (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016; P1; P5; P7; P8; P14; P15; P22; P25; P26). Participants believe Vietnam is primarily known in the world for war (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016; P8; P14; P15; P22).

Participants asserted that, beyond war, most foreigners associate Vietnam with communism (P1; P5; P25; P26) and poor economic conditions (P1; P7; P14). A few indicated the world knows almost nothing about Vietnam (P5; P25; P26).

Meanwhile, the data show internal perceptions of Vietnam are positive. Although noting the need for improvement in areas such as economic development and education, participants characterized Vietnam's citizens as smart and hardworking (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P11; P25; P26; P27). Participants indicated Vietnam should be known in the international community for its safe environment, beautiful natural landscapes, delicious food, friendly citizens, and strong families (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P8; P10; P13; P25; P26; P27). To combat perceptions of Vietnam as a poor country, participants pointed out the modernization of cities such as Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang and agricultural exports such as rice (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P5; P14).

Participants expressed optimism about Vietnam's future. For example, one participant said, "We in the young generation are dynamic, active, and confident. We are open-minded and we are willing to learn" (P27). Another indicated, "Maybe after 50 years the young generation will take part in the government and we will change what we want. We can open our country with the world. We are not afraid of the Americans or the Western people anymore" (P1). Participants emphasized they will be patient for change that may take generations to come to fruition because they do not want any more wars or



revolutions (P22; P25; P26). Participants avowed that amid change, they will “do good things for our children” (P25) while also working “to protect our ancestral roots” (P26).

### **Internal Perceptions of Nation Branding**

At the conclusion of 21 interviews, participants watched and responded to a nation branding video produced by Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (P1; P2; P3; P4; P5; P8; P9; P10; P11; P12; P13; P14; P15; P16; P17; P19; P20; P21; P22; P23; P24). Participants acknowledged the government’s function to highlight Vietnam’s best features to attract foreigners and indicated the video accomplished this purpose (P1; P2; P3; P4; P5; P10; P12; P13; P15; P16; P22; P23). The video generated positive feelings. For example, one participant said, “I felt so proud when I saw this video because it introduces Vietnam’s beauty, culture, and food to people around the world” (P4). When watching the video, participants identified images of people in traditional Vietnamese dress (P2; P5) and images of geographic features, especially the lotus and rice fields (P3; P4; P8; P12; P13; P15; P22), as the most authentic representations of Vietnam. Figure 4.3 displays two images that participants perceived as accurate portrayals of Vietnam in the nation branding stimulus. One participant further acknowledged the appropriateness of the music in the video because it is the “traditional music of Vietnam” (P8).

However, participants also noted the video ignores some important aspects of Vietnam. For example, after watching the video, one participant stated, “That is not all of my country” (P11). Participants indicated the video fails to depict the realities of pollution caused by industrialization (P1; P11; P22), chaotic traffic caused by urbanization (P3; P5; P11), and crime such as robbery (P1). Other participants expressed

that the video overlooks Vietnam's rural regions (P1; P3; P23). For example, one participant indicated the video, primarily featuring scenes of cities, portrays Vietnam as a developed country when it is actually developing slowly, especially in rural areas (P10). Another criticized the video for showing graduation scenes at a foreign private university in Vietnam rather than the inferior facilities at public universities where most Vietnamese attend (P11). One participant asserted that foreigners who watch the video will "see that our country is very beautiful, but they are not prepared for the negative things" (P1).

### **Cultural Mediators' Interpretations of Citizen Diplomacy**

Research question 2 asks how cultural mediators perceive citizen diplomacy and interpret their experiences interacting with foreigners during citizen diplomacy activities. This research question was answered by inductively analyzing the qualitative data collected from participant observation hours ( $N = 27$ ) with four organizations that facilitate exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners and in-depth interviews ( $N = 27$ ) with Vietnamese citizens who interact with foreigners during citizen diplomacy activities. In addition to expanding the country identity constructs identified in previous literature, the qualitative dataset provides findings about communication that highlights cultural differences during citizen diplomacy, cultural mediators' motivations for engaging in citizen diplomacy, and cultural mediators' experiences and feelings during citizen diplomacy, including the perceived role and impact of cultural mediators.

### **Manifestations of Cultural Differences**

One theme that emerged inductively in interview and participant observation data centers on cultural differences and demonstrates a paradox in communication about

cultural differences. Participants minimized cultural differences (P13; P22; P25; P26) while simultaneously communicating to explain cultural differences and cultural misunderstandings. This theme elucidates differences in collectivism versus individualism and high power distance versus low power distance.

During interviews and observed exchanges, participants acknowledged physical differences such as stature and weight between Vietnamese and foreigners (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; P1; P8; P25; P26; P27). However, they minimized differences beyond physical traits. For example, one interview participant said, “Foreigners are the same, just with different hair color and skin color” (P27). Another avowed, “We are different races, white and yellow, but we live happy together. There is no difference” (P25). When communicating about Vietnam’s country identity, however, both participants later described areas of cultural difference in education and business contexts.

Similarly, at the beginning of one interview, a participant said, “I don’t notice any cultural differences. Maybe I am lucky because I have met a lot of foreigners who are very nice and gentle and polite” (P13). The same participant, however, later gave examples of cultural differences, especially related to nonverbal communication: “An Australian, when he went to go back to his country, he hugged me. But at the airport in Vietnam or in public places, it is weird and so I don’t do something like this” (P13).

Further, while interview participants minimized cultural differences between themselves and the foreigners with whom they personally know, they pointed out cultural differences, in both positive and negative terms, between Vietnam and other countries. In other words, participants asserted that Vietnamese and foreigners are different, but that

the foreigners with whom they have interacted are the same as they are – but then participants elaborated on the ways in which they are in fact different from the foreigners with whom they have interacted (P1; P5; P6; P8; P10; P11; P13; P19; P20; P22; P24; P25; P26; P27). Not only did interview participants describe cultural differences between Vietnamese and foreigners, the data reveal intercultural communication during citizen diplomacy activities emphasizes cultural differences: Participants communicated about constructs associated with Vietnam's country identity by comparing and contrasting Vietnamese culture to the cultures of foreigners' countries (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016). Such differences included overt differences in verbal and nonverbal communication as well as differences situated in the deep structure of Vietnam's culture.

For example, during citizen diplomacy activities, participants talked with foreigners about Vietnamese cultural norms for managing motorbike and pedestrian traffic (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P2; P3; P4; P5; P6; P8; P10; P11; P13; P15; P19; P20; P24), queuing (or not) and bargaining in the market (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P2; P13; P14; P15; P19), eating dogs (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P24; P25; P26; P27), wearing clothing to maintain white skin (Da Nang, August, 11, 2016; P1; P4; P6; P13; P14; P15), and asking personal questions such as those about age and salary (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016;

P1; P13; P16). Differences in nonverbal communication focused on greeting behaviors and public displays of affections. For example, when foreigners initiated shaking hands at the beginning of an exchange, participants seemed embarrassed (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016). Moreover, a participant explained that during a discussion in the park, the foreign couple with whom she was communicating held each other and kissed: “This is terrible in Vietnam. But Americans tell me this is normal” (P6). Another participant noted some foreigners kiss each other on the cheek as a greeting and commented, “In Vietnam, this is quite rude” (P15).

When communicating about the more complex political appeal construct, most interview participants acknowledged differences between Vietnam’s one-party system and the multiparty systems of the United States and other countries, but some emphasized cultural similarities. For example, one participant referenced the speeches of Barack Obama and Michelle Obama to argue dignity and respect are the same in the United States and Vietnam: “So humans are pursuing the common values” (P26). Another participant, in reference to governmental control and human rights, contended, “Everyone loves freedom – we just express it in different ways and we pursue our freedom and happiness in a different way, but at the end of the day the destination is the same. We all have the same needs” (P25). Participants also avowed differences between cultural groups are not as pronounced as they are between those who are politically powerful and those who are powerless in the international community (P11; P22).

**Collectivism.** Interview and participant observation data reveal the cultural dimension of collectivism as a part of the deep structure of Vietnam’s heritage and

culture. Not only is family a dominant variable through which participants perceive the heritage and culture construct as well as other country identity constructs, participants identified emphasis on family and community as a primary cultural difference between Vietnamese and foreigners (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P6; P8; P13; P16; P18; P19; P20; P22; P23; P24; P25; P26; P27). Comparing Vietnam to the United States, one participant said, “We do not focus on the individual; we appreciate that we are united” (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016). One participant linked the collectivistic nature of Vietnamese society to its agrarian history: “Family and community is the center of our life, but the industrial life makes you not have time for other people” (P25). Further, participants indicated Vietnamese, unlike Westerners, avoid conflict with their family members and with those in their neighborhood to maintain harmony and to save face (P1; P8; P15; P22; P25; P26; P27).

According to interview participants, collectivism also influences the level of privacy among family members, friends, and neighbors. One participant acknowledged, “We never respect the privacy between friends. Some Western people they will respect the privacy between friends, but in our country we are very close” (P1). Some participants envisioned a path toward understanding between collectivistic cultures and individualistic cultures. For example, one participant indicated that “in the Western world, privacy is more respected, but in Vietnam the community is more respected” but maintained that foreigners living among Vietnamese provides opportunity “for Western friends to adapt to the local environment for mutual respect and empathy” (P25).

Conversely, another participant cautioned that some foreigners have difficulty navigating the manner in which collectivism affects Vietnam's social and business contexts:

"Foreigners cannot understand the family connection and the bonding" (P20). A unique characteristic of Vietnamese, according to participants, is the ability to live together, even with those unlike themselves, in happiness and peace (P1; P8; P9; P11; P19; P20; P21; P22; P23; P24; P25; P26; P27).

Beyond the compatibility of collectivism and individualism, some participants extolled familial piety and loyalty to the community, while others protested the interconnected and interdependent nature of collectivistic societies. One participant said, "In other countries, the people focus too much time on work. They don't have time for family and for friends. They cannot get close to each other. But here we are very close and we care about each other and it feels more comfortable" (P1). During an observed exchange, a participant declared the Vietnamese way is preferable because it "connects the family closer" (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). Many Vietnamese are proud that Vietnam's culture focuses on family (Personal Communication, August 14, 2016).

Other participants, though, communicated curiosity about and even preference for the Western approach to family and relationships. During two exchanges, participants reacted in awe when foreigners discussed the age at which children gain independence from their parents and the practice of placing elderly parents in convalescent homes; the participants asked numerous questions about such cultural norms (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 4, 2016). One participant said, "I've learned a lot from Western culture, so I would prefer independence and freedom" in matters associated with pursuing

interests, a career, and a family without parental oversight (P27). However, another participant explained her parents' reaction when she revealed her involvement in citizen diplomacy: "My parents talk to me and say, 'You know foreigners in their developed countries they don't take care of their families. You should not learn that'" (P8).

Although the core of Vietnam's culture is close familial relationships within a collectivistic social framework, participants perceived foreigners' communication with family members as more intimate (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016; P8; P24). During an exchange with foreigners, participants indicated Vietnamese experience difficulty in talking about personal matters and feelings with family members (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). Similarly, an interview participant stated, "Vietnamese feel shy when they say I love you, thank you, and sorry – it is not normal in a Vietnamese family" (P24). However, Vietnamese in the young generation are changing and use words such as "I love you" in the public sphere because "they want to be like Western culture" (P24). Moreover, despite close familial relationships, some participants indicated spousal abuse with mostly women as victims is common in Vietnam (P16; P18; P20; P24).

**Knowledge, evidence, and power distance.** In addition to the cultural dimension of collectivism, the data reveal cultural differences between Vietnamese and foreigners specific to epistemological viewpoints (Ho Chi Minh City, August 7, 2016; P1; P20; P25; P26; P27). These differences center on the nature of knowledge and sources of evidence; the latter further relates to power distance and the way in which less powerful members of Vietnamese society accept evidence from those in higher positions on the social hierarchy. Regarding the nature of knowledge, for example, one participant identified



philosophical differences between Vietnamese and foreigners and reported communicating with foreigners about the ways in which the principles of Confucius and Lao Tzu guide Vietnamese thought specific to the importance of learning and the essence of nature and human behavior (P20). Moreover, participants juxtaposed foreigners who value knowledge based on scientific inquiry with Vietnamese who believe in phenomena that cannot be explained by science (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P8; P11; P12; P13; P14; P18; P20; P23; P27). For example, according to participants, Vietnamese rely on folklore and fortunetellers to avoid illness and to identify auspicious days for making major decisions and hosting events such as weddings (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; P12; P13; P15; P27).

Further, interview and participant observation data reveal participants value evidence from individuals who hold a respected place in Vietnamese society. Such esteem is granted because of age, title, and/or perceived authenticity (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P8; P19; P20; P21; P23; P25; P26; P27). Participants, however, distrust information from government sources (P1; P8; P20; P21; P25; P26; P27). Participants asserted official tour guides advance the government perspective about Vietnam's history and society and, thus, are not credible sources for foreigners to learn about Vietnam (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P3; P4; P8; P27). In comparison with official tour guides, "local people can honestly tell foreigners what they feel" (P1).

Moreover, participants contrasted university education in Vietnam with that in other countries (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P8; P11; P13; P14; P15; P17; P18; P20; P21; P25; P26; P27). Communication about the education context highlighted participants' perceptions of source credibility and power relationships. During exchanges with foreigners, participants criticized the political influence on the educational system but did not denunciate Vietnam's teachers (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). One interview participant defended high school teachers: "They had to teach exactly what was in the book; they had to do that to keep working and to keep living and so their students could pass the national history exam" (P21). Further, participants commended university professors for holding Vietnamese students to high standards (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016; P15), but participants had difficulty comprehending foreigners' accounts of approaching and communicating with high-ranking professors via email and during office hours (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016). Some interview participants cited personal experiences with teachers and professors who are working to change educational policies that will encourage greater academic freedom and engagement. Participants avowed academic freedom would further integrate Vietnam into the international community (P13; P20; P21; P25; P26).

### **Motivations for Engagement**

Another theme that emerged in the qualitative dataset centers on cultural mediators' motivation for engaging in citizen diplomacy. During both interviews and observed exchanges, participants consistently gave two reasons for participating in

citizen diplomacy activities. First, participants indicated they want to improve their English speaking and listening skills. Participants view English skills as essential for securing a job with a high salary and for improving Vietnam by further integrating into the international community (Da Nang, August 11, 2016, Ha Noi, August 14, 2016, Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P6; P7; P8; P14; P22; P23; P27). Some Vietnamese perceive, for example, that in a situation in which one graduate has a great amount of knowledge but does not speak English and another graduate possesses half the knowledge but speaks fluent English, the latter will be hired (Personal Communication, August 11, 2016).

Some participants pointed out that Vietnamese, unlike Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans use the Latin script, which they perceive as advantageous to learning English (P5; P25; P26). However, Vietnam's universities focus on English grammar and writing rather than conversational speaking, so participants seek opportunities to practice English with foreigners (P1; P7; P8; P11; P13; P14; P15; P17; P18; P19; P22; P25; P26; P27). During observed exchanges, participants asked foreigners many questions about English vocabulary, accents, idioms, and slang (Ha Noi, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 7, 2016). Some participants asked foreigners if their accents could pass as American accents while others asked if they sounded British "like Simon Cowell" (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016; August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016).

Second, participants indicated they engage in citizen diplomacy to teach foreigners about contemporary Vietnam (Da Nang, August 11, 2016, Ha Noi, August 14, 2016, Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016,

August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016) because, according to one participant, “many people think Vietnam is still at war; other people don’t even know where Vietnam is on the map” (P22). One participant specified entrepreneurs such as herself engage with foreigners because “we want to promote our national heritage, culture, and business to international guests and in return we want to expand our international understanding and our international network” (P26). While nearly every participant stated they talk with foreigners to improve their English skills and to inform others about Vietnam, the data also show that opportunities “to learn about other cultures and perspectives” (P4), “to catch up with Western values” (P25), and “to get aligned with the international community” (P27) motivate participants to engage in citizen diplomacy. Beyond personal benefits, participants are motivated to “contribute something to the society and to the country” by serving as cultural mediators who promote a positive image of Vietnam through intercultural communication with foreigners (P1).

However, interview and participant observation data reveal participants are selective about with whom they communicate. Some participants prefer foreigners with particular physical traits and of certain nationalities. Participants identified foreigners according to their physical appearance, especially skin, eye, and hair color. For example, participants prefer to talk with white foreigners from Western countries, not foreigners from other Asian countries, although they admire the beauty and popular culture of Koreans (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016; P1). During observed exchanges, participants commented on foreigners’ skin and hair color and asked questions about their family members’ skin and hair color. For example, an Irish citizen’s

red hair and freckles drew several questions from participants (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016) as did the pale skin of a couple from Denmark (Da Nang, August 11, 2016).

Interview and participant observation data indicate country image is salient in citizen diplomacy activities involving Vietnamese and foreigners, for participants generally seek out foreigners from countries they associate with positive feelings and perceptions while avoiding foreigners from countries that they associate with negative feelings and perceptions. Participants want to communicate with foreigners from countries in North America and Europe as well as Australia more than with foreigners from other countries. Participants emphasized their familiarity with the geographic features, cultures, universities, and economic and political systems of Western countries, which they learned about from entertainment and news media (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P2; P10; P25). During observed exchanges, participants seemed eager to showcase their knowledge of the foreigner's home country. For example, in an exchange with an American, participants gave brief reports about the lives of Christopher Columbus, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). In an exchange with a Danish couple, one participant stated, "We love your country because your queen gave money for scholarships for Vietnamese students to study in Denmark" (Da Nang, August 11, 2016).

**Positive country image: United States.** Despite the shared wartime history between Vietnam and the United States, the data reveal participants welcome Americans to Vietnam. During an exchange with an American, a participant confirmed there is no

animosity between Vietnam and the United States because “now Americans help build my country” (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). Moreover, participants hope for improved diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the United States, especially to help combat China in the East Sea (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016; P5; P7; P8; P13; P19; P25; P26; P27).

During interviews and observed exchanges, participants explicitly stated their admiration for the United States (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P2; P5; P8; P10; P13; P14; P18; P19; P21; P25; P26; P27), for, according to one participant, “America is the best of the best” (P21). Another participant explained, “The majority of Vietnam is Americanist” and then defined “Americanist” as someone who is not American but loves all things about the United States (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). During exchanges with Americans, participants sometimes asked questions about Vietnamese populations in U.S. cities (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016), although some interview participants, while praising Americans, belittled Viet Kieu, or Vietnamese living overseas, with claims of political bias and outdated perspective of Vietnam (P25; P26).

The data show participants seek communication with Americans because of political, economic, social, and cultural factors associated with the United States’ country image. First, political leaders such as Obama influence participants’ perceptions of the United States (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 7, 2016, August 14, 2016; P9; P10; P19; P25). For example, one participant showed the researcher a video of Obama’s car in Ho Chi Minh City and

explained Vietnamese lined the streets because “he is friendly” and “the president of the best country” (P10). During observed exchanges, participants showed their knowledge of the U.S. government by talking about the legislative, executive, and judicial branches (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). Participants were also eager to discuss Donald J. Trump and Hillary Clinton, candidates in the 2016 U.S. political election (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 6, 2016; P2; P8; P9; P25). One participant noted during an exchange with Americans that the real advantage of living in the United States is political freedom as well as freedom of speech, religion, and movement, which are limited in Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016).

Second, the data show the U.S. economic system and the notion of the American dream influence participants’ perceptions of the United States (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016, Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 7, 2016; P5; P13; P14; P26; P27). For example, one participant indicated he wanted to talk with Americans because they come from a “modern and developed country” (P27). Another wanted to talk with Americans about “economic opportunities in America” (P14). During an exchange, one participant described the “American doctrine” as working hard to have a better standard of living; he contended Vietnamese who assume Americans are naturally wealthy do not understand how hard Americans work to earn money (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016).

Third, the data show U.S. social appeal, particularly good universities and abundant educational opportunities, draws participants to engage with Americans (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016; P5; P13; P18; P25; P26). One participant called the United States “a dreamland for a good education and a brighter future” (P18). While

participants indicated Vietnamese, like Americans, have high standards in education, studying in the United States is generally unattainable for Vietnamese because of cost. Also, some parents do not want their children, especially daughters, to move far away. During exchanges, participants talked about Vietnamese who have achieved success in U.S. universities. For example, participants told an American about Vietnamese students who attend Harvard University and about Ngô Bảo Châu, a mathematician at the University of Chicago (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). One participant applauded the opening of Fulbright University in Vietnam, a collaboration between the U.S. Department of State and Harvard University, as representing “freedom of education, freedom of theories without any political influence” (P25).

Finally, the data show participants seek communication with Americans because of cultural factors such as films, television shows, and music (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016; August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P5; P8; P10; P14; P25; P27). For example, participants indicated they watch *Friends* and *How I Met Your Mother* to learn English and to understand the “Western way of thinking” (Ho Chi Minh City, August 4, 2016). During two exchanges with Americans, participants asked Americans to sing a famous song from the United States (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016). Participants further showed their knowledge of U.S. culture and history, for example, by talking about icons such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Ray Charles (P25).

Participants indeed recognized problems in the United States such as gun violence, including police shootings, but interpreted such events as anomalies (Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016). While some participants mentioned the legacy of Agent



Orange, they indicated Vietnamese still welcome Americans because the war was against the U.S. government, not the American people (P8; P10; P15; P27) and because in recent years the United States has contributed to Vietnam's economic development as well as healthcare and education (P14; P15; P21).

**Negative country image: China.** The data reveal participants have negative perceptions of China. While acknowledging China's influence on Vietnam through culture, food, religion, philosophy, and political ideology (P5; P19; P22; P25; P27), participants expressed Vietnam's disdain for China (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August, 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P8; P13; P19; P22; P25; P26; P27). During an exchange, one participant told foreigners, "A big problem for Vietnam is China" (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). In another exchange, participants emphasized Vietnam is culturally distinct from China (Da Nang, August 11, 2016). Although not condoning this action, participants pointed out that some hotels and restaurants in Vietnam, especially those near popular beach destinations, have signs that read, "We don't serve Chinese" (P8; P13; P23).

One participant indicated Vietnam must deal with China cautiously yet diplomatically because of the geographic proximity of the two countries: "China is a big guy and Vietnam is a little guy, but we live in the same area so we can't run away so we have to protect our house or they will get our house. But you have to be patient and smart and try not to fight them, but we will never surrender" (P27). Other participants suggested Vietnam has a choice between strengthening ties with the United States and strengthening ties with China. Displaying cynicism of improved relations with China, one

participant said, “There are two reasons why you do not trust: You don’t know each other or you are too known to each other. We know the Chinese too well” (P25). Another participant confirmed, “Between the U.S. government and the Chinese government, the U.S. government is far better” (P26).

As rationale to distrust China, participants explained Chinese companies that own factories in Vietnam caused environmental damage that polluted the air, poisoned the food supply, and killed the fish (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016; P1; P11; P15; P27). According to participants, Vietnam’s political leaders looked the other way after the Chinese companies paid them bribes (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016; P11). Further, in discussions with foreigners, participants used narratives as evidence that Chinese are dangerous. One participant told foreigners about a Chinese police officer who stabbed an innocent Chinese citizen (Ho Chi Minh City, August 6, 2016), while another told foreigners about Chinese citizens’ cruelty toward dogs (Ho Chi Minh City, August 2, 2016). Finally, an interview participant discussed Chinese students’ mistreatment of Vietnamese students at universities in the United States (P26).

### **Cultural Mediators’ Experiences**

The final theme that emerged in the qualitative dataset centers on the experience of being a cultural mediator engaged in citizen diplomacy, including the role of a cultural mediator, the emotions associated with communicating with foreigners as a cultural mediator, and the perceived impact that cultural mediators have on foreigners and on themselves. Figure 4.4 summarizes these findings.

**Role.** Interview participants described the role of a cultural mediator as someone who understands the perspectives of foreigners and connects foreigners with the “real Vietnam” apart from the government narrative (P14; P15; P22). According to participants, the primary qualifications to be a cultural mediator are the ability and willingness to communicate with foreigners about Vietnam in English and an appreciation for differing worldviews and cultural perspectives (Da Nang, August 11, 2016; Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, August 7, 2016; P1; P6; P7; P8; P13; P14; P22; P23; P27). Participants viewed themselves as competent in the role of a cultural mediator in Vietnam because they are Vietnamese citizens and because of skills developed by traveling to foreign countries and/or by interacting extensively with foreigners through face-to-face communication and/or social media (P1; P5; P11; P13; P15; P17; P25; P26; P27).

Interview participants gave numerous examples about how they make effort to talk with foreigners for the purpose of connecting foreigners with Vietnam’s culture and heritage. One participant reported initiating communication with foreign marketing professionals and inviting them to participate in a Vietnamese culinary tradition: “We eat dog meat. Is that bad or good? It is very subjective. But dog meat brings Westerners closer to the local mindset” (P25). In cases such as this, participants encouraged foreigners to assimilate to Vietnamese cultural practices; in other cases, participants adopted the cultural practices of the foreigners. For example, during exchanges with foreigners, participants often introduced themselves with names such as Serena, Dorothy, Helen, and Bill instead of by their Vietnamese names (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016).

Sometimes the role of a cultural mediator advances from someone who joins cultural groups together into an arbitrator who reconciles differences between cultural groups and, according to one interview participant, “corrects misunderstandings about our culture and also our behaviors” (P1). Interview and participant observation data show cultural mediators address misunderstanding by communicating the reason for Vietnamese behavior. For example, in every observed exchange in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi, participants explained traffic patterns and regulations and made suggestions for navigating traffic in the way Vietnamese navigate traffic (Ha Noi, August 14, 2016; Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016, August 7, 2016). Further, participants explained to foreigners that Vietnamese stare at them because Vietnamese are curious (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016; P20) and “because the foreigner is beautiful because they have the yellow hair, the gold hair, and even they have the high nose” (P1). Participants also explicated the reasons for Vietnamese often asking personal questions such as “How old are you?” and “How much is your salary?” One participant said, “This is Vietnamese habit. When parents have a son or daughter who works for a company, they always ask, ‘How much money do you get for a month?’” (P13). Another confirmed, “Parents talk with their friends about how much their children are earning” (P16). One organizational leader specified that she directs members not to ask questions about age, salary, and marital status during exchanges: “It is OK to ask Vietnamese these questions but not foreigners” (Personal Communication, August 14, 2016).

Some cultural differences are more challenging to reconcile because, according to interview participants, Vietnamese and foreigners have a different way of thinking (P1; P8; P22; P25; P27). One participant, for example, shared experiences functioning as a cultural mediator in a foreign-owned financial company who mediated between Vietnamese colleagues and foreigner colleagues and customers. The participant said misinterpretations abounded because foreigners are direct about their opinions, whereas a Vietnamese employee will smile and be friendly even when they disagree or are angered (P8). Another participant narrated experiences as a cultural mediator who worked with a multinational film crew: “Westerners are blunt and aggressive, and Vietnamese do not understand why, so I have to stand in the middle and help them communicate with each other... It is difficult, but I can understand both people and I help them to understand the differences. I have to try to keep myself very balanced” (P22).

**Emotions.** Interview and participant observation data reveal fear as the common emotion experienced by novice cultural mediators. Participants reported that before they regularly interacted with foreigners, the language barrier (P11; P13; P15; P27) and wartime history (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2013; P5; P6) provoked anxiety about communicating with foreigners, especially Americans. For example, during an observed exchange, citing fear about talking with Americans about the wartime past, a participant shied away from a discussion with an American who was asking questions about the war (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016). Similarly, interview participants indicated foreigners who ask a lot of questions about Vietnam, especially questions about the war, cause

anxiety and fear because the young generation lacks in-depth knowledge about Vietnam's history (P5; P6; P8; P9; P15; P19; P21).

However, participants indicated their emotions associated with communicating with foreigners change over time: Fear decreases and happiness increases the more participants communicate with foreigners (P5; P8; P9; P13; P14; P27). For example, one participant who interacted with foreign diplomats and numerous expats through his previous job relayed, "Day by day, minute by minute, I feel more confident and better when interacting with the foreigner" (P13). Another participant with extensive experience communicating with foreigners in business and social contexts acknowledged that talking with Americans about the war is emotional because a family member lives with the effects of Agent Orange, but still her overall sentiment about functioning as a cultural mediator has shifted from apprehension to one of pleasure (P8). Another participant reported he was afraid of foreigners until talking with them more frequently at work and in social situations. Now he seeks opportunities to be a cultural mediator: "Foreigners have become like my magnets. I have to go over to them whenever I see them to start a conversation" (P27).

**Impact.** Participants view their role as cultural mediators as central to promoting understanding and to strengthening cultural relations and, for those who engage with foreigners in the business context, business relations; they assert their participation in citizen diplomacy corrects misrepresentations from media sources and affects Vietnam's country image when the foreigners with whom they interact communicate with people back in their home countries (P1; P3; P4; P5; P8; P9; P10; P13; P14; P15; P17; P24; P25;

P26; P27). Cultural mediators avow cultural understanding happens best by developing community between Vietnamese and foreigners through face-to-face interaction; mediated communication and government sources are not as effective (P1; P3; P4; P15; P25). For example, one participant said, “It is difficult for you to live under the skin of the local people to understand the culture, but when the observer and the observed become one, then understanding happens” (P25).

Participants expressed concern that, prior to citizen diplomacy activities, foreigners have sparse knowledge about Vietnam or knowledge limited to negative portrayals in media sources such as films and the internet. One participant commented that the United States is a “media dictatorship” and that “under the eyes of the Western media, you don’t need to know about Vietnam” (P25). Another participant pointed out that media representations of Vietnam focus on war and, thus, “many people have the impression that Vietnam is still at war or that it is a very bad and undeveloped country” (P5). Participants reported encountering foreigners who feared interacting with Vietnamese (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P5; P7; P8; P19; P25; P27). Such fear was rooted in either Vietnam’s wartime history or its contemporary communist government. For example, according to participants, Americans and French assume Vietnamese dislike them because of their respective country’s historical involvement in Vietnam (P1; P5; P7; P8; P19; P25; P27). Moreover, one participant contended, “Foreigners are afraid of our country because of the communists like in North Korea or China. But the communists here act different. They give us more freedom and they give Americans more freedom to get here and they don’t look after the Americans

when they travel here. So I think some need to know about that so they feel free when they travel here” (P1).

Participants believe their role as a cultural mediator influences Vietnam’s country image for the better. Participants noted, however, that although they are eager to share Vietnam’s culture and heritage, some foreigners have limited interest in learning about Vietnam and in developing community with Vietnamese. For example, participants indicated some tourists only want shopping recommendations or directions to war tourism sites; conversely, some tourists, but more so foreigners who are in Vietnam to live and/or to work, are vested in understanding the nuances of Vietnam’s culture (P1; P8; P15; P25). With foreigners who are motivated to understand cultural differences, cultural mediators contextualize variables associated with the culture and heritage construct, especially food and religion, within geographic features while emphasizing Vietnam is a peaceful, independent country (Ho Chi Minh City, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 6, 2016; P1; P5; P8; P11; P13; P15; P25; P27).

Further, participants conveyed that communication during citizen diplomacy activities promotes enduring friendships between Vietnamese and foreigners; such friendships are maintained through additional face-to-face meetings or social media (P1; P6; P8; P10; P11; P13; P14; P17; P24; P27). As friendships progress, however, foreigners are more likely to disclose negative perceptions of Vietnam’s culture and policies; criticisms are often associated with traffic, theft, and businesses that charge foreigners more money than they charge local people for products and services (Ho Chi Minh City, July 23, 2016, July 30, 2016, August 2, 2016 August 4, 2016, August 6, 2016,



August 7, 2016; P1; P6; P8; P10; P13; P14; P15; P24). Interview participants asserted their engagement with foreigners remedies these negative perceptions. According to participants, their experiences as cultural mediators provide evidence that prolonged citizen diplomacy activities, including discussing cultural differences and accompanying foreigners to local businesses to explain local customs, foster an understanding that brings foreigners to appreciate Vietnam and its culture despite previous grievances (P1; P6; P8; P10; P13; P14; P15; P24; P25; P26; P27).

Finally, interview participants avowed functioning as a cultural mediator in citizen diplomacy has changed them for the better. Some participants indicated they are unable to travel internationally but interacting with foreigners in Vietnam has taught them about the world (P1; P8; P14; P15; P27). For example, one participant, citing his newfound knowledge of differing communication norms, familial structures and functions, and political systems, said interacting with foreigners “changed my mindset about life” (P27). Another participant purported he and his colleagues improved their global awareness as the result of working with foreigners: “We are open-minded. We know more about other countries” (P13). In addition to developing global awareness, according to another participant, communication in citizen diplomacy reduces intercultural obstacles and promotes international networks: “When we talk to each other, then we feel safer and we make friends” (P1).

### **Perceptions of External and Internal Reputation**

Research question 3 examines cultural mediators’ perception of overall external reputation in the international community. Further, research question 3 examines cultural

mediators' perception of internal reputation as measured by the country identity constructs – physical appeal, economic appeal, culture and heritage, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal. Quantitative survey data ( $N = 368$ ) were used to answer this research question.

The first item in the CRI and an item in this survey asked participants to rate Vietnam's overall reputation in the international community. The results indicate the mean perception of Vietnam's external reputation was slightly above the middle of the scale ( $M = 3.06$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ). This means participants generally rated the perceived favorability of Vietnam's reputation as "neither agree nor disagree."

Further, the results explain internal perceptions of the variables associated with the country identity constructs. Participants had the highest perceptions of Vietnam's culinary experiences ( $M = 4.69$ ;  $SD = .664$ ), beautiful landscapes ( $M = 4.68$ ;  $SD = .675$ ), historical past ( $M = 4.54$ ;  $SD = .840$ ), diversity ( $M = 4.40$ ;  $SD = .891$ ), friendly citizens ( $M = 4.37$ ;  $SD = .890$ ), cultural traditions ( $M = 4.37$ ;  $SD = .893$ ), emphasis on family ( $M = 4.37$ ;  $SD = .925$ ), and religion ( $M = 4.05$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ). The results also indicate participants like Vietnam ( $M = 4.45$ ;  $SD = .904$ ) and respect Vietnam ( $M = 4.43$ ;  $SD = .898$ ). Table 4.3 displays the ten highest rated variables associated with perception of Vietnam's country identity.

The results demonstrate participants had the lowest perceptions of Vietnam's standard of living ( $M = 1.98$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ), ability to outperform competitors ( $M = 1.98$ ;  $SD = 1.04$ ), roads and traffic regulations ( $M = 2.01$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ), and healthcare system ( $M = 2.08$ ;  $SD = .983$ ). Participants also rated low the variable associated with Vietnam's

leaders communicating an appealing vision for the future of the country ( $M = 2.16$ ;  $SD = 1.27$ ). Table 4.4 displays the five lowest rated variables associated with perception of Vietnam's country identity.

Thus, the results of research question 3 indicate that while cultural mediators' perception of overall external reputation in the international community is in the middle of the scale, perception of internal reputation related to variables associated with the country identity constructs range from low, such as standard of living, to high, such as culinary experiences. Perception of internal reputation related to variables within the heritage and culture, human capital, and emotional appeal constructs are among those rated high, while perception of internal reputation related to variables within the economic appeal and political appeal constructs are rated low. Variables within the physical appeal and social appeal constructs display more variance in ratings. For example, within the physical appeal construct, participants rated high beautiful landscapes but rated low variables associated with man-made infrastructure.

### **Amount of Communication About Country Identity**

Research question 4a examines how often cultural mediators communicate with foreigners about variables within the country identity constructs during citizen diplomacy activities. Further, research question 4b specifically examines how often cultural mediators communicate with Americans about the American War, U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations, and cultural differences between Americans and Vietnamese. Quantitative survey data ( $N = 368$ ) were used to answer this research question.

In regards to communication about specific variables related to country identity, the results indicate participants talk with foreigners the most about Vietnam's cuisine ( $M = 3.67$ ;  $SD = 1.29$ ), friendly citizens ( $M = 3.50$ ;  $SD = 1.30$ ), cultural traditions ( $M = 3.14$ ;  $SD = 1.31$ ), tolerant and adaptable citizens ( $M = 3.12$ ;  $SD = 1.30$ ), entertainment activities ( $M = 3.01$ ;  $SD = 1.23$ ), diversity ( $M = 2.96$ ;  $SD = 1.27$ ), traffic ( $M = 2.95$ ;  $SD = 1.26$ ), emphasis on family ( $M = 2.90$ ;  $SD = 1.30$ ), and educational opportunities ( $M = 2.88$ ;  $SD = 1.20$ ). The results also indicate participants feel proud when they talk with foreigners about Vietnam ( $M = 3.19$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ). The constructs represented by these variables are heritage and culture, human capital, physical appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal. Table 4.5 displays the ten highest rated variables associated with the amount of communication with foreigners about country identity.

Further, the results demonstrate participants talk with foreigners the least about Vietnam's manufacturing industries ( $M = 1.69$ ;  $SD = .929$ ), taxes ( $M = 1.80$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ), political leaders ( $M = 1.92$ ;  $SD = 1.18$ ), and innovations in technology and research ( $M = 1.95$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ). Participants also rated low the variable associated with talking about Vietnam's leaders communicating an appealing vision for the future of the country ( $M = 1.94$ ;  $SD = 1.21$ ). The constructs represented by these variables are economic appeal, political appeal, and human capital. Table 4.6 displays the five lowest rated variables associated with the amount of communication with foreigners about country identity.

### **Communicating With Americans**

The survey results further show the rating for the amount of communication with Americans about the American War were low, indicating participants talk about the war

“rarely” or “occasionally” ( $M = 1.86$ ;  $SD = 1.13$ ). Participants rated the amount of communication with Americans about current U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations slightly higher ( $M = 2.11$ ;  $SD = 1.19$ ). The highest rated item associated with communication with Americans measured the amount of communication about cultural differences between Americans and Vietnamese; participants indicated they talk about such differences “occasionally” or “sometimes” ( $M = 2.79$ ;  $SD = 1.23$ ).

Thus, the results of research question 4 indicate that during citizen diplomacy, participants talk “frequently” about Vietnam’s cuisine and Vietnam’s friendly citizens. The American War and U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations are not salient during citizen diplomacy activities with Americans, although cultural mediators do communicate about cultural differences between Americans and Vietnamese.

### **Relationships Between Perception of and Communication About Country Identity**

Research question 5 examines the relationship between cultural mediators’ perceptions of the country identity constructs and the amount of communication with foreigners about the country identity constructs during citizen diplomacy activities. Quantitative survey data ( $N = 368$ ) were used to answer this research question.

### **Comparing Perception and the Amount of Communication**

Following the merging of variables that measured perceptions of a particular country identity construct into one composite variable, the results show the ratings for the country identity constructs were as follows: emotional appeal ( $M = 4.17$ ;  $SD = .905$ ), heritage and culture ( $M = 3.94$ ;  $SD = .645$ ), human capital ( $M = 3.40$ ;  $SD = .756$ ), social appeal ( $M = 3.03$ ;  $SD = .992$ ), economic appeal ( $M = 3.01$ ;  $SD = .797$ ), physical appeal

( $M = 2.92$ ;  $SD = .655$ ), and political appeal ( $M = 2.76$ ;  $SD = 1.01$ ). Following the merging of variables that measured the amount of communication about a particular country identity construct into one composite variable, the results show the ratings for these country identity constructs were as follows: talk about emotional appeal ( $M = 2.90$ ;  $SD = 1.02$ ), talk about heritage and culture ( $M = 2.83$ ;  $SD = .995$ ), talk about human capital ( $M = 2.48$ ;  $SD = .882$ ), talk about physical appeal ( $M = 2.45$ ;  $SD = .888$ ), talk about social appeal ( $M = 2.38$ ;  $SD = .970$ ), talk about economic appeal ( $M = 2.09$ ;  $SD = .865$ ), and talk about political appeal ( $M = 2.02$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ).

Table 4.7 displays the ratings for the variables associated with perception of and communication about emotional appeal. Table 4.8 displays the ratings for the variables associated with perception of and communication about heritage and culture. Table 4.9 displays the ratings for the variables associated with perception of and communication about human capital. Table 4.10 displays the ratings for the variables associated with perception of and communication about social appeal. Table 4.11 displays the ratings for the variables associated with perception of and communication about economic appeal. Table 4.12 displays the ratings for variables associated with perception of and communication about physical appeal. Table 4.13 displays the ratings for variables associated with perception of and communication about political appeal.

Figure 4.5 compares the mean ratings for perceptions of the country identity constructs versus the amount of communication about the country identity constructs. The means were sorted from highest to lowest based on perception ratings. In all cases, the perception rating for a construct was higher than the communication rating for the

same construct. The maximum discrepancy between perception and the amount of communication was found in the emotional appeal construct (difference in  $M = 1.27$ ). The minimum was in the physical appeal construct (difference in  $M = .47$ ).

### **Correlations Between Perception and the Amount of Communication**

Preliminary analyses indicated the sufficient reliability of the scales to measure each country identity construct and the normality of the composite variable for each construct. Thus, a Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between perception of each country identity construct and communication about each country identity construct. There was a weak, positive correlation between perception of culture and heritage and the amount of communication about culture and heritage, which was statistically significant ( $r = .251, N = 368, p < .001$ ). Similarly, there was a weak, positive correlation between perception of emotional appeal and the amount of communication about emotional appeal, which was statistically significant ( $r = .243, N = 368, p = .001$ ). In other cases, there was not a statistically significant relationship between cultural mediators' perception of a country identity construct and how often cultural mediators communicate about that country identity construct. There was also a moderate, positive correlation between perception of economic appeal and the amount of communication about emotional appeal, which was statistically significant ( $r = .335, N = 368, p < .001$ ). Table 4.14 shows the correlations between perceptions of and communication about the country identity constructs.

Thus, the results of research question 5 indicate cultural mediators have high perceptions of the emotional appeal, heritage and culture, and human capital constructs,

and they also communicate most often about these constructs. Further, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between cultural mediators' perception of heritage and culture and how often cultural mediators communicate about heritage and culture. Within the heritage and culture construct, however, Vietnam's unique culinary experiences is the sole variable about which cultural mediators communicate "frequently" with foreigners during citizen diplomacy activities. Finally, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between cultural mediators' perception of emotional appeal and how often cultural mediators communicate about emotional appeal. However, the data show a discrepancy between perception and the amount of communication about emotional appeal, which suggests that cultural mediators might be hesitant to express favorable feelings and respect for their own country during citizen diplomacy activities.

### **Influencers of Country Identity and Communication About Country Identity**

Research question 6a investigates which aspects of country identity influence cultural mediators' overall feelings toward country identity. The scale that measured heritage and culture and the scale that measured human capital were analyzed further because variables were added to these scales based on findings within the qualitative data. Research question 6b investigates which aspects of country identity influence cultural mediators' amount of communication with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy. Finally, research question 6c explores characteristics of cultural mediators that influence the amount of communication with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy. Quantitative survey data ( $N = 368$ ) were used to answer this research question.



## **Influencers of Feelings Toward Country Identity**

**Analyzing heritage and culture variables.** There was a strong, positive significant correlation between perceptions of emotional appeal and culture and heritage ( $r = .532$ ,  $N = 368$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, emotional appeal ( $M = 4.17$ ;  $SD = .905$ ) and heritage and culture ( $M = 3.94$ ;  $SD = .645$ ) have the highest ratings among the country identity constructs. The emotional appeal construct is unique since it measured a cultural mediator's internal feelings, while the heritage and culture construct (and the other country identity constructs) was measured by variables associated with external phenomena apart from the cultural mediator. Thus, regression analyses were run to examine the relationship between emotional appeal (dependent variable) and potential predictors within the culture and heritage construct (independent variables). Table 4.15 shows the Pearson correlations among the variables in the heritage and culture scale to indicate none is strongly correlated (for each variable  $r < .634$ ); since each  $r < .70$ , the items can be used as independent variables in a regression model. The assumption of normality was tested via examination of a boxplot, Q-Q plot, and histogram, and linearity and homogeneity of variance were tested via examination of scatterplots. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.109, which is acceptable, and the collinearity statistics were within the accepted limits (tolerance values were between .701 and .901, which is above the .10 threshold, and VIF values were between 1.110 and 1.427, which is below the 10 cut-off).

The results of a multiple linear regression indicate three variables within the heritage and culture construct were positively and significantly correlated with overall emotional appeal: emphasis on family (Beta = .297,  $p < .001$ ), cultural diversity (Beta =

.202,  $p < .001$ ), and fashion and beauty (Beta = .166,  $p = .001$ ), which means participants with higher values on these variables tend to have a higher composite values on emotional appeal. A regression model ( $p < .001$ ) with the three predictors accounted for 32.7% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .318$ , which, according to Cohen (1992), is a large size effect.

A simple linear regression model ( $p < .001$ ) with the family variable as the sole variable also predicted emotional appeal. The family variable was tested because it is not an established measure within the heritage and culture scale but was added to this survey based on findings within the qualitative data. Perception of the importance of family accounted for 24.2% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .238$ , which is a large size effect (Cohen, 1992).

Finally, two simple linear regressions were run – one using the heritage and culture scale with the family variable and one using the heritage and culture scale with the family variable removed as a predictor of overall feelings toward country identity. The regression model ( $p < .001$ ) with the family variable accounted for 28.3% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .280$ . Cronbach's alpha for the scale with the family variable was  $\alpha = .821$ . The regression model ( $p < .001$ ) without the family variable accounted for 25.7% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .254$ . Cronbach's alpha for the scale without the family variable was  $\alpha = .793$ . Thus, along with PCA, regression analyses and reliability tests support the addition of the family variable to the heritage and culture scale. Table 4.16 shows the results of the two linear regressions.

**Analyzing human capital variables.** Regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between emotional appeal (dependent variable) and potential predictors within the human capital construct (independent variables). Table 4.17 shows the Pearson correlations among the variables in the human capital scale to indicate none is very strongly correlated (for each variable  $r < .645$ ). The assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were tested and satisfied. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.963. Further, the collinearity statistics were within the accepted limits (tolerance values were between .475 and .646, and VIF values were between 1.549 and 2.105).

The results of a multiple linear regression indicate three variables within the human capital construct were positively and significantly correlated with overall emotional appeal: citizens as well-educated (Beta = .279,  $p < .001$ ), citizens as hardworking (Beta = .262,  $p < .001$ ), and citizens as creative and critical thinkers (Beta = .170,  $p = .019$ ), which means participants with higher values on these variables tend to have higher composite values on emotional appeal. A regression model ( $p < .001$ ) with the three predictors accounted for 41.7% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .410$ , which is a large size effect (Cohen, 1992).

A simple linear regression model ( $p < .001$ ) with the hardworking variable as the sole variable also predicted emotional appeal. This work ethic variable was tested because it is not an established measure within the human capital scale but was added to this survey based on findings within the qualitative data. Perception of citizens as hardworking accounted for 31.7% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .314$ , which is a large size effect (Cohen, 1992).

Finally, two simple linear regressions were run – one using the human capital scale with the hardworking variable and one using the human capital scale with the hardworking variable removed as a predictor of overall feelings toward country identity. The regression model ( $p < .001$ ) with the hardworking variable accounted for 35.4% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .351$ . Cronbach's alpha for the scale with the hardworking variable was  $\alpha = .856$ . The regression model ( $p < .001$ ) without the hardworking variable accounted for 31.9% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .315$ . Cronbach's alpha for the scale without the hardworking variable was  $\alpha = .836$ . Thus, along with PCA, regression analyses and reliability tests support the addition of the hardworking variable to the human capital scale. Table 4.18 shows the results of the two linear regressions.

**Analyzing the drivers of positive feelings about country identity.** While controlling for biological sex, gender, region of origin, and current city of residence, a two-stage hierarchal multiple regression was conducted to determine which of the survey variables that measured perceptions of various country identity constructs predicted overall positive feelings about country identity (emotional appeal). The relevant data assumptions for normality, homogeneity of variance, independence of variables, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were tested and satisfied. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.223. The collinearity statistics were within the accepted limits (tolerance values were between .126 and .731, and VIF values were between 1.368 and 7.953).

At stage one, control variables ( $p = .036$ ) explained 4.9% with an adjusted  $R^2 = .030$  of the variance. The only demographic variable that exerted positive statistically

significant influence on feelings toward Vietnam was region of origin ( $\text{Beta} = .047, p = .036$ ). At stage two, the variables related to the physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, and social appeal constructs formed a model ( $p < .001$ ) that accounted for 69.3% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .600$ , which is a large size effect (Cohen, 1992). Thus, perception of country identity statistically significantly predicted emotional appeal. The variables that exerted positive statistically significant influence on feelings toward Vietnam were emphasis on family, citizens as well-educated, citizens as creative and critical thinkers, political stability, and citizens as hardworking; the variable citizens as athletic exerted negative statistically significant influence on feelings toward Vietnam. Table 4.19 shows the results of these variables as determined by the hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Then the composite variables that measured perceptions of physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, and social appeal were tested as predictors of overall feelings toward Vietnam. According to scatterplots, boxplots, Q-Q plots, and histograms, the data were suitable for use as independent variables in a regression model. Further, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.142. Table 4.20 displays the results of the multicollinearity test of the composite scales that measured each of the country identity constructs.

The model ( $p < .001$ ) accounted for 47.4% of the variation in emotional appeal with an adjusted  $R^2 = .459$ , a large size effect (Cohen, 1992). The variables that exerted positive statistically significant influence on feelings toward Vietnam were social appeal

(Beta = .308,  $p < .001$ ), heritage and culture (Beta = .247,  $p = .001$ ), and human capital (Beta = .179,  $p = .045$ ). Table 4.21 shows the results of this multiple regression analysis.

### **Influencers of the Amount of Communication About Country Identity**

The first item in this survey asked participants to rate their overall amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam during citizen diplomacy. The results show the mean amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam was slightly below the middle of the scale ( $M = 2.82$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ). This indicates participants talk about Vietnam “occasionally” or “sometimes” during citizen diplomacy, which suggests cultural mediators talk more about foreigners’ home countries than about Vietnam.

A two-stage hierarchal multiple regression was conducted to identify which variables that measured perceptions of the country identity constructs predicted the overall amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam during citizen diplomacy activities. The suitability of the variables for regression analysis, including normality and homogeneity of variance, was confirmed. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.930. The collinearity statistics were within the accepted limits (tolerance values were between .126 and .723, and VIF values were between 1.383 and 7.941).

At stage one, control variables explained 2.7% with an adjusted  $R^2 = .007$  of the variance; however, this model was not statistically significant ( $p = .245$ ). At stage two, the variables related to physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal formed a model ( $p = .030$ ) that accounted for 34.1% of the variation in the amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam with an adjusted  $R^2 = .114$ , a medium size effect (Cohen,

1992). Thus, perceptions of country identity variables statistically significantly predicted the amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam. The variables friendly citizens and well-developed manufacturing industries exerted positive statistically significant influence on the amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam. The variable rich historical past exerted negative statistically significant influence on communication with foreigners about Vietnam. Table 4.22 shows the results of these variables as determined by the hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Then the composite variables that measured perceptions of physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal were tested as predictors of the overall amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam. According to scatterplots, boxplots, Q-Q plots, and histograms, the data were suitable for use as independent variables in a regression model. Further, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.884. The model ( $p = .001$ ) accounted for 11.7% of the variation in the amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam with an adjusted  $R^2 = .086$ , which is a small size effect (Cohen, 1992). The variable that exerted positive statistically significant influence on the amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam was economic appeal (Beta = .599,  $p < .001$ ). Table 4.23 shows the results of this multiple regression analysis.

**Analyzing characteristics of cultural mediators.** Finally, tests were conducted to explore personal characteristics of cultural mediators that influence how often they communicate with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. According to a t-distribution, cultural mediators who had either lived in or traveled to at

least one foreign country reported engaging in communication with foreigners in Vietnam more often ( $M = 3.28$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ) than those who had never left Vietnam ( $M = 2.83$ ;  $SD = 1.14$ ). There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ( $p = .271$ ). Thus, the amount of communication rating for cultural mediators who had spent time in a foreign country was .46 (95% CI, .09 to .82) higher than that of cultural mediators who had never been in a foreign country. The difference in ratings was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ).

Then a simple linear regression was conducted to understand the effect of attitude about the importance of establishing friendships with foreigners on the amount of communication with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. The relevant assumptions for this statistical analysis, including normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance, were tested and satisfied, and the Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.012. Attitude about establishing friendships with foreigners statistically significantly predicted the amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam. The model ( $p < .001$ ) included a composite independent variable derived from the items that measured attitude about establishing friendships with foreigners and attitude about establishing close friendships with foreigners. The model accounted for 37.8% of the variation in the amount of communication with foreigners about Vietnam with an adjusted  $R^2 = 37.3\%$ , which is a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

Thus, the results of research question 6 indicate social appeal, heritage and culture, and human capital are statistically significant predictors of overall feelings toward country identity. The emphasis on family and citizens as hardworking variables



positively influence feelings toward country identity in the Vietnam context. Moreover, economic appeal is a statistically significant predictor of the amount of communication with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy. Finally, characteristics of cultural mediators influence how often they engage in communication with foreigners about country identity. Cultural mediators who have lived in or traveled to at least one foreign country are more likely to communicate with foreigners, and cultural mediators who perceive establishing international friendships as important are more likely to communicate with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy.

## **CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION**

The discussion chapter contextualizes the quantitative data in the qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of country identity and the relational approach to public diplomacy. Further, this chapter synthesizes the qualitative and quantitative results and integrates these results with existing theoretical perspectives and previous research associated with country identity and public diplomacy. Through in-depth interview, participant observation, and survey methods, this dissertation expands theory by uncovering internal perceptions of and feelings toward the country identity constructs (physical appeal, economic appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, and emotional appeal) in the Vietnam context. The open-ended interview questions and participant observations allowed two new variables associated with country identity to emerge in the data: The family variable helps to measure the heritage and culture construct and the work ethic variable helps to measure the human capital construct. Further, this dissertation confirms the importance of heritage and culture and human capital in explaining overall feelings citizens have toward their own country and expands theoretical knowledge about how and why economic appeal influences the amount of communication with foreigners about country identity. Finally, this dissertation offers insight into the experiences of cultural mediators and the network of citizen diplomats in a non-Western, one-party, postwar, developing country.

### **Understanding Country Identity: Evidence From Vietnam**

Anholt (2006) contends that citizens make accurate assessments of themselves. Thus, through collecting data from Vietnam's citizens, this dissertation reveals a glimpse

into the country identity profile of Vietnam. Further, this dissertation uses evidence from the Vietnam context to offer theoretical insights into the seven country identity constructs established in previous literature.

### **Country Identity Constructs With Positive Perceptions**

The emotional appeal construct provides insight into the feelings people have toward their own country (Anholt, 2006; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005). The survey data in this dissertation show participants have positive feelings toward Vietnam; specifically, participants rated highly the likability and respect variables. Although interview and participant observation data also support participants' positive feelings toward Vietnam, it is not common for people to say explicitly "I like [country]" or "I respect [country]." Rather, citizens often show their admiration for their country through other statements. For example, interview data indicate participants expressed patriotic feelings by emphasizing Vietnam's history of defeating powerful enemies and by talking about beautiful geographic features.

**Heritage and culture.** The heritage and culture construct measures perceptions of a country's history and cultural products as well as citizens' belief systems, traditions, and behaviors. Holliday (2011) conceptualizes heritage and culture as a part of country identity, and Dinnie (2004) argues heritage and culture determine a country's reputation. Che-Ha et al. (2016) display through a survey of Malaysian citizens that the heritage and culture construct influences citizens' emotions about their own country, and Yousaf and Li (2015) posit through a survey of Pakistani citizens that the heritage and culture construct is relevant when citizens assess how good their country is. Regarding the

heritage and culture construct, the results of this dissertation are parallel to the findings of previous empirical research: The heritage and culture construct is a positive significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam. Moreover, six out of the ten variables with the highest means in the survey are a part of the heritage and culture construct; participants rated highly their perceptions of Vietnam's food, historical past, cultural diversity, cultural traditions, emphasis on family, and religious beliefs and practices. The qualitative dataset further confirms the influence of the heritage and culture construct, especially unique culinary experiences, on the feelings citizens have toward their country.

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) include culinary aspects of a country as a part of the aesthetic dimension of a country's image. Further, previous research shows food intersects with identity (Thompson, 2012) and can be a part of the nation brand as well as a tool of political persuasion (Nirwandy & Awang, 2014; Spence, 2016). The results of this dissertation support the salience of food in country identity: The food variable was the highest rated variable in the survey and was prominent in interview and participant observation data. The results indicate that what people cook reflects whom they are and where they are from; further, people teach others about their culture by talking about food and by sharing in the experience of cooking and eating local food. Participants also gave details about food when talking about other variables associated with the heritage and culture construct. For example, data were collected during the Tết Trung Nguyên festival (also called the Vu Lan festival); participants discussed the festival in terms of its importance in demonstrating respect for parents and honoring ancestors, its relationship

to Buddhism and releasing souls from hell's torture, and its traditions such as preparing vegetarian food and wearing the traditional áo dài dress to temples.

Beerli and Martin (2004) argue socio-demographic characteristics influence the image of a place, and the results of this dissertation show such characteristics also influence country identity. The heritage and culture construct includes a variable that measures perceptions of social and cultural diversity. Survey participants rated this variably highly, and the variable is a positive significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam. Although cultural mediators praised Vietnam's regional diversity, they rarely spoke about ethnic diversity. Vietnam's government recognizes 54 ethnic minority groups, many of which reside in the Central Highlands; nevertheless, in comparison to the United States, Vietnam is homogenous (Ashwill & Oanh, 2009). According the 2006 World Values Survey, the majority of Vietnamese respondents agreed with the statement "ethnic diversity enriches my life." However, in response to another question on the same World Values Survey, 40.3% of respondents indicated they would not want ethnic minorities as neighbors. This suggests perceptions of diversity in Vietnam are complex.

The religion variable within the heritage and culture construct also encompasses conceptual complexity. Che-Ha et al. (2016) show philosophical and/or religious belief systems are a part of the heritage and culture construct. In this dissertation, survey participants rated the religion variable highly, and the qualitative data contextualize the variable within Vietnamese folklore, ancestor worship, and Buddhism.

However, Vinken (2006) warns religion is a problem in international research, for Western study designs assume religion is a choice. In the United States, for example,

those who want to be religious voluntarily choose to be religious. In East Asian cultures, however, religion and kinship are blended and then infused into everyday family life. In this dissertation, the religion variable and the family variable had a moderate significant correlation in the survey, and the qualitative data demonstrate participants talked about familial hierarchy as a type of religious notion. Vinken (2006) asserts, “It is almost a truism that in East Asia all other issues and domains of life are filtered, interpreted and valued through a family-based looking glass” (p. 20). Previous research in China (Zheng, Shi, & Tang, 2005), Japan (Hashimoto, 1996), and South Korea (Kim & Park, 2005) illustrates devotion to following social protocols for respecting and loving parents. Ngoc (2016) acknowledges Buddhism as the dominant religion in Vietnam but also shows Confucianism and filial piety are important. Further, in the World Values Survey, 88.4% of respondents indicated they are not a member of a church or religious organization, but a majority indicated their religion is “ancestral worshipping.”

Another variable associated with perceptions of the heritage and culture construct is the historical past (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005). Beerli and Martin (2004) show culture aligns with history, particularly in constructing a place image. Ishii (2006) emphasizes the importance of history, specifically the history of colonial domination and economic growth, in understanding the East Asia context.

In this dissertation, survey participants rated the history variable highly. However, interview participants often claimed they lacked knowledge of Vietnam’s history to share with the researcher and other foreigners. The data collected during participant observations explain this dichotomy. Participants communicated with foreigners about

their awareness of Vietnam's wartime history and of the Đổi Mới policy that opened Vietnam's economy in the 1980s but little else in regards to history. While participants expressed that history was not a favorite subject in school, the qualitative data show history has endowed Vietnam with the identity of a victor.

Regarding the salience of the history variable in country identity, the results of this dissertation confirm the findings of previous research. For example, the World Values Survey reported 98.2% of Vietnamese are proud to be Vietnamese, and Ashwill and Oanh (2009) argue such pride is rooted in Vietnam's ability to survive repeated invasions, occupations, and war. Similarly, Ngoc (2016) indicates historical research about Vietnam shows the nation formed for the purpose of fighting foreign invaders.

**Human capital.** The human capital construct measures perceptions of the abilities and skills of a country's citizens. Che-Ha et al. (2016) and Passow et al. (2005) show the human capital construct displays a positive significant relationship with feelings toward a country. The results of this dissertation confirm previous research: The human capital construct is a positive significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam. Moreover, one of the variables with the highest means in the survey is a part of the human capital construct; participants rated highly their perceptions of Vietnam's citizens as friendly and welcoming. Moreover, these three variables within the human capital construct are positive significant predictors of overall feelings toward Vietnam: citizens as well-educated, citizens as hard-working, and citizens as creative and critical thinkers when problem solving. The qualitative dataset further confirms the importance of the

human capital construct, especially perceptions of Vietnam's citizens as friendly and welcoming, adaptable and tolerant, and hardworking.

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) include the level of education of a country's citizens as a part of the functional dimension of a country's image, and Passow et al. (2005) exemplify in their survey of Liechtenstein's citizens that internal perceptions of well-educated citizens influence country identity. Ngoc (2016) maintains that the traditional Vietnamese character embodies a "love of learning" (p. 5). The results of this dissertation confirm citizens' education levels influence perception of country identity in the Vietnam context. While participants acknowledged weaknesses in Vietnam's education system, they talked about ways citizens are able to direct their own education and knowledge. For example, cultural mediators' motivation to engage in communication with foreigners derived in part from their desire to learn English.

Anholt (2006) avows friendly and welcoming citizens as well as considerate and tolerant citizens foster a positive country image. In this dissertation, the qualitative and quantitative datasets show perceptions of citizens as friendly and welcoming influence feelings about country identity. The theme of friendliness dominated the interview data. Ashwill and Oanh (2009) highlight the welcoming nature of Vietnam's citizens but clarify that while Vietnamese welcome foreigners to visit and even to live in Vietnam as fully functioning members of society, Vietnamese view those with ethnic and racial differences as an "other." According to the World Values Survey, 92% of Vietnamese believe foreigners seeking citizenship must adopt the customs of Vietnam. The complexity in the friendliness variable in the human capital construct relates back to the



complexity of the diversity variable in the heritage and culture construct. The results of this dissertation demonstrate participants are friendly and welcoming toward foreigners of certain ethnic and racial backgrounds, but, according to the World Values Survey, Vietnamese have the expectation that foreigners assimilate to Vietnam's cultural norms.

During participant observations, however, Vietnamese adapted to the foreigners' cultural norms in several ways. For example, cultural mediators spoke English and introduced themselves with Western names instead of their real names. Thus, while the tolerant variable within the human capital construct was not a significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam in the survey data, a theme based on Vietnam's citizens as tolerant and adaptable emerged in the qualitative dataset. Ngoc (2016) indicates Vietnamese are adaptable out of necessity: If Vietnamese were not adaptable to various foreign cultures as well as harsh living conditions, they could not have survived occupation and war. During citizen diplomacy activities, participants positioned the human capital construct, especially the Vietnamese characteristics of adaptable, friendly, and hardworking, as helpful in Vietnam's globalization and economic development.

**Social appeal.** The social appeal construct measures perceptions of a country's championing of social and environmental causes (without economic benefit). In previous surveys to investigate internal perceptions of country identity, Passow et al. (2005) and Yousaf and Li (2015) show the social appeal construct displays a positive significant relationship with feelings toward a country. In this dissertation, the social appeal construct exerted a positive significant influence on overall feelings toward Vietnam. None of the social appeal variables, however, was rated among the highest means in the

survey. The variable rated highest within the social appeal scale itself was responsibility in the international community. Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) include international responsibility in the normative dimension of a country's image. Anholt (2006) argues that a good country image is dependent upon a country earning respect as a responsible member in the international community. Passow et al. (2005) and Yousaf and Li (2015) identify the salience of the international responsibility variable in country identity.

Although a positive significant predictor of feelings toward Vietnam, the social appeal construct was not a dominant theme in the qualitative dataset. Participants did not focus on Vietnam's foreign integration policy; they did not mention its membership or participation in international organizations such as the United Nations. Participants, however, did talk about Vietnam's role in promoting security in the territorial disputes in the East Sea. Within the social appeal scale, the variable rated second highest was responsibility in the areas of peace and international security. Beerli and Martin (2004) and Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) contend responsibility in the areas of peace and international security contributes to a country's image, while Passow et al. (2005) show perception of responsibility in international security affects country identity.

According to the World Values Survey, 83.1% of Vietnamese agree with the statement "I see myself as a world citizen." International citizenship is related to neoliberal economic policy and to a sense of cosmopolitanism based on an ethical responsibility to the global population. International citizenship includes compliance with international law, support for bilateral or multilateral agreements, willingness to complete international tasks because of moral obligation, leadership to improve international norms

and standards, and maintenance of global peace and stability (Pert, 2014). This definition of international citizenship overlaps with the measures within the social appeal construct. Thus, perhaps participants in this dissertation rated the social appeal construct highly because they view themselves as world citizens.

**Physical appeal.** While the physical appeal construct was not a statistically significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam, perception of the beautiful landscapes and scenery was the second highest mean among all of the survey variables associated with country identity. Further, the qualitative dataset in this dissertation shows participants are proud of their geographic features; beautiful landscapes and scenery emerged as a dominant theme in the participant observation data. For example, cultural mediators in Ho Chi Minh City carried laminated photographs of beaches, mountains, and other geographic features and used the images to stimulate communication with foreigners about Vietnam. Moreover, in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang, cultural mediators elucidated that place is related to identity as they communicated about their hometowns to foreigners, including descriptions of terrain, vegetation, and bodies of water. Thus, this dissertation confirms previous research by Anholt (2006), Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015), and Passow et al. (2005) that posits beautiful landscapes and scenery are foremost in the process of forming a country identity and a country image.

### **Country Identity Constructs With Negative Perceptions**

**Political appeal.** The political appeal construct measures perceptions of a country's political system and governmental leaders. Previous research demonstrates perceptions of leadership and their competence in managing the country influence

country identity and country image (Anholt, 2006; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Passow et al., 2005). Vietnam's political system presents a unique case since it is a one-party state. However, previous survey research, even in multi-party democracies, indicates citizens often have low perceptions of political appeal. Yousaf and Li (2015) show Pakistani citizens consider their governmental leaders as the least exemplifying entity to their country identity. Passow et al. (2005) show citizens in Lichtenstein rate their leaders as lacking charisma and failing to communicate an appealing vision for the country. Therefore, although in this dissertation one of the lowest rated survey variables was perception of leaders communicating an appealing vision for Vietnam's future, this is not unique to Vietnam.

Interestingly, according to the World Values Survey, 95.7% of Vietnamese indicated they "have confidence in the government in Ha Noi." Another question in the World Values Survey asked Vietnamese to rank these priorities in order of importance: "maintaining order in the nation," "give people more say," "fighting rising prices," and "protecting freedom of speech." Only 4.7% rated protecting freedom of speech as the top priority; the majority (57.4%) rated maintaining order as the top priority.

This coincides with the quantitative results of this dissertation in which the highest rated variable within the political appeal construct was Vietnam as a politically stable country; this variable was also a positive significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam. Moreover, the qualitative data illustrate participants' perceptions that political leaders have kept Vietnam safe from violence and conflict, both domestic and foreign. The qualitative data further indicate, however, that participants perceived

political leaders as well as police and military officers as corrupt for giving and receiving bribes. According to the World Values Survey, 82.9% of Vietnamese believe “someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties” is “never justifiable.” In contrast to the World Values Survey results, however, the qualitative data in this dissertation indicate some participants were concerned about human rights, especially freedom of expression.

**Economic appeal.** The economic appeal construct measures perceptions of a country’s economic development and prosperity level as well as its investment environment. Previous research demonstrates perceptions of a country’s goods and services, competitive advantage, and prospects for future growth influence country image and country identity (Anholt, 2005; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Gudjonsson, 2005; Passow et al., 2005). In this dissertation, economic appeal as a predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam is not significant, which is unsurprising since Vietnam is a developing country. Perceptions of Vietnam’s ability to outperform its competitors was the second lowest mean among all of the survey variables associated with country identity. The qualitative data complement this result as participants’ communication reflected their view of Vietnam as an underdog in the global economy.

**Standard of living and infrastructure.** The qualitative and quantitative datasets reveal a few additional weaknesses associated with Vietnam’s country identity. Three variables outside of the political appeal and economic appeal constructs were among the survey variables with the lowest means. Beerli and Martin (2004) contend standard of living, which is associated with the social appeal construct, influences a place image. In this dissertation, perceptions of Vietnam’s standard of living was the lowest rated survey

variable among all of the variables associated with country identity. Ngoc (2016) explains Vietnam's social development is linked to economic development; standard of living is lagging behind other countries in the region because of Vietnam's history of war as well as its history as an agrarian society, which emphasized subsistence farming and deemphasized long-term profitability.

While beautiful landscapes and scenery increase Vietnam's physical appeal, which Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) situate in the aesthetic dimension of a country image, man-made infrastructure, especially transportation infrastructure, decreases Vietnam's physical appeal, which Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) situate in the functional dimension of a country image. In the Country Reputation Index, however, geographic and man-made elements combine to form the physical appeal scale. Thus, while the beautiful landscapes and scenery variable was among the highest rated variables associated with country identity in this dissertation, participants rated very low the roads and traffic variable as well as the healthcare variable. The latter variable was not a central theme in the qualitative data, although one participant worked at a hospital and as such talked about perspectives of Vietnam's healthcare system; a few other participants discussed how Vietnamese utilize acupuncture and food as healing agents instead of seeking care from traditional healthcare workers. However, participants' concern about traffic regulations (or lack thereof) and the impact of chaotic traffic on foreign perception of Vietnam emerged as a dominant theme in both interview and participant observation data.

## **Expanding Country Identity**

In addition to providing insight into the country identity profile of Vietnam through analysis of the country identity constructs established in previous literature, this dissertation expands the country identity theoretical framework by proposing the addition of two variables to measure and to understand country identity. Public diplomacy research is often criticized for being Western-centric (Gregory, 2010; Zaharna, 2012). When investigating other cultures, researchers often erroneously assume categories from one cultural perspective will transfer seamlessly to another (Holliday, 2011; Ngoc, 2016). To combat this problem, this dissertation allowed new variables associated with country identity to emerge by employing open-ended questions in interviews and by observing communication in authentic citizen diplomacy exchanges. The qualitative data suggests and the quantitative data confirms the importance of adding a family variable to the heritage and culture construct and a work ethic variable to the human capital construct.

**Family.** The results of this dissertation support the importance of the heritage and culture construct in country identity. Further, this dissertation expands the heritage and culture construct to include a variable about the emphasis on family. Qualitative data from interviews and participant observations prompted the addition of the family variable to the heritage and culture scale. The quantitative survey data confirmed that emphasis on family is a unique and significant variable to measure heritage and culture. The family variable was among those with the highest means in the survey and is a positive significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam.

Vietnam's emphasis on family is rooted in Confucian philosophy. In a synthesis of research about the characteristics of Vietnamese culture, Ngoc (2016) contends Vietnamese display a "strong adherence to the community" and a devotion to "filial piety, respect for aged persons, and solidarity" (p. 5). Moreover, Hofstede rates Vietnam as a highly collectivistic society in which citizens' self-image is defined by "we" and families and social groups provide unconditional loyalty to members (n.d.). The collectivistic dimension also stresses harmony, which is the cardinal value of Confucian philosophy (Chen, 2001). The importance of harmony in Vietnam promotes cooperation and saving face, or maintaining the honor of the family or group (Ngoc, 2016).

This dissertation confirms the collectivistic nature of Vietnam's culture. Families remain close to each other – almost too close, according to some participants – throughout the various lifecycles. Similarly, friends and neighbors form tightly integrated groups. While this dissertation shows the family as central to Vietnam's country identity, this variable would likely show its importance in other collectivistic countries such as Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Understanding the collectivistic nature of a country has implications for public diplomacy (Anagondahalli & Zhu, 2016) as well as international communication (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996), negotiation (Cohen, 1991; Luomala, Kumar, Singh, & Jaakkola, 2015), management, and marketing (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010), including nation branding (Dinnie, 2008). Thus, considering family as a layer of heritage and culture – and in some cases the core of heritage and culture – is important for scholars and practitioners to understand country identity.



**Work ethic.** While the results of this dissertation support the importance of the human capital construct in country identity, another contribution of this dissertation is expanding the human capital construct to include a variable about work ethic. Qualitative data from interviews and participant observations prompted the addition of the work ethic variable as well as the problem solving variable to the human capital scale. The quantitative survey data confirmed that perception of a country's citizens as hardworking is a unique and significant variable to measure human capital; however, the problem solving variable did not load strongly in a principal components analysis. Within the human capital construct, the work ethic variable was a positive significant predictor of overall feelings toward Vietnam.

The qualitative and quantitative data reveal participants perceived Vietnam's citizens as hardworking but the data show varied perspectives about whether citizens possess the ability to think creatively and critically when problem solving. Ngoc (2016) summarizes research findings that posit Vietnamese have an "ardor for work" (p. 5) but often rely on chance rather than take aggressive measures to solve a problem. Thus, as would be expected, within the human capital scale in this dissertation, the mean of the hardworking variable is higher than the mean of the problem solving variable.

This dissertation shows making work ethic a layer of the human capital construct allows for a more comprehensive understanding of country identity. The World Values Survey asked respondents to identify qualities that children should be encouraged to learn at home; 88.9% of Vietnamese gave "hard work" as the top quality. Moreover, a question in the World Values Survey asked Vietnamese to indicate which of the following are

important in their lives: work, religion, family, leisure time, and politics; 99.6% answered that family was important and 88.4% answered that work was important. Thus, the addition of the work ethic variable in the human capital construct and the family variable in the heritage and culture construct is imperative for understanding country identity.

### **Complexity of the Country Identity Constructs**

While Che-Ha et al. (2016) show culture and heritage and human capital are the most salient constructs in Malaysia's country identity and Yousaf and Li (2015) show cultural appeal and physical appeal are the most salient constructs in Pakistan's country identity, these previous studies utilized a quantitative survey method without qualitative data. Through the depth of interview and participant observation data, this dissertation exemplifies the complexity in parceling the country identity constructs. The qualitative data in this dissertation reveal participants neither perceived nor communicated about a country identity construct in isolation of the other constructs.

Further, the results of this dissertation demonstrate that heritage and culture is not only a salient country identity construct but is the core of country identity as participants explained other constructs and other variables through a cultural lens. For example, participants talked about beautiful mountains (physical appeal) in terms of their religious significance (heritage and culture) and their functionality as a living space for resourceful wartime soldiers who adapted to the environment and used the trees and caves to survive (heritage and culture and human capital). Participants talked about working hard to earn a university degree (human capital) so they could later secure good employment (economic appeal) as a way to care for family and respect elders (heritage and culture).

The interview data in this dissertation show participants used narratives and symbols to communicate their country identity in response to questions such as “What does it mean to be Vietnamese?” Participants employed multiple country identity constructs in a sole narrative. For example, several participants told stories about the farmer as an archetypal hero of Vietnam. Such stories incorporated elements of physical appeal with descriptions of regional climates and the beautiful landscapes of rural Vietnam, economic appeal with facts about Vietnam’s agricultural exports such as rice and coffee, human capital with emphasis on the hard work required of farmers, heritage and culture with details about regional differences in food and leisure activities, social appeal with discussion of educational opportunities (or lack thereof) in rural Vietnam, and emotional appeal with proud descriptions of farmers-turned-soldiers who defended Vietnam in wartime. Thus, this dissertation contributes to an understanding of the complexity of country identity by establishing that the constructs associated with country identity overlap. Additionally, this dissertation confirms previous research that illustrates storytelling has a crucial role in constructing ethnic identities and in communicating traditions (Merino, Becerra, & De Fina, 2016).

### **Country Identity in Citizen Diplomacy**

#### **Economic Appeal as a Predictor of Communication With Foreigners**

This dissertation unravels the relationship between internal perceptions of country identity and the nature of communication with foreigners about the constructs associated with country identity. To the researchers’ knowledge, this is the first study to test empirically the effect of country identity on communication behaviors. The data indicate

economic appeal is the only positive significant predictor of the amount of communication with foreigners during citizen diplomacy in the Vietnam context. This result warrants a closer look at the variables within the economic appeal construct.

The qualitative and quantitative datasets converge on the perception among participants that Vietnam cannot outperform its economic competitors. Ashwill and Oanh (2009) posit, “Vietnamese are deeply concerned about their country’s development in the era of globalization” (p. 150). Participants referred to Vietnam as a developing country during interviews and participant observations, and participants rated perception of Vietnam’s agricultural industries higher than perception of Vietnam’s manufacturing industries in the survey. The variables measuring perception of Vietnam as an inviting place to do business and perception of Vietnam’s prospects for future growth were among the highest means within the economic appeal construct. The World Values Survey confirms 67% of Vietnamese believe the primary goal of the country for the next decade should be “a high level of economic growth.”

While the qualitative and quantitative data in this dissertation show participants’ concern for Vietnam’s economic future, the survey variables measuring the amount of communication with foreigners about economic appeal indicate participants only “occasionally” talk about economic appeal during citizen diplomacy activities. The overall amount of communication about economic appeal was one of the lowest means among the country identity constructs; the mean for overall amount of communication about political appeal was the only one rated lower. The two lowest means among all of the variables associated with the amount of communication about country identity were

both variables within the economic appeal construct: talk about manufacturing industries in Vietnam and talk about taxes in Vietnam.

Therefore, the survey results show cultural mediators do not often talk about the variables associated with the economic appeal construct, yet perception of economic appeal predicts the amount of communication with foreigners about country identity. The qualitative data provide an explanation. Interviews and participant observations reveal cultural mediators engage in communication with foreigners for two reasons: 1) to teach foreigners about Vietnam and 2) to learn English. An examination of the motivations for learning English elucidates the belief that a citizenry competent in speaking English will integrate more readily into the international economy.

Participants recognized problems with Vietnam's economy, but they also expressed optimism for future growth. This coincides with findings from a 2016 Nielson survey ranking Vietnam as #7 among all countries in the Consumer Confidence Index, which indicates Vietnamese are optimistic about the local economy. In this dissertation, the belief that an educated workforce with English-speaking skills directly affects Vietnam's future economic development motivates participants to learn English. Acknowledging a lack of opportunity to study English in school, cultural mediators take the initiative to talk with foreigners to practice speaking English and to improve the soft skills required for success in the international business context.

While participants reported eagerness to cooperate in economic initiatives with those from other countries and to improve Vietnam's overall economic appeal, they want to preserve other aspects of Vietnam's country identity. In communication about

economic appeal, cultural mediators conveyed an inferiority complex as citizens of a developing country, but they also expressed pride in Vietnam's beautiful landscapes, welcoming environment, and collectivistic nature. The theme of economic development as a threat to collectivism emerged in the qualitative dataset: Participants viewed pursuit of individual wealth and interests (perceived as selfishness) as a characteristic of capitalism, but participants want to maintain Vietnam's cultural norms for establishing and maintaining close relationships with families and groups, including sharing time and resources. Participants expressed fear that integration into the international economy would detract from Vietnam's emphasis on family.

### **Communication About Country Identity in Citizen Diplomacy**

**Communicating identity.** Zaharna (1989, 2007, 2012) posits that all communication is fundamentally about identity. Thus, this dissertation advances scholarship about country identity by investigating the relationship between country identity and communication during citizen diplomacy activities. In doing so, this dissertation provides insight into which country identity constructs are most salient in cultural mediators' communication with foreigners about Vietnam.

In this dissertation, survey data show participants feel proud of Vietnam when they talk with foreigners. While economic appeal is a predictor of how often cultural mediators communicate with foreigners about Vietnam, the qualitative and quantitative datasets reveal participants often talk about variables associated with country identity constructs other than economic appeal. Rather, among the survey variables that measure amount of communication, five out of the ten with the highest means are a part of the

heritage and culture construct; participants rated highly their amount of communication about Vietnam's food, cultural traditions, entertainment activities, cultural diversity, and emphasis on family. The other variables with the highest means are a part of the human capital construct; participants rated highly their amount of communication about Vietnam's friendly and welcoming citizens and adaptable and tolerant citizens. The qualitative dataset confirms the amount of communication about variables associated with heritage and culture and human capital and also supports the amount of communication about beautiful landscapes and scenery within the physical appeal construct during citizen diplomacy activities.

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) include educational opportunities as a part of the functional dimension of a country's image, and, in this dissertation, participants indicated they talk with foreigners about educational opportunities in Vietnam. This emphasis on educational opportunities as a part of country identity is perhaps because many of the participants were university students or recent graduates. Interview participants further conveyed that Vietnam's educational system is in need of reform that encourages student engagement, but such reform, according to participants, must maintain Vietnamese cultural norms such as promoting learning and respecting authority.

Interviews and participant observations further explicate how Vietnam's country identity influences cultural mediators' management of communication during citizen diplomacy activities. For example, the heritage and culture construct evinces positive emotions and is salient in cultural mediators' communication with foreigners. While reputation and brand research indicates transparent communication, including the

admission of negative qualities, has the potential to increase source credibility (Auger, 2014), Vietnamese are generally cautious in expressing the negative (Ngoc, 2016). Thus, on the one hand, the history variable within the heritage and culture construct generates positive feelings toward Vietnam and positive communication about Vietnam, for cultural mediators are proud to have defeated China, France, and the United States. On the other, Vietnam's identity as a victor is the consequence of a controversial war, and interview participants voiced diverse and even negative emotions about war.

Cultural mediators, however, do not often talk about the American War during citizen diplomacy, unless foreigners ask them specific questions about the war or war tourism sites. Biles, Loyd, and Logan (1999) conclude that Americans who visit Vietnam primarily do so because of the shared wartime history between Vietnam and the United States. The observed exchanges in this dissertation indicate Americans are the foreigners who usually ask about war. This further aligns with Anholt (2005) who claims tourism is "often the most visibly promoted aspect of the nation brand," and as such "might have a disproportionate effect on people's perceptions of the country as a whole" (p. 297).

Moreover, political appeal was the lowest rated among the country identity constructs; similarly, participants rated low their amount of communication about the variables associated with politics and governmental leaders. This finding aligns with previous research (Piff, Martinez, & Keltner, 2012) that contends citizens distance themselves from politicians when such politicians engage in behaviors or embrace viewpoints and policies that could damage the reputation of the country. The qualitative data suggest cultural mediators' caution in communicating with foreigners about



Vietnam's political system and governmental leaders could also be related to human rights concerns, specifically freedom of expression.

Participants talked often during citizen diplomacy activities about one of the lowest rated survey variables. The lowest rated variable in the physical appeal scale and one of the lowest rated variables among all of the survey variables was the variable related to transportation infrastructure and traffic regulations. However, participants rated highly their amount of communication about traffic in Vietnam. The qualitative data show communication about traffic focused on providing foreigners with practical advice for safety, including crossing the street as a pedestrian and riding on a motorbike.

Additionally, the qualitative data show philosophical beliefs rooted in Vietnam's deep structure of culture influence cultural mediators' management of communication during citizen diplomacy activities. For example, conceptualizations of yin and yang emerge in the data about economic appeal and notions of karma emerge in the data about religious and cultural traditions. Further, the qualitative data reflect the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (n.d.), particularly Vietnam's collectivism, high power distance, and long-term orientation. For example, cultural mediators' communication about heritage and culture and human capital emphasizes focusing on the future, respecting elders, and prioritizing family over tasks.

A final consideration related to communication and country identity is language. While cultural mediators communicated in English during citizen diplomacy activities, the content of their communication reflected the structure of the Vietnamese language. For example, knowing a person's age is essential for communicating in the Vietnamese

language, for relative age and gender affect the pronouns used for direct address (Ngoc, 2016). Thus, at the beginning of a conversation, participants sometimes asked foreigners about their ages. More experienced cultural mediators were aware of this cultural difference, avoided such questions, and advised others not to ask foreigners about age. Another note about language is cultural mediators perceived speaking multiple languages as a sign of intelligence; they pointed out the number of languages Ho Chi Minh spoke and talked about the languages spoken by their family members (many had parents or grandparents who had learned either Russian or French in school). Cultural mediators often asked foreigners to list the languages they speak.

**Highlighting cultural differences.** The qualitative data in this dissertation demonstrate communication about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities emphasizes culture and cultural differences. Zaharna (2012) argues that “culture infuses every aspect of public diplomacy from policy, to practice, to scholarship,” yet the role of culture in communication between global publics has been underexplored (p. 7). Further, Condon and Yousef (1975) contend that “we cannot separate culture from communication, for as soon as we start to talk about one we are almost inevitably talking about the other, too” (p. 34). Iriye (n.d.) suggests, “All international relations are intercultural relations.” Dutta-Bergman (2006) asserts cultural differences affect the relational aspects of public diplomacy. Thus, understanding how culture influences cultural mediators’ intercultural communication and relationships with foreigners, including the processes through which culture is communicated during informal exchanges, has implications for public diplomacy.

Culture is a transmitted system of norms, symbols, and meanings. Collier and Thomas (1988) posit that culture becomes apparent when social actors communicate the attributes and values of their culture and in doing so compare and contrast their culture to other cultures. In this manner, intercultural communication elucidates a culture's unique features and moves social actors toward intercultural communication competence.

The survey data in this dissertation report cultural mediators talk with Americans about cultural differences “occasionally” or “sometimes.” The majority of the participant observations in this dissertation, however, involved foreigners from countries other than the United States. The qualitative dataset indicates participants are keenly aware of cultural differences, including differences they perceive as positive and differences they perceive as negative, between Vietnam and other countries. For example, cultural mediators pointed out during citizen diplomacy activities the individualistic nature of Americans in comparison with the collectivistic nature of Vietnamese; they generally praised collectivism as a positive feature of Vietnam's culture.

Further, cultural mediators minimized cultural differences while also explaining various cultural differences and cultural misunderstandings. For example, interview participants indicated they had not noticed any cultural differences during exchanges with foreigners but within the interview explained several instances of misunderstandings associated with cultural norms in verbal and nonverbal communication. In participant observations, when foreigners' communication reflected how they perceived Vietnamese culture, cultural mediators provided feedback to confirm or to correct the foreigners' perceptions until foreigners' communication reflected how Vietnamese cultural mediators

themselves perceived Vietnamese culture. According to Collier and Thomas (1988), this communication process leads toward intercultural communication competence.

### **Country Image in Citizen Diplomacy**

Zaharna (2012) avows public diplomacy is “inherently about identity and image in that it says something about how each party sees itself (identity) and the other (image)” (pp. 24-25). Although this dissertation focuses on country identity, one of the themes that emerged in the qualitative dataset was how Vietnamese cultural mediators view the “other.” During citizen diplomacy activities, cultural mediators’ communication revealed Vietnam’s country identity but it also revealed the country image of other countries.

Interviews and participant observations disclose that country image influences cultural mediators’ management of communication with foreigners during citizen diplomacy activities. Cultural mediators sought communication with light-skinned foreigners from North America, Europe, and Australia more so than foreigners with darker skin and/or from other continents. Cultural mediators indicated they were eager to speak with Americans for reasons associated with their physical beauty (heritage and culture), political leaders such as Obama (political appeal), capitalism and the notion of the American dream (economic appeal), abundant educational opportunities and good universities (social appeal), and Hollywood films and television shows (heritage and culture). Participants seemed eager to impress Americans with their knowledge of U.S. history and politics, while other participants poignantly noted the real benefit of being a U.S. citizen is enjoying human rights and political freedom.

The qualitative dataset shows participants idealized Western culture. Nye (2004) argues culture is an element of soft power. In this dissertation, participants' idealization of the United States and denigration of China reflect the 2016 Soft Power Index rankings in which the United States is #1 and China is #28 (McClory, 2016). Participants communicated numerous grievances against China, especially those related to the territorial disputes in the East Sea and the environmental risks posed by Chinese-owned factories in Vietnam. Participants, though, exhibited a double standard in their perceptions of China and the United States. For example, participants used a narrative about a Chinese police officer who stabbed an innocent Chinese citizen as evidence that Chinese are dangerous. In a discussion about police shootings in the United States, however, the same participants regarded such situations as rare, implying the events do not reflect poorly on Americans.

While Nye (2004) shows the Vietnam War hurt U.S. soft power in the global community, such an effect has dissipated even in Vietnam. Participants acknowledged variance in opinions among the older generation but indicated most Vietnamese view the wartime past as the past: Today Vietnamese and Americans are friends. Eager to integrate further into the international community, the young generation has forgiven wartime wrongs and now focuses on opportunities for the U.S.-Vietnam partnership to strengthen Vietnam's economic development and regional security.

### **Communication Networks of Cultural Mediators**

Previous literature has shown the conceptual convergence of public diplomacy and public relations as well as the application of public relations tools to public

diplomacy practice (Cull, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010a; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Kim, 2016; Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005; L'Etang, 2009; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; White, 2015a; Zaharna, 2009, 2012; Zaharna et al., 2013). By examining the nature of communication during informal people-to-people exchanges, this dissertation provides evidence that the new public diplomacy, particularly citizen diplomacy, shares functional similarities with public relations. The data collected from interviews and participant observations indicate cultural mediators want to build and maintain relationships with foreigners. The relationships are mutually beneficial as Vietnamese learn English and foreigners learn about Vietnam. Cultural mediators communicate with foreigners to generate goodwill on behalf of Vietnam and, theoretically, such communication could influence the favorability of Vietnam's country image.

The new diplomacy includes networks of state and non-state actors and emphasizes collaboration and two-way exchanges (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Melissen, 2005b; Seib, 2016; Zaharna et al., 2013). Citizen diplomacy allows for a dynamic in which ordinary citizens collaborate with foreigners through establishing friendships. In this dissertation, the quantitative and qualitative datasets show participants value friendships with foreigners. Perception of the importance of international friendships is a positive significant predictor of the amount of communication with foreigners during citizen diplomacy, and the more cultural mediators engage with foreigners, the more they seek other opportunities for engagement with other foreigners.

Cultural mediators in Vietnam have established extensive collaborative networks with foreigners as well as with other Vietnamese citizens, who then also establish

international friendships and become cultural mediators. Zaharna (2007) explores the network communication approach to public diplomacy with emphasis on message exchange through non-governmental organizations' structure, synergy, and strategy. Previous research denotes international organizations create networks that influence foreign policy (Seib, 2016) and promote understanding (Betsill & Corell, 2007; Gass & Seiter, 2009; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Taylor & Kent, 2013; Wang, 2006a).

This dissertation's phenomena in the Vietnam context, however, involve organizations much different from the NGOs, service organizations, and other international organizations examined in previous research. While this dissertation includes participant observations with four nonprofit organizations that arrange informal exchanges between Vietnamese and foreigners, there are dozens of these types of organizations in Vietnam, especially in Ho Chi Minh City. These organizations represent grassroots citizen diplomacy: Often a handful of university students or young professionals form an organization simply by establishing a network through social media and through face-to-face exchanges at locations foreigners frequent. Although Hayden (2009) analyzed "grassroots" exchanges sanctioned and supported by universities, the citizen diplomacy activities investigated in this dissertation were facilitated by citizen-led organizations without involvement from external entities.

In most cases, the leaders of these organizations lack resources, infrastructure, and knowledge of management and diplomatic strategy. Nevertheless, motivated to learn English and to teach foreigners about Vietnam, they create soft power through relational networks as described by Zaharna (2007). Most organizations have a public Facebook

page for external exchanges with foreigners as well as a closed Facebook page for internal exchanges; some have more than 50,000 members on their closed Facebook page. Members via Facebook engage in relationship-building activities such as exchanging photographs, discussing media reports about foreigners in Vietnam, and practicing English-language idioms. Members also use Facebook to exchange information and resources and to communicate about meeting times and locations.

Some of these organizations utilize other social media websites to expand their external network. For example, one organization maintains a YouTube Channel and posts English-language videos of members talking about various elements of Vietnam with the caption, “You can know all about Vietnam by watching our videos.” Several videos have thousands of views; one has more than 500,000 views.

Each organization has a regular schedule for face-to-face meetings. For example, one organization meets once a week at a coffee shop for English-language instruction directed by the organizational leaders or by foreign volunteers; the researcher volunteered to teach a lesson during one of these meetings. The organization also meets four times a week at locations where foreigners are likely to be available to engage in communication. Such face-to-face meetings offer foreigners the opportunity to join the network and to maintain friendships with Vietnamese cultural mediators via social media.

Thus, these citizen-led grassroots organizations construct a network structure through which cultural mediators establish and maintain relationships with foreigners while exchanging information about Vietnam. Zaharna (2007) explains networks create synergy and “a self-perpetuating type of energy that can grow exponentially” (p. 219).



Synergy is evident in these grassroots organization in Vietnam as involvement in the network affords members a purpose, an identity, and an excitement that spreads to other regions. For example, organizational leaders in Ho Chi Minh City put the researcher into contact with organizational leaders in Ha Noi and Da Nang; the leaders had never met face-to-face but rather established relationships through the social media network. In some cases, the leaders only knew each other through foreigners in the network. For example, an organizational leader in Da Nang started his group after foreigners told him about their helpful communication with a Ho Chi Minh City organization.

By establishing an interconnected network, creating synergy, and co-creating messages with internal and external publics, cultural mediators in Vietnam arguably accomplish what governmental leaders cannot: Instead of relying on a mass media approach to wield soft power resources, citizen diplomats with few resources use a network communication approach to exchange credible information and to build friendships with thousands of foreigners. Holmes and O'Neill (2012) emphasize the power of intercultural friendships for relinquishing fears of the "other," questioning stereotypes, and grappling with complex intercultural challenges. Handelman (2012) and Schattle (2015) show people-to-people exchanges change perceptions and opinions. The qualitative data in this dissertation confirm that networks increased participants' confidence in their intercultural communication abilities, exposed them to new ideas and different cultures, and changed their worldview. Through the network, their neighborhood became the world.

## **Implications for Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding**

This dissertation expands scholarly knowledge about country identity and provides insight into how internal perceptions and feelings toward a country influence domestic publics' communication with foreigners. Further, this dissertation investigates the experiences of cultural mediators and applies a public relations approach by analyzing relational communication about country identity within grassroots citizen diplomacy networks. Additional theoretical contributions as well as practical implications for promoting a favorable country identity and harnessing the synergy of citizen diplomats to enhance the relational aspect of public diplomacy are discussed next.

### **Practical Contributions to Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding Strategy**

**Promoting the nation brand to domestic publics.** Amid globalization, organizations need a favorable brand, and countries do, too (Passow et al., 2005). Nation branding involves projecting the qualities that make a country special and unique (Hurn, 2016). Kotler and Gertner (2002) argue a country must establish a clear positive country identity before the nation brand can be projected into the global social system: The citizens will live the nation brand and so their perceptions and acceptance of the brand affect whether the brand endures. Anholt (2003) advises that the country's citizens initiate the most powerful marketing about a country: "Country branding occurs when public speaks to public; when a substantial proportion of the population of the country – not just civil servants and paid figurehead – gets behind the strategy and lives in out in their everyday dealings with the outside world" (p. 123).

Thus, nation branding to domestic publics is the first part of a two-stage public diplomacy process: First, attract domestic audiences, then attract foreign audiences (Ashworth & Kavartzis, 2010; Bátorá, 2005; Yousaf & Li, 2015). Before highlighting the nation brand to domestic publics, however, a country must identify its distinctive characteristics and competencies, which become the “drivers of reputation” (Passow et al., 2005, p. 313). In countries with an established grassroots diplomacy network such as that in Vietnam, it is particularly important to ensure the nation brand is one that citizens believe in and one that is clearly inside their minds. Thus, this dissertation has implications for diplomats, policymakers, and nation branding experts to focus on promoting the nation brand to domestic publics.

In the context of Vietnam, the nation brand should focus on heritage and culture and human capital. These constructs, benefitting from favorability among cultural mediators, foster positive feelings toward Vietnam and are essential to gain a more expansive positive country identity. A positive country identity based on elements such as Vietnam’s unique culinary experiences, emphasis on family, and friendly and welcoming environment can develop into a positive country image as citizen diplomats promote the nation brand through face-to-face communication with foreigners in educational, business, and social contexts.

More strategic effort may be necessary to enhance internal perceptions of a country as socially respectable. Considering the lack of communication about elements of social appeal during citizen diplomacy activities, Vietnam could do more to build and manage its reputation as a champion of social causes. For example, Vietnam could

highlight its role and responsibilities in international organizations such as the United Nations. A nation brand, however, is only credible if supported by a country's actions (Anholt, 2010; Youde, 2009). Thus, a country needs to align with good social causes, both domestic and international, such as education initiatives and environmental protection, before emphasizing social responsibility in the nation brand. For example, in the 2015 Good Country Index, Vietnam is ranked #98; the climate subscale ranking is particularly low. Cultural mediators also expressed their concern about environmental protection in Vietnam, so taking action in this area might be a good place to start.

Cultural mediators crave the opportunity to advance Vietnam socially, economically, and politically and convey optimism for the future. However, cultural mediators indicated leaders do not communicate an appealing vision for the future of the country. Further, cultural mediators maintain the mindset of an underdog in the global economy. To contest this perception, Vietnam could emphasize its transformation from one of the poorest war-ravaged countries in the world into one of the most dynamic emerging economies in East Asia (World Bank, 2017). Further, Vietnam has maintained resilient economic growth, even through the global financial crisis, since joining the World Trade Organization in 2007. Business-focused media such as *Forbes* has positioned Vietnam as "Asia's next economic tiger," citing that Vietnam's growth rate since 1990 is second only to China (Fuller, 2016). To improve economic appeal, countries such as Vietnam, in which family-owned business yet comprise a large portion of the economy, should promote the country's companies, including plans for continued viability in the global economy. Since developing countries face challenges in creating and managing a nation brand

(Melissen, 2005b), governmental leaders in developing countries should collaborate with business leaders to communicate a clear vision for the future direction of the country.

**Collaborating with citizen diplomats.** Trust in government communication is low (Cull, 2010; Lee & Ayhan, 2015; Nye, 2004; Payne, 2009). Thus, countries should promote the nation brand and seize the opportunity to attract foreign publics by mobilizing citizen diplomats, whose messages are perceived as more believable and credible than government messages. Bellamy and Weinberg (2008) contend governments are foolish to ignore citizen diplomacy and the “tremendous infrastructure that exists and the many ways it could be leveraged. Large-scale and influential public diplomacy could be achieved with a modest increase in federal dollars directed at partnerships between the federal government and a vast network of cultural and educational organizations that already exist” (p. 56). However, Sharp (2001) explains governments and policymakers are reticent to acknowledge citizen diplomats whose message and actions cannot be controlled; for in the context of citizen diplomacy, diplomacy can be about anything citizens think is important.

In Vietnam, motivated cultural mediators have already established a competent and effective relational network with structure, synergy, and strategy to inform and influence foreigners’ ideas about Vietnam. This model could be replicated in other countries, and governments could take measures to collaborate with these networks. Bellamy and Weinberg (2008) argue citizen diplomacy is worthy of government attention because people-to-people exchanges create a context in which differences are addressed and then accepted. Sevin (2010) avows governments ought to pay more attention to

citizen diplomats because they reach a wide audience of foreigners who perceive them as more credible than government communication.

While partnerships would allow official diplomats and citizen diplomats “to combine their efforts and to achieve a unified goal” (Zaharna, 2012, p. 26), these collaborations must be approached with caution: The benefit of citizen diplomacy is the autonomous and, thus, authentic message; too much government involvement would weaken the perceived credibility of the message and, therefore, the power of citizen diplomats to engage persuasively with foreign publics would be lost. In fact, citizen diplomacy advocates contend that, by definition, a citizen diplomat cannot be an official agent of the state (Sharp, 2001).

**Engaging foreign publics through culture.** Finally, this dissertation, by showing the importance of the heritage and culture construct in country identity, offers practical insight for diplomats to engage foreign publics. First, diplomats, who often approach diplomatic activities from a secular perspective, must understand the culture and embrace the cultural activities in the country in which they work (Seib, 2016). Smith (1994) observes, “The surest way to the heart of a people is through their faith” (p. 13). Thus, religion affects diplomacy. In a country such as Vietnam, cultural traditions, many with religious or philosophical underpinnings, are a part of daily life. In the Vietnam context, Ted Osius, the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, is a model of a diplomat whom citizens respect because of his knowledge of and participation in Vietnamese cultural activities. For example, Osius expressed his love for his mother, prayed for her health, and served her tea at the Quán Sứ Temple during the Tết Trung Nguyên festival (“US Ambassador

Osius,” 2015). Further, Osius and his family participated annually in Tết Táo Quân (the Kitchen Gods’ Day) by releasing carp into the lake to thank the kitchen gods for protecting the house and to help transport them to heaven (“US Ambassador Celebrates,” 2017). Osius’ appreciation for Vietnamese cultural traditions has been praised by Vietnam’s media as well as by Vietnam’s citizens through social media. Since previous research establishes the importance of culture in country identity in other contexts (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Yousaf & Li, 2015), diplomats who embrace local culture would likely earn the respect of local people.

Second, diplomats should use social media to engage with foreign publics about elements of heritage and culture. In 2016, Obama visited Vietnam. The visit included talks with Vietnam’s governmental leaders about trade and security partnerships as well as the official announcement of the opening of Fulbright University in Vietnam. However, participants in this dissertation repeatedly communicated about a sole aspect of Obama’s historic visit – Obama ate the food of the local people (bún chả) in a casual restaurant in Ha Noi – and asked foreigners, “Did you see the picture?”

Seib (2016) argues social media are diplomacy tools. During Obama’s visit, a photograph of Obama eating with chopsticks while sitting on the plastic stools common in Vietnamese restaurants circulated on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In Vietnam, with a population of 95.2 million, there are 49.5 million active internet users and 40 million active social media accounts of which 34 million are mobile (Kemp, 2016; Vietnam, 2016). Connectivity and online engagement is increasing. Diplomats should continue to find ways to use social media for engagement not limited to national interests

and policy but inclusive of culture as a way to win the hearts and minds of foreign publics. Although issues of legitimacy and accuracy plague social media, the case of the photograph of Obama eating local food exemplifies that social media are effective in communicating with foreign publics about the ways diplomats embrace the local culture.

### **Contributions to Theory About Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding**

**Expanding established country identity theory.** The results of this dissertation contribute to theory about country identity and the domestic dimension of public diplomacy, specifically cultural mediators in citizen diplomacy. Previous empirical research situates country identity within a nation branding theoretical framework (Che-Ha et al., 2016; Passow et al., 2005; Yousaf & Li, 2015), and this dissertation provides confirmatory evidence that perceptions of heritage and culture and human capital strengthen country identity even in a non-Western, one-party, postwar, and developing country. This dissertation also supports the idea that the political appeal construct, aligned with the low credibility of government communication, has the potential to weaken favorable perceptions of country identity in a variety of political systems. Further, similar to previous research, this dissertation shows citizens have favorable emotions toward their own country identity and rate internal perceptions higher than perceived external perceptions of their country in the international community.

By testing internal perceptions of country identity in a new context, this dissertation advances the conceptualization and operationalization of country identity by adding the family variable to the heritage and culture construct and the hardworking variable to the human capital construct. Further, data collected through interviews and



participant observations show cultural mediators do not perceive the country identity constructs as distinct, including constructs rated high, such as heritage and culture, and constructs rated low, such as political appeal. For example, the quantitative and qualitative datasets support family as the core of country identity in a developing, collectivistic country such as Vietnam, and cultural mediators relate family to human capital, physical appeal, economic appeal, and emotional appeal. Similarly, cultural mediators relate political appeal to heritage and culture, physical appeal, and economic appeal. Further, investigation of country identity in a one-party state suggests human rights as a potential new variable in the political appeal construct.

**Identifying factors that influence communication in citizen diplomacy.** While previous research examines country identity and the nation brand by surveying internal perceptions of domestic publics, this dissertation goes a step further by investigating cultural mediators' communication with foreigners about country identity during citizen diplomacy activities. Thus, this dissertation builds upon the country identity theoretical framework to explore the relationship between domestic perceptions and communication with foreigners, since such communication has the potential to inform and to influence foreign publics. When communicating about Vietnam, participants most often talked about emotional appeal, heritage and culture, and human capital, which suggests cultural mediators communicate more often about the country identity constructs with favorable perceptions. The physical appeal construct, however, is complex: Participants communicated about the geographic features that strengthen internal perceptions of their

country identity, but they also communicated about the man-made infrastructure that weaken internal perceptions of their country identity.

The results of this dissertation further show that, in the case of a developing country such as Vietnam, the economic appeal construct helps to explain cultural mediators' motivation for engaging in communication with foreigners. Country image and soft power also assist in elucidating the grassroots citizen diplomacy phenomenon as cultural mediators seek communication with foreigners from countries with developed economies. The quantitative and qualitative datasets support the idea that cultural mediators are motivated to participate in citizen diplomacy to improve their standing in the global economy by developing the skills necessary for success in international business contexts. While cultural mediators perceive their role as citizen diplomats who reconcile cultural differences as a service to their country, they also recognize the economic value of growing their personal international network.

**Understanding cultural mediators and grassroots citizen diplomacy.** Finally, the results of this dissertation provide theoretical insight into cultural mediators engaged in grassroots citizen diplomacy networks in their own country. The data indicate exposure to different worldviews and ideas changes cultural mediators' perspectives. Interviews and participant observations, however, elucidate a paradox: Cultural mediators obscure the reality of cultural differences by denying overt differences between themselves and the foreigners, but they concurrently explain their own cultural values and practices in comparison with other cultures and resolve cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication during citizen diplomacy.

Focusing on the relational approach to public diplomacy, this dissertation expands the network communication dimensions proposed by Zaharna (2007) to citizen-directed grassroots diplomacy networks. In the case of Vietnam, cultural mediators with limited resources have established network structure to exchange messages with domestic and foreign publics through social media and face-to-face communication. Moreover, grassroots citizen diplomacy networks generate synergy through building relationships across geographic regions and show potential for embracing strategies to co-create identities and to foster favorable country images. Such networks also demonstrate potential to initiate long-term collaborative communication processes, as described by Cowan and Arsenault (2008), to promote international cooperation and respect.

In sum, this dissertation investigates country identity and citizen diplomacy from the perspective of cultural mediators in a non-Western, one-party, postwar, and developing country. This dissertation provides theoretical insight into the relational goals of public diplomacy, specifically a network approach to citizen diplomacy, and offers guidance for diplomats' engagement with domestic publics as well as foreign publics.

## **CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION**

Although it has been more than 40 years since the “fall of Saigon” or the “liberation of Saigon” – depending on the positionality of the historian – Vietnamese cultural mediators fear Vietnam’s international reputation is still based on war. Media are a primary channel for constructing a country reputation (Szondi, 2009), and stereotypes projected in films, television series, and music have largely defined American perceptions of Vietnam and Vietnamese (Bradford, 2013; Dittmar & Michaud, 2000; Louvre & Walsh, 1989). However, as one t-shirt commonly sold in Ho Chi Minh City tourist shops reads, “Vietnam is a country, not a war,” and cultural mediators, through interconnected networks of citizen diplomats and foreigners, deflect outdated wartime images by promoting their country as peaceful, safe, and welcoming.

While recognizing economic development and better educational opportunities are necessary for long-term viability in the international community, Vietnam’s citizens have positive feelings toward their country. Previous literature provides a theoretical basis for the potential of domestic publics to change a negative country reputation (Anholt, 2002; Konecnik & Go, 2008; Pisarska, 2016; Yousaf & Li, 2015). In the case of Vietnam, grassroots cultural mediators, functioning as unofficial internal ambassadors of the nation brand, engage in citizen diplomacy. Communication during citizen diplomacy highlights Vietnam’s identity as a victor against powerful invaders but more so emphasizes characteristics of human capital and culture.

Beyond the Vietnam context, this dissertation generates knowledge with applicability toward country identity and citizen diplomacy in other non-Western, one-

party, postwar, and/or developing countries. Both the qualitative and quantitative datasets converge on the salience of heritage and culture and human capital in country identity, including the addition of the family and work ethic variables. The quantitative survey data show social appeal also influences positive feelings toward a country, whereas physical appeal emerges in the qualitative interview and participant observation data as eliciting positive feelings. These findings exemplify how citizens in a collectivistic culture with an agrarian history base their country identity on the strength of family and community and, during communication with foreigners, contextualize this strength in accounts of working to survive off the land and to defend the land in wartime.

This dissertation further elucidates how perception of country identity affects communication about country identity during informal people-to-people exchanges. The data indicate cultural mediators communicate more often with foreigners about variables with very high or very low perception ratings. For example, landscapes and cuisine were rated high and emerged frequently in communication during citizen diplomacy activities. Transportation infrastructure was rated low but also emerged frequently during citizen diplomacy. As the world becomes smaller through travel and communication technology, the importance of domestic publics to public diplomacy increases. Citizen diplomats are perceived as more credible than official government sources, and, as this dissertation shows, domestic publics in a developing country who are eager to talk with foreigners communicate about both positive and negative characteristics of a country identity to foreigners. This finding suggests governments should direct nation brandings efforts toward domestic publics.

Further, this dissertation provides evidence that, in a developing country, perception of economic appeal influences the amount of communication with foreigners, since cultural mediators engage in citizen diplomacy to integrate further into the international community. In this way, citizen diplomacy reflects mutuality: Foreign publics learn about a country, while cultural mediators learn about the world and expand the network for future development. Although economic factors motivate cultural mediators to build and nurture relationships with foreigners from developed countries, they move toward global integration with caution. The Western approach views modernization as beneficial, but citizens in developing countries recognize the cost of economic growth – and the loss of cultural traditions such as familial loyalty and hierarchal respect is a high price to pay.

Finally, this dissertation offers insight about grassroots citizen diplomacy networks and intercultural communication processes during informal people-to-people exchanges. Cultural mediators, without financial resources and formal training in diplomacy, have the ability to establish networks that foster relational communication through face-to-face and social media interactions. Communication between citizen diplomats and foreigners highlights cultural differences. However, establishing international friendships brings understanding to cultural differences and expands worldviews. Moreover, citizen diplomacy networks encourage collaboration between citizens in various regions to take active roles in shaping their country's image. This is especially important to cultural mediators in postwar, one-party countries who want to overcome a country reputation based on war and authoritarianism. A citizen-directed

grassroots network achieves the immediate goal of promoting a country identity but also shows potential to accomplish long-term objectives associated with fostering international collaboration.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This dissertation is not without limitations. Data were collected from a purposive sample in Vietnam. All of the interview participants had completed at least some university courses and the majority of survey participants had earned a bachelor's degree or more. Thus, Vietnamese citizens who participated in this research had higher education levels than the general population of Vietnam, which creates issues for generalizability. Further, data were collected in three urban environments: Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, and Da Nang; participants from Ho Chi Minh City comprised the majority of the sample. Participants were motivated to talk about Vietnam with foreigners, including the researcher and, thus, their perceptions may not represent other urban, educated Vietnamese who do not talk with foreigners. Moreover, this research does not represent perspectives from the various ethnic minority groups in Vietnam. Considering the sample utilized for this dissertation, the researcher does not claim the results can be applied to Vietnam as a whole. Additional research with an expansive sample across demographic categories and regions is necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of the elements important to Vietnam's country identity – and even those results would need to be presented with the understanding that perceptions among domestic publics are diverse (Buhmann, 2016).

While the researcher acknowledges the limitations the purposive sample imposes on this dissertation as well as the unexplored multidimensional layers of subcultures within Vietnam, the purposive sample used for this research was appropriate to answer the research questions. The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate country identity and citizen diplomacy by examining cultural mediators' perceptions of and communication about their own country during informal people-to-people exchanges. Cultural mediators tend to be educated citizens who live in urban areas with a high population of foreigners; they interact with foreigners in educational, business, and social settings. As such, the research purpose could not have been fulfilled by collecting data in rural areas where citizens' contact with foreigners is limited. Further, the purposive sample encompasses individuals who are poised to be the future leaders of Vietnam. Thus, this dissertation provides a glimpse into the perspectives of those with the potential to lead Vietnam in the areas of education, technology, engineering, architecture, tourism, media, and business and finance.

Moreover, the research process is “a set of dilemmas to be ‘lived with’” (McGrath, 1982, p. 69). Although this dissertation was carefully designed with input from scholars and cultural informants, there are limitations to the study design. Foremost, a direct causal link between cultural mediators' perceptions of country identity and communication with foreigners about country identity cannot be established. Although regression models indicate relationships between perception of country identity and feelings toward a country as well as perception of country identity and the amount of communication with foreigners, other factors could influence cultural mediators' feelings



toward their own country and motivation to engage in citizen diplomacy. For example, this dissertation did not explore whether communication with foreigners affects perception of country identity.

Further, surveys contain inherent biases (Zaharna, 2012). Survey bias is especially problematic when a Western study design with Western-based categorical dimensions is applied in non-Western contexts. For example, Hamamura, Heine, and Paulhus (2008) and Harzing (2006) argue dialectical thinking produces moderate and ambivalent scores in East Asian survey respondents. Choi and Choi (2002) show Korean respondents display inconsistent self-evaluations in comparison with American respondents. Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, and Hou (2004) show Chinese survey respondents more often incorporate simultaneous positive and negative self-reports in comparison with Americans. Additional research is necessary to understand how Vietnamese respondents' approach to rating items in the Country Reputation Index and similar surveys might differ from that of respondents in other countries. Moreover, Harpaz (2003) stresses the importance of multinational research teams when adapting measures. While this dissertation employs mixed methods to account for survey bias, future research should include collaborations with scholars in Vietnam to understand how Vietnamese culture affects the interpretation of research constructs, survey questions, and responses.

Moreover, it is perhaps more accurate to state the data collected for this dissertation reflect the projection rather than the perception of country identity. Social actors are careful in how they communicate identity (Zaharna, 2012). The ways social actors project identity are complex and influenced by their history, politics, and life

trajectory (Holliday, 2011). In a country such as Vietnam with high power distance, factors such as the age and social position as well as the gender and ethnicity of the researcher could affect data collection. Especially in interviews and participant observations, cultural mediators may have projected a country identity they deemed appropriate for foreign audiences rather than communicate their true perception of Vietnam's country identity. This concern was addressed first by establishing rapport and building trust with research participants; communication with the researcher seemed authentic and sincere. Second, rigorous, systematic qualitative and quantitative methods were triangulated to produce a strong array of evidence that expands the public relations, public diplomacy, and country identity literature. Nevertheless, this dissertation initiates methodological inquiries about best practices for empirical research in international contexts. Future research should investigate methods for maintaining qualitative data quality when researching identity in a different culture.

Additionally, this dissertation focused on internal perceptions of country identity and citizen diplomacy. While assessing the influence of cultural mediators' communication about country identity on foreign publics is outside the scope of this dissertation, future research should include the perspectives of foreigners who communicate with cultural mediators. Analyzing the perceptions of foreigners would bolster scholarship about factors that influence citizen diplomacy and nation branding to foreign publics. Similarly, future research that investigates external perceptions would be useful to assess if a country's identity and country's image align in citizen diplomacy.

Future research is also necessary to understand the conceptualization of country identity variables in a non-Western context. For example, in relation to work ethic, Vinken (2006) posits that Western notions of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations for work emphasize individualistic values that are less relevant in East Asia (Vinken, 2006). Thus, understanding the conceptualization of what it means to be “hardworking” in Vietnam requires further investigation. Moreover, in the heritage and culture construct, more research is needed to clarify conceptualizations of religion and diversity in the context of Vietnam; the former necessitates uncovering the relationship between religion and tradition in the practice of worshipping ancestors, while the latter involves understanding perceptions of various subcultures, including regional cultures and ethnic cultures. While this dissertation did not purpose to explore gender norms in Vietnam’s culture, some interview participants discussed traditional standards for men and women in Vietnam. As Nguyen and Simkin (2015) note, inequitable representation and discrimination is an area of prudent research related to Vietnam’s diversity. Since this dissertation presents the family as the center of Vietnamese society, future research could explore how gender inequality functions at both familial and societal levels.

Another finding in this dissertation is the importance of food to the heritage and culture construct. The link between food and diplomacy warrants additional scholarly attention. Sometimes called culinary diplomacy or gastrodiploamacy, food diplomacy is “the use of food and cuisine as an instrument to create cross-cultural understanding in the hopes of improving interactions and cooperation” (Chapple-Sokol, 2013, p. 151). Zhang (2015) describes the strategic communication used by Japan, Malaysia, Peru, South

Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand in food diplomacy campaigns. Similarly, Sweden and Mexico employed government policies to promote their food as a type of soft power (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013). Additional research could explore the role of food in citizen diplomacy and the potential for other countries to use cuisine as a diplomatic tool to promote the nation brand.

Additional research is needed to investigate the complexity and nuance of the political appeal construct in country identity. The qualitative data in this dissertation reflect a variety of perspectives about Vietnam's political system, national heroes, and human rights. Future research could focus on these different perspectives to address outliers and to understand more fully the factors that influence internal perceptions of political appeal and human rights in a one-party state.

The complexity of the political appeal construct further relates to the complexity of defining the nation – What is Vietnam? Is Vietnam the government? Is Vietnam the citizens? Is Vietnam the geographic features? For example, when participants were asked to “describe Vietnam,” some responded with descriptions of mountains, others with descriptions of cultural traditions. One survey participant emailed the researcher while taking the survey to ask, “What does the survey mean by Vietnam – the people or the government?” The researcher directed the participant to answer each question according to how he thought of “Vietnam” within the context of the specific question. Perhaps, though, this participant's question raises an inherent issue with the Country Reputation Index and other surveys that include items that begin with “[Country] is...” This dissertation supports the notion proposed by Anderson (1983): Nations do not exist in

and of themselves but rather are dynamic ideas that citizens imagine into being through rituals and national symbols. Seib (2016) further includes diasporas who remain virtually integrated with their home country as a part of the nation. More research is required to understand how the nation, an external frame, intersects with country identity, an internal frame. Such research would have implications for nation branding to domestic publics – and perhaps diasporas – and the consequence of a government and citizens not sharing the same perceptions of and feelings toward the country.

Finally, this dissertation shows communication about heritage and culture is a core component of citizen diplomacy. Is then citizen diplomacy a form of culture diplomacy? Cultural diplomacy is “the exchange of ideas, art and other cultural aspects, all aiming to foster cultural understanding between nations” (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013, p. 225). Cultural diplomacy is often associated with the arts (Hurn, 2016) but also fosters understanding through cultural agreements and cooperation (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). Schneider (2009) proposes cultural diplomacy through collaboration by building networks around a cultural event such as a music concert, film festival, or art exhibition.

Thus, cultural diplomacy can include citizen diplomats. Sharp (2001), however, shows citizen diplomats have the potential to do more than share culture. In the case of this dissertation, citizen diplomats functioned as cultural mediators, or as “citizen diplomats as a go-between” (Sharp, 2001, p. 137). However, Sharp (2001) identifies these other citizen diplomat typologies that extend beyond cultural mediation: the citizen diplomat as a representative for an economic interest, the citizen diplomat as an advocate for a particular cause, and the citizen diplomat as a subverter or transformer of existing

policies. Thus, cultural diplomacy can be citizen diplomacy but not all cultural diplomacy is citizen diplomacy, and citizen diplomacy can be cultural diplomacy but not all citizen diplomacy is cultural diplomacy. More research is needed to investigate the intersection of cultural diplomacy and citizen diplomacy.

Establishing evidence of the success of a public diplomacy activity is challenging (Fitzpatrick, 2010a; Seib, 2016), and this is true for citizen diplomacy. Participants in this dissertation, however, reported their worldviews changed as they communicated with foreigners and established international friendships. Further, participants explicitly and implicitly emphasized their belief that the best way to learn about a country is to interact with the local people. Diplomacy is always changing (Seib, 2016), and, thus, it is difficult to predict the best topic or context to investigate next. This dissertation echoes the call of Yousaf and Li (2015) for continued research that focuses “on the internal audiences in their role as a ‘communication medium’ to external audiences” in the context of public diplomacy (p. 408). The role and experiences of cultural mediators engaged in citizen diplomacy activities in other non-Western, one-party, postwar and/or developing countries – and the impact of such activities – is an area that merits research.

In conclusion, this dissertation confirms the salience of culture and heritage and human capital in country identity. The levels of qualitative data saturation as well as statistical analyses performed on the quantitative data indicate family and work ethic are additional layers of heritage and culture and human capital, respectively. Further, economic appeal motivates cultural mediators to engage in citizen diplomacy, since they want to improve their communication skills for better integration into the international

community. This dissertation provides insight into cultural mediators as a typology of citizen diplomat and into citizen-directed grassroots networks as a public diplomacy method to promote cultural alliances. Future research can build upon these findings.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Interview Instrument**

1. Describe the goal or purpose of your interactions with foreigners.

Probe → What is it like to interact with a foreigner?

2. Describe Vietnam's overall international reputation.

3. What are the most important things for foreigners to know about Vietnam?

4. Describe how you talk about Vietnam to foreigners.

Probe with constructs of country identity →

- Physical appeal
- Economic appeal
- Heritage and cultural appeal, including history  
→ What did you study in school?
- Human capital
- Leadership appeal  
→ How do you think the government could improve?
- Social appeal
- Emotional appeal

5. How does the way you talk about Vietnam to Americans differ from the way you talk about Vietnam to other foreigners?

Probe → Do you talk about the American War in Vietnam differently with Americans than with other foreigners?

Probe → Do you talk about Vietnam differently with other Vietnamese than with foreigners?

6. How is Vietnam similar to/different from other countries?

7. How are Vietnamese similar to/different from foreigners?

8. When interacting with foreigners, have you ever found yourself in a situation when there was a cultural misunderstanding (beyond language)? Explain what happened.

9. What have foreigners learned about Vietnam during their exchanges with you?

10. How do you think your interactions with foreigners have affected your attitude about and perception of Vietnam and of other countries? Why?

11. How do you think your interactions with foreigners have affected their attitudes about and perceptions of Vietnam? Why?
12. Have you maintained relationships with foreigners after your initial contact? Explain.
13. (Show this video as a stimulus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXyJ4J8yY-A>.) Do you think this video is an accurate portrayal of Vietnam? Why or why not?

## **Appendix B: Video Transcript**

“Welcome to Vietnam” video

Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXyJ4J8yY-A>

Published on October 1, 2015

Produced by Do Duc Thanh

Production Company: Digisun Vietnam

Commissioned by the Ministry of Foreigner Affairs of Viet Nam

Supported by the People’s Committee of Quang Ninh Province, Ha Giang Province, Lao Cai Province, Ninh Binh Province, Thua Thien/Hue Province, Da Nang City, Quang Nam Province, and Ho Chi Minh City

Songs:

“Hello Viet Nam” composed by Marc Lavoine and performed by Pham Quynh Anh

“Viet Nam” composed and performed by Mai Khoi

### **Transcript:**

Welcome to Viet Nam

Viet Nam – the love we share

Welcome to Viet Nam, the land of miracles

Viet Nam – a country with a history that goes back thousands of years is blessed by mother nature with heart touching magnificent landscapes.

With unique values of biodiversity, culture and architecture, being home to eight UNESCO-recognized World Natural Heritages, Viet Nam comes across as the top attracted tourist destinations in Southeast Asia.

A mystical, dreamy, and elegant Ha Long Bay.

An ancient and poetic Trang An Landscape Complex.

The captivating and spectacular sites of Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park.



The mysterious tranquil ancient temples and towers of My Son Sanctuary.

The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long.

The Citadel of the Ho Dynasty.

The Complex of Hue Monuments, a relic of the glorious royal dynasty in the history of Viet Nam.

Come to Viet Nam, immerse yourself in her natural beauties and feel the strong vitality and great development potential of our country.

The Vietnamese people have a deep-rooted patriotic spirit, and a strong love for peace, independence and freedom.

They cherish traditions, work hard and are creative in nation building and development.

They are simple, amiable, and hospitable.

Viet Nam is a multiethnic country, with 54 ethnic groups living together in peace, each having distinctive customs, practices and festivals.

The charm of Viet Nam lies in its diverse culture, with many World Culture Heritages recognized by UNESCO, along with its selective absorption of world's cultural quintessence.

Viet Nam is the common home to millions of religious followers.

Besides major religions, such as Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, and indigenous religions, such as Caodaism and Hoa Hao, new religions and beliefs keep coming in, contributing to the country's multicolored religious picture, and the diverse spiritual life of the Vietnamese.

In Viet Nam, religious activities are freely carried out under Vietnamese laws and are respected and protected.

Coming to Viet Nam, one shall not resist the distinctive culinary features, the dishes that have become art and nostalgia to tourists and those living away from home.

Those are the time-honored tastes and flavors of the Viet culinary heaven.

Since the launch of Doi Moi reform in 1986, Viet Nam has recorded outstanding achievements in economic development, with high and steady growth rate, robust trade

and swift transformation of economic structure, with the industrial and service sectors accounting for over 80% of the country's GDP.

The flourishing market economy has enabled Viet Nam to advance steadily on the path of industrialization, modernization, and extensive international integration.

Not only the world's top rice exporter, Viet Nam has made itself one of the world's leading exporters of a variety of other products, such as tea, coffee, pepper, cashew nut, fishery and agriculture products, garment and textiles, which has secured a firm foothold in markets across the globe.

Viet Nam is restructuring its economy towards green and sustainable growth, with focus on the application of advanced technologies.

The government of Viet Nam attaches great importance to infrastructural investment and modernization, considering it as the foundation for development with a view to generating the most favorable links for sustainable growth across the country.

Boasting a peaceful living environment and a dynamic way of life, where human values are respected and cherished, Viet Nam wishes to offer international visitors and friends the experience of a life full of success and happiness.

Education and training, especially vocational training, have received special attention and investment, with a view to increase human resource quality, generate key drivers for sustainable growth, and make the development demands in the era of integration.

Taking pride in its ideal geographical location, it's the world's 14th largest market with over 90 million people, 60% of whom are under 25 years of age, that forms the backbone of the country's skilled workforce, stable business environment, and enabling legal framework for enterprises to thrive.

Viet Nam offers promising business opportunities for foreign investment, and has become a destination of choice for many of the world's leading corporations. Pursuing a foreign policy of independence, self-alliance for peace, cooperation and development through diversification and multilateralization of external relations, and proactive international integration, being a reliable friend and partner of all countries, and a responsible member of the international community, Viet Nam has recorded significant achievements after three decades of reform, maintaining a peaceful, stable and favorable environment for development, firmly safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity and taking its international position to new heights.

Come to Viet Nam to sense the strong vitality of this land, the values and souls of its people, to embrace the natural beauties and cultural heritages of this nation, and to be

immersed in the robust, miracle growth of one of East Asia's most dynamic centers, that is vigorously rising to integrate with the world.

Come to Viet Nam, a Viet Nam imbued with traditional values and national identities, a Viet Nam of peace, stability and development.

Welcome to Viet Nam.

We love Viet Nam!

## Appendix C: Survey Instrument

### Part 1

Please indicate how often you talk with foreigners about the following things:

Xin hãy cho biết tần suất bạn nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về những điều dưới đây bằng cách chấm điểm từ 1-5 như chỉ dẫn sau:

| <b>Rarely</b><br><b>Hiếm khi</b> | <b>Occasionally</b><br><b>Đôi khi</b> | <b>Sometimes</b><br><b>Thỉnh thoảng</b> | <b>Frequently</b><br><b>Thường xuyên</b> | <b>Usually</b><br><b>Rất thường xuyên</b> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>                         | <b>2</b>                              | <b>3</b>                                | <b>4</b>                                 | <b>5</b>                                  |

1. I talk about Vietnam with foreigners.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về Việt Nam.
2. I talk with foreigners about the geographic features of Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về các đặc điểm địa lý của Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about safety in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về độ an toàn ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about traffic and the infrastructure of roads in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về giao thông và cơ sở hạ tầng đường xá tại Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about housing in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về nhà ở tại Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about service businesses in Vietnam (for example: retail, transportation, restaurants, or other service businesses).  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về kinh doanh dịch vụ tại Việt Nam (Ví dụ: bán lẻ, vận tải, nhà hàng, hoặc các loại hình dịch vụ khác).

I talk with foreigners about healthcare in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về y tế tại Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about the communications infrastructure in Vietnam (for example: radio, telephone, or internet communication systems).  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về cơ sở hạ tầng truyền thông tại Việt Nam (Ví dụ: đài phát thanh, điện thoại, hoặc hệ thống thông tin mạng internet).

I talk with foreigners about natural disasters in Vietnam (for example: typhoons, tornadoes, or other natural disasters).

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về những thảm hoạ thiên nhiên tại Việt Nam (Ví dụ: lốc xoáy, bão, hay các thảm hoạ thiên nhiên khác).

3. I talk with foreigners about business opportunities in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về các cơ hội kinh doanh ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about various manufacturing industries in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về nhiều ngành công nghiệp chế tạo của Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about agriculture in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về nông nghiệp tại Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about taxes in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về thuế ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about the quality of Vietnam's goods and services.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về chất lượng hàng hoá và dịch vụ ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's performance in the global economy.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về sức mạnh kinh tế Việt Nam trong nền kinh tế thế giới.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's economic future.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về nền kinh tế Việt Nam trong tương lai.

4. I talk with foreigners about diversity in Vietnam's society and culture.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về sự đa dạng văn hoá và xã hội Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's history.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về lịch sử Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about religion in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về tôn giáo ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about the importance of family in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về tầm quan trọng của gia đình trong văn hoá Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's entertainment activities.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về các hoạt động vui chơi giải trí ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about movies, TV shows, and/or music made in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về phim, chương trình truyền hình, và/hoặc âm nhạc được sản xuất tại Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnamese fashion and beauty culture.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về văn hoá thời trang và thẩm mỹ ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's cuisine.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về ẩm thực Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's cultural events and traditions such as holidays.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về các sự kiện và truyền thống văn hoá Việt Nam, ví dụ như các lễ hội.

5. I talk with foreigners about the education levels of Vietnamese citizens.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về trình độ học vấn của người Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about the work ethic of Vietnamese.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về thái độ và kỷ luật trong lao động của người Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnamese celebrities such as singers and athletes.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về những người nổi tiếng như ca sĩ hay vận động viên Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about art in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về nghệ thuật tại Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about sports in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về các môn thể thao tại Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnamese are creative and critical thinkers when solving problems.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về vấn đề liệu người Việt Nam có sự sáng tạo và khả năng phân tích trong quá trình giải quyết các vấn đề gặp phải hay không.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnamese innovations in research and technology.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về những sáng kiến và sáng tạo ở Việt Nam về nghiên cứu và công nghệ.

I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnamese are adaptable and tolerant.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về người Việt Nam có dễ thích ứng và cởi mở hay không.

I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnamese are friendly and welcoming to foreigners.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về việc người Việt Nam có chào đón và có thân thiện hay không với người nước ngoài.

6. I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's leaders.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về các nhà lãnh đạo của Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about how Vietnam is managed by its leaders.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về cách các nhà lãnh đạo quản lý Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnamese leaders' vision for the future of Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về tầm nhìn của những nhà lãnh đạo Việt Nam dành cho tương lai của đất nước.

I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnam complies with international laws.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về tình hình tuân thủ luật pháp quốc tế của Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about Vietnam's political stability.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về sự ổn định về chính trị ở Việt Nam.

7. I talk with foreigners about the standard of living in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về mức sống ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about educational opportunities in Vietnam.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về cơ hội giáo dục ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about social causes that Vietnam supports.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về các chương trình xã hội mà Việt Nam ủng hộ.

I talk with foreigners about environmental policies that Vietnam supports.  
Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về những chính sách về môi trường mà Việt Nam ủng hộ.

I talk with foreigners about how Vietnam behaves in the areas of international peace and security.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về cách hành xử của Việt Nam trong lĩnh vực hoà bình và an ninh quốc tế.

I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnam is a responsible member of the international community.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về vấn đề liệu Việt Nam có phải là một thành viên có trách nhiệm trong cộng đồng quốc tế hay không.

8. I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnam is liked in the world.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về việc liệu Việt Nam có được bạn bè quốc tế yêu mến hay không.

I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnam is respected in the world.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về việc liệu Việt Nam có được bạn bè quốc tế tôn trọng hay không.

I talk with foreigners about whether Vietnam is trusted in the world.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về việc liệu Việt Nam có được bạn bè quốc tế tin tưởng hay không.

I talk with foreigners about the good things in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về những điều tốt đẹp ở Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about the bad things in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về những điều không tốt đẹp ở Việt Nam.

9. When I talk with foreigners, I try to change negative opinions of Vietnam or stereotypes about Vietnamese.

Tôi cố gắng thay đổi những ý kiến hoặc định kiến tiêu cực về Việt Nam khi tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài.

10. When I talk with foreigners, I feel proud of Vietnam.

Khi tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài, tôi cảm thấy tự hào về Việt Nam.

11. I talk with foreigners about the unity of Vietnamese people.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về sự đoàn kết của người Việt Nam.

I talk with foreigners about regional differences in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người nước ngoài về sự khác biệt vùng miền ở Việt Nam.

12. I establish friendships with foreigners.

Tôi kết bạn với những người nước ngoài.



13. I establish CLOSE friendships with foreigners.

Tôi xây dựng tình bạn THÂN THIẾT với những người nước ngoài.

14. I talk with Americans about cultural differences between Vietnam and the United States.

Tôi nói chuyện với người Mỹ về những khác biệt trong văn hoá giữa Việt Nam và Mỹ.

I talk with Americans about the American War in Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người Mỹ về Chiến tranh chống Mỹ tại Việt Nam.

I talk with Americans about current diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam.

Tôi nói chuyện với người Mỹ về tình hình quan hệ ngoại giao hiện nay giữa Việt Nam và Mỹ.

## Part 2

Please indicate how much you agree with each statement according to the following scale:

Xin hãy cho biết mức độ đồng ý/không đồng ý của bạn với những câu dưới đây bằng cách chấm điểm từ 1-5 như chỉ dẫn sau:

| <b>Disagree</b><br><b>Không đồng ý</b> | <b>Somewhat disagree</b><br><b>Không đồng ý một phần nào đó</b> | <b>Neither agree nor disagree</b><br><b>Trung lập</b> | <b>Somewhat agree</b><br><b>Đồng ý một phần nào đó</b> | <b>Agree</b><br><b>Đồng ý</b> |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>                               | <b>2</b>                                                        | <b>3</b>                                              | <b>4</b>                                               | <b>5</b>                      |

1. Overall, Vietnam's international reputation is favorable.

Nhìn chung, Việt Nam có danh tiếng tốt trong mắt bạn bè quốc tế.

2. Vietnam has beautiful natural landscapes and scenery.

Việt Nam có phong cảnh đẹp.

Vietnam is a safe place.

Việt Nam là một đất nước an toàn.

Vietnam has a good infrastructure of roads and traffic regulations.

Việt Nam có cơ sở hạ tầng đường xá và giao thông tốt.

Vietnam has good housing.  
Việt Nam có nhà cửa đẹp.

Vietnam has good service businesses (for example: retail, transportation, restaurants, or other service businesses).  
Việt Nam có hình thức kinh doanh dịch vụ tốt (Ví dụ: bán lẻ, vận tải, nhà hàng, hoặc các loại hình dịch vụ khác).

Vietnam offers good health care.  
Việt Nam cung cấp hệ thống chăm sóc sức khỏe tốt.

Vietnam has a good communications infrastructure (for example: radio, telephone, or internet communication systems).  
Việt Nam có cơ sở hạ tầng truyền thông tốt (Ví dụ: đài phát thanh, điện thoại, hoặc hệ thống thông tin mạng internet).

Vietnam is free of natural disasters (for example: typhoons, tornadoes, or other natural disasters).  
Việt Nam không có nhiều thiên tai (Ví dụ: Ví dụ: lốc xoáy, bão, hay các thảm họa thiên nhiên khác).

3. Vietnam is an inviting place to do business.  
Việt Nam là một điểm đến hấp dẫn cho các doanh nghiệp kinh doanh.

Vietnam has a well-developed manufacturing industries.  
Việt Nam có nền công nghiệp sản xuất phát triển mạnh.

Vietnam has a well-developed agricultural sector.  
Việt Nam có khu vực nông nghiệp phát triển mạnh.

Vietnam is a country with a low tax rate.  
Việt Nam là quốc gia có thuế suất thấp.

Vietnam's businesses provide high quality goods and services.  
Các doanh nghiệp Việt Nam cung cấp hàng hoá và dịch vụ chất lượng cao.

Vietnam tends to outperform its competitors.  
Việt Nam thường vượt trội so với các quốc gia đối thủ.

Vietnam is a country with strong prospects for future growth.  
Việt Nam là quốc gia có cơ hội lớn trong sự tăng trưởng trong tương lai.

4. Vietnam is socially and culturally diverse.  
Việt Nam có sự đa dạng về xã hội và văn hoá.

Vietnam has a rich historical past.  
Việt Nam có bề dày quá khứ lịch sử.

Religion is an important part of Vietnam's cultural traditions.  
Tôn giáo là phần quan trọng trong nền văn hóa Việt Nam.

Vietnam has strong families with a family support system.  
Việt Nam có nền tảng gia đình mạnh mẽ nhờ sự hỗ trợ lẫn nhau giữa các thành viên trong gia đình.

Vietnam offers enjoyable entertainment activities.  
Tại Việt Nam có nhiều hoạt động vui chơi giải trí hấp dẫn.

Vietnam produces enjoyable movies, TV shows, and/or music.  
Việt Nam sản xuất ra nhiều bộ phim, chương trình truyền hình, và/hoặc tác phẩm âm nhạc hấp dẫn.

Vietnam has a unique fashion and beauty culture.  
Việt Nam có nền văn hóa thời trang và thẩm mỹ độc đáo.

Vietnam offers varied and unique culinary experiences.  
Ẩm thực Việt Nam rất đa dạng và độc đáo.

Vietnam has unique cultural events and traditions such as holidays.  
Việt Nam có những truyền thống và sự kiện văn hoá độc đáo, ví dụ như các lễ hội.

5. Vietnam has well-educated citizens.  
Người dân Việt Nam là những người có giáo dục.

Vietnamese are hard-working.  
Người Việt Nam làm việc chăm chỉ.

Vietnam has notable celebrities such as singers and athletes.  
Việt Nam có những nhân vật nổi tiếng đáng chú ý như các ca sĩ hay vận động viên.

Vietnamese are artistic.  
Người Việt Nam giỏi nghệ thuật.

Vietnamese are active in sports.  
Người Việt Nam rất tích cực tham gia các hoạt động thể thao.

Vietnamese are creative and critical thinkers when solving problems.  
Người Việt Nam sáng tạo và phân tích kỹ lưỡng khi giải quyết các vấn đề mà họ gặp phải.

Vietnam is innovative in research and technology.  
Việt Nam là một quốc gia sáng tạo trong nghiên cứu và công nghệ.

Vietnamese are adaptable and tolerant.  
Người Việt Nam có dễ thích ứng và cởi mở.

Vietnamese are friendly and welcoming to others.  
Người Việt Nam thân thiện và chào đón với người nước ngoài.

6. Vietnam has charismatic leaders.  
Việt Nam có những vị lãnh đạo thuyết phục được quần chúng.

Vietnam is a well-managed country.  
Việt Nam là một đất nước được quản lý tốt.

Vietnam's leaders communicate an appealing vision for the future of Vietnam.  
Các nhà lãnh đạo Việt Nam truyền đạt tầm nhìn lôi cuốn cho tương lai Việt Nam.

Vietnam upholds international laws.  
Việt Nam tuân theo luật pháp quốc tế.

Vietnam is a politically stable country.  
Việt Nam là quốc gia có sự ổn định về chính trị.

7. Vietnam has a high standard of living.  
Việt Nam có mức sống cao.

Vietnam offers good educational opportunities to citizens.  
Việt Nam mang lại nhiều cơ hội giáo dục cho người dân.

Vietnam supports good social causes.  
Việt Nam ủng hộ những chương trình xã hội tốt đẹp.

Vietnam supports responsible policies for environmental protection.  
Việt Nam ủng hộ các chính sách bảo vệ môi trường.

Vietnam behaves responsibly in the areas of international peace and security.  
Việt Nam hành xử có trách nhiệm trong các vấn đề về hoà bình và an ninh quốc tế.

Vietnam is a responsible member of the international community.  
Việt Nam là một thành viên có trách nhiệm trong cộng đồng quốc tế.

8. I like Vietnam.  
Tôi yêu mến Việt Nam.

I respect Vietnam.  
Tôi tôn trọng Việt Nam.

I trust Vietnam.  
Tôi tin tưởng vào Việt Nam.

Vietnam is a well-liked country in the world.  
Việt Nam là một đất nước được bạn bè quốc tế yêu mến.

Vietnam is a well-respected country in the world.  
Việt Nam được bạn bè quốc tế tôn trọng.

Other countries trust Vietnam.  
Các quốc gia khác tin tưởng Việt Nam.

I have good feelings about Vietnam.  
Tôi có những cảm nhận tích cực về Việt Nam.

9. Vietnamese feel a sense a unity with each other.  
Người Việt Nam cảm nhận được tình đoàn kết dân tộc.

10. Vietnam has many regional differences.  
Việt Nam có rất nhiều sự khác biệt văn hóa vùng miền.

11. It is important to me to establish relationships with foreigners.  
Với tôi việc thiết lập những mối quan hệ với người nước ngoài là quan trọng.

### **Part 3**

Lastly, please answer the following demographic questions:  
Cuối cùng, vui lòng trả lời các câu hỏi nhân khẩu học sau đây:

1. What is your biological sex? Please check one box.  
Giới tính của bạn là gì? Vui lòng đánh dấu chọn một ô.

- ☐ Man / Nam
  - ☐ Woman / Nữ
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer / Không muốn trả lời
2. How old are you? Please check one box.  
Bạn bao nhiêu tuổi? Vui lòng đánh dấu chọn một ô.
- ☐ 18-24 years old / 18-24 tuổi
  - ☐ 25-34 years old / 25-34 tuổi
  - ☐ 35-44 years old / 35-44 tuổi
  - ☐ 45-54 years old / 45-54 tuổi
  - ☐ 55-64 years old / 55-64 tuổi
  - ☐ 65 + years old / 65 tuổi trở lên
3. From which region of Vietnam do you originate (i.e. where did you spend the majority of your childhood)? Please check one box.  
Nguyên quán của bạn thuộc vùng nào ở Việt Nam (hay phần lớn tuổi thơ của bạn, bạn sống ở vùng nào)? Vui lòng đánh dấu chọn một ô.
- ☐ Southeast / Đông Nam
  - ☐ Red River Delta / Đồng bằng châu thổ sông Hồng
  - ☐ Mekong River Delta / Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long
  - ☐ Northeast / Đông Bắc
  - ☐ Northwest / Tây Bắc
  - ☐ North Central Coast / Duyên hải Bắc Trung Bộ
  - ☐ South Central Coast / Duyên hải Nam Trung Bộ
  - ☐ Central Highlands / Tây Nguyên
4. In which city do you currently live? Please check one box.  
Hiện tại bạn đang sống ở thành phố nào? Vui lòng đánh dấu chọn một ô.
- ☐ Ho Chi Minh City / TP.HCM
  - ☐ Da Nang / Đà Nẵng
  - ☐ Ha Noi / Hà Nội
5. What is your highest level of education? Please check one box.  
Trình độ học vấn cao nhất của bạn là gì? Vui lòng đánh dấu chọn một ô.
- ☐ 9th grade or below / Từ lớp 9 trở xuống
  - ☐ Some high school / PTTH (chưa tốt nghiệp)
  - ☐ High school diploma / PTTH (đã tốt nghiệp)

- ☐ Some college, no degree / Đại học/cao đẳng (chưa tốt nghiệp)
  - ☐ Technical or vocational training / Học nghề
  - ☐ Bachelor's degree or more / Bằng cử nhân hoặc cao hơn
6. In what contexts have you talked with foreigners? Please check all that apply.  
 Bạn đã từng nói chuyện với người nước ngoài trong hoàn cảnh nào? Vui lòng đánh dấu chọn tất cả những nội dung.
- ☐ I have gone to places that foreigners visit in my city so I can talk with them.
  - ☐ I have met foreigners in my school, university, or other educational setting.
  - ☐ I have met or worked with foreigners in my business.
  - ☐ I have met foreigners in my daily life activities (other than school or work).
  - ☐ I have traveled to foreign countries.
  - ☐ I have met foreigners in contexts other than those described above.
- ☐ Tôi đến những nơi mà khách du lịch tham quan để nói chuyện với họ.
  - ☐ Tôi gặp gỡ người nước ngoài ở trường học hoặc những trung tâm giáo dục khác.
  - ☐ Tôi gặp gỡ hoặc làm việc với người nước ngoài trong công việc.
  - ☐ Tôi gặp gỡ người nước ngoài thường xuyên trong cuộc sống hàng ngày (không kể trường học và nơi làm việc).
  - ☐ Tôi đi du lịch nước ngoài.
  - ☐ Tôi gặp gỡ người nước ngoài trong những trường hợp khác.
7. Have you ever lived or studied abroad? Please check one box.  
 Bạn đã từng sinh sống và học tập tại nước ngoài chưa? Vui lòng đánh dấu chọn một ô.
- ☐ Yes / Đã từng
  - ☐ No / Chưa từng

***Thank you for participating in this survey!***  
***Cảm ơn bạn đã tham gia trả lời trắc nghiệm!***

Table 2.1. Conceptual and operational definitions of the country identity constructs.

| <b>Constructs</b>           | <b>Conceptualization</b>                                                                                       | <b>Operationalization</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Physical Appeal</b>      | The country's geographic and physical elements                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautiful landscapes and scenery (Anholt, 2006; Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Safe place (Beerli &amp; Martin, 2004; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Efficient infrastructure of roads (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Adequate housing and healthcare (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Efficient communication infrastructure (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Free of natural disasters (De Vicente, 2004)</li> </ul>                                                              |
| <b>Economic Appeal</b>      | The country's economic development and prosperity level as well as its investment environment                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality goods and services (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015)</li> <li>• Developed industrial sector (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Inviting business environment (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Low tax rate (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Competitive advantage over other countries (Gudjonsson, 2005)</li> <li>• Strong prospects for future growth (Che-Ha et al., 2016)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Heritage and Culture</b> | The country's history and cultural products as well as the citizens' belief systems, traditions, and behaviors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique cultural traditions (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015)</li> <li>• Philosophical and/or religious belief systems (Che-Ha et al., 2016)</li> <li>• Unique culinary experiences (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015)</li> <li>• Plentiful leisure activities (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Original entertainment media e.g. movies, TV shows, and/or music (Yun, 2015)</li> <li>• Fashion and beauty leader (Yun, 2015)</li> <li>• Socially and culturally diverse (Beerli &amp; Martin, 2004; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Rich historical past (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> </ul> |



Table 2.1. Continued.

| <b>Constructs</b>       | <b>Conceptualization</b>                                                                | <b>Operationalization</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Human Capital</b>    | The abilities and skills of the country's citizens                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-educated (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Innovative in research and technology (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015)</li> <li>• Notable celebrities such as singers and athletes (Anholt, 2006)</li> <li>• Artistic (Anholt, 2006)</li> <li>• Considerate and tolerant (Anholt, 2006)</li> <li>• Friendly and welcoming (Anholt, 2006)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Political Appeal</b> | The country's political system and governmental leaders                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charismatic leaders (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Leaders who communicate an appealing vision of the country (Che-Ha et al., 2016)</li> <li>• Leaders who uphold international laws (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Well-managed (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Political stability (Beerli &amp; Martin, 2004; Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Gudjonsson, 2005)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Social Appeal</b>    | The country's championing of social and environmental causes (without economic benefit) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High standard of living (Beerli &amp; Martin, 2004)</li> <li>• Educational opportunities (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015)</li> <li>• Supportive of good causes (Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Responsible for environmental protection (Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Responsible in the areas of international peace and security (Beerli &amp; Martin, 2004; Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Responsible member of the international community (Anholt, 2006; Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Emotional Appeal</b> | The feelings people have toward the country                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likability (Anholt, 2006; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Respect (Anholt, 2006; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Trust (Anholt, 2006; Passow et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Positive feelings (Che-Ha et al, 2016)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

Table 3.1. Demographic information of interview participants.

|           | <b>City</b>      | <b>Sex</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Degree</b> | <b>Occupation</b>            |
|-----------|------------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 31         | Bachelor's    | Engineer                     |
| <b>2</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 21         | –             | University Student           |
| <b>3</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Female     | 28         | Bachelor's    | Tour Guide                   |
| <b>4</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Female     | 30         | Bachelor's    | Media Administrator          |
| <b>5</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Female     | 25         | Bachelor's    | Business Associate           |
| <b>6</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Female     | 19         | –             | University Student           |
| <b>7</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 19         | –             | University Student           |
| <b>8</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Female     | 22         | Bachelor's    | Business Associate           |
| <b>9</b>  | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 23         | Bachelor's    | Marketing Associate          |
| <b>10</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 25         | Bachelor's    | IT Professional              |
| <b>11</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | Female     | 29         | Bachelor's    | Healthcare Professional      |
| <b>12</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 26         | Bachelor's    | Engineer                     |
| <b>13</b> | Da Nang          | Male       | 33         | Master's      | English Teacher              |
| <b>14</b> | Da Nang          | Female     | 22         | Bachelor's    | English Teacher/Waitress     |
| <b>15</b> | Da Nang          | Male       | 22         | Bachelor's    | Tour Guide                   |
| <b>16</b> | Da Nang          | Male       | 22         | –             | University Student           |
| <b>17</b> | Da Nang          | Female     | 21         | –             | University Student           |
| <b>18</b> | Da Nang          | Female     | 19         | –             | University Student           |
| <b>19</b> | Ha Noi           | Female     | 32         | Bachelor's    | Loan Officer                 |
| <b>20</b> | Ha Noi           | Male       | 24         | –             | Filmmaker                    |
| <b>21</b> | Ha Noi           | Male       | 25         | Bachelor's    | Accountant                   |
| <b>22</b> | Ha Noi           | Female     | 29         | Bachelor's    | Filmmaker                    |
| <b>23</b> | Ha Noi           | Female     | 26         | Bachelor's    | Sales Executive/Farmer       |
| <b>24</b> | Ha Noi           | Female     | 23         | Bachelor's    | Tourism Office Administrator |
| <b>25</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 40         | MBA           | Marketing CEO                |
| <b>26</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | Female     | 40         | MBA           | School Administrator         |
| <b>27</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | Male       | 26         | Bachelor's    | English Teacher              |

Table 3.2. Record of participant observation hours.

|          | <b>City</b>      | <b>Date</b>     | <b>Duration</b> | <b>Type of Nonprofit Organization</b> | <b>Foreigner Nationalities</b>  |
|----------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | July 23, 2016   | 3 hours         | Tourism organization                  | American                        |
| <b>2</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | July 30, 2016   | 3 hours         | Tourism organization                  | American<br>Irish               |
| <b>3</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | August 2, 2016  | 3 hours         | Tourism organization                  | American<br>Scottish<br>British |
| <b>4</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | August 4, 2016  | 3 hours         | Tourism organization                  | American<br>Welch               |
| <b>5</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | August 6, 2016  | 3 hours         | English-language school               | American<br>British             |
| <b>6</b> | Ho Chi Minh City | August 7, 2016  | 6 hours         | English-language school               | American<br>French<br>Italian   |
| <b>7</b> | Da Nang          | August 11, 2016 | 4 hours         | Tourism organization                  | American<br>French<br>Dane      |
| <b>8</b> | Ha Noi           | August 14, 2016 | 2 hours         | English-language school               | American<br>Dutch               |

Table 3.3. Principal component analysis: Heritage and culture variables.

| <b>Item</b>                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Loading</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Component 1: The Deep Structure of Culture</b>                                                                                                                   |                |
| Vietnam has a rich historical past                                                                                                                                  | .80            |
| Vietnam is socially and culturally diverse                                                                                                                          | .79            |
| Vietnam has strong families with a family support system*                                                                                                           | .75            |
| Vietnam has unique culinary experiences                                                                                                                             | .74            |
| In Vietnam, religion is an important part of culture                                                                                                                | .67            |
| <b>Component 2: Cultural Products</b>                                                                                                                               |                |
| Vietnam produces enjoyable movies, TV shows, and/or music                                                                                                           | .88            |
| Vietnam has a unique fashion and beauty culture                                                                                                                     | .81            |
| Vietnam has enjoyable entertainment activities                                                                                                                      | .68            |
| *This dissertation added this variable, based on qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews, to the heritage and culture scale used in previous literature |                |

Table 3.4. Principal component analysis: Human capital variables.

| <b>Item</b>                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Loading</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Vietnam has artistic citizens                                                                                                                                | .80            |
| Vietnam has notable celebrities                                                                                                                              | .75            |
| Vietnamese have a strong work ethic*                                                                                                                         | .75            |
| Vietnam is innovative in technology and research                                                                                                             | .73            |
| Vietnam has well-educated citizens                                                                                                                           | .69            |
| *This dissertation added this variable, based on qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews, to the human capital scale used in previous literature |                |

Table 4.1. Participants' descriptions of places in conjunction with country identity.

| <b>Construct</b>            | <b>Variable</b>        | <b>Places Discussed During Citizen Diplomacy</b>                                                                       |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Physical Appeal</b>      | Landscapes and Scenery | Mountains (e.g., Bà Nà Hills, Cát Bà, Hà Giang, Hải Vân Pass, Mộc Châu, and Ngũ Hành Sơn)                              |
|                             |                        | Caves (e.g., Hang Sơn Đoòng and Phong Nha-Kẻ Bàng)                                                                     |
|                             |                        | Islands (e.g., Côn Đảo, Lý Sơn, and Phú Quốc)                                                                          |
|                             |                        | Beaches (e.g., Bãi Cát Vàng, Mỹ Khê, and Nhật Lệ)                                                                      |
|                             |                        | Cities (e.g., Đà Lạt, Hội An, Huế, Nha Trang, Ninh Bình, Phan Thiết, and Sa Pa)                                        |
|                             |                        | Other: Rice fields (e.g., Mù Cang Chải), trees (e.g., Ghềnh Bàng), limestone formations (e.g., Hạ Long Bay)            |
| <b>Economic Appeal</b>      | Economic Development   | Bitexco Financial Tower – HCMC                                                                                         |
| <b>Heritage and Culture</b> | Leisure                | Asia Park – DN                                                                                                         |
|                             | History                | Củ Chi Tunnels – HCMC<br>Independence Palace – HCMC<br>Saigon Central Post Office – HCMC<br>War Remnants Museum – HCMC |
|                             | Religion               | Linh Ứng Pagoda – DN<br>Notre Dame Cathedral – HCMC<br>St. Joseph's Cathedral – HN                                     |
|                             | Fashion                | Áo Dài Museum – HCMC                                                                                                   |
| <b>Political Appeal</b>     | Leadership             | Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum – HN<br>Ho Chi Minh Museum – HCMC                                                                |

*HCMC: Ho Chi Minh City*

*HN: Ha Noi*

*DN: Da Nang*

Table 4.2. Participants' descriptions of regional diversity.

| <b>Region</b>       | <b>Climate</b>                                                                         | <b>Food</b>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Economy</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Culture</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>North</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Winter and summer seasons</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Boiled and steamed</li> <li>– Seasoned carefully with herbs and spices</li> <li>– Very salty</li> <li>– Contains MSG</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Manufacturing</li> <li>– Families save money (perceived as stingy)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Conservative, especially in preserving traditional culture (folk tales, songs, etc.)</li> <li>– Focused on education</li> <li>– Pleasant but not always sincere</li> <li>– Less friendly toward foreigners, especially the older generation</li> <li>– Proud of their origin, especially if a “true Hanoian,” meaning ancestors also from Ha Noi</li> </ul> |
| <b>Central</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Salty and spicy</li> <li>– Seafood</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Technological center of the country (Da Nang)</li> <li>– Farmers and fishermen (poor)</li> <li>– Hard workers</li> <li>– Families save money</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Variety of temperatures depending on elevation</li> <li>– Very rainy</li> <li>– Harsh weather</li> </ul>                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Very conservative, especially in maintaining hierarchy</li> <li>– Slow lifestyle (Hue)</li> <li>– Friendly and genuine</li> <li>– Loud</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>South</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rainy and hot seasons</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sweet</li> <li>– Oily</li> <li>– Similar to China</li> </ul>                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Economic center of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City)</li> <li>– Workers from every region in Vietnam</li> <li>– Multinational corporations</li> <li>– Industrial parks</li> <li>– Families spend money</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Modern</li> <li>– Open-minded</li> <li>– Lacks traditional culture</li> <li>– Busy lifestyle</li> <li>– Friendly and helpful</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>MeKong Delta</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Good climate for growing food</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Very sweet</li> <li>– Fruit</li> <li>– Seafood</li> </ul>                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lots of land, thus, agrarian region</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Easy going</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Table 4.3. High scores: Variables measuring perception of country identity.

| <b>Item</b>                                          | <b>Construct</b>     | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Vietnam has unique culinary experiences              | Heritage and culture | 4.69        | .664      |
| Vietnam has beautiful landscapes and scenery         | Physical appeal      | 4.68        | .675      |
| Vietnam has a rich historical past                   | Heritage and culture | 4.54        | .840      |
| I like Vietnam                                       | Emotional appeal     | 4.45        | .904      |
| I respect Vietnam                                    | Emotional appeal     | 4.43        | .898      |
| Vietnam is socially and culturally diverse           | Heritage and culture | 4.40        | .891      |
| Vietnamese are friendly and welcoming                | Human capital        | 4.37        | .890      |
| Vietnam has unique cultural events and traditions    | Heritage and culture | 4.37        | .893      |
| Vietnam has strong families                          | Heritage and culture | 4.37        | .925      |
| In Vietnam, religion is an important part of culture | Heritage and culture | 4.05        | 1.05      |



Table 4.4. Low scores: Variables measuring perception of country identity.

| <b>Item</b>                                                      | <b>Construct</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Vietnam has a high standard of living                            | Social appeal    | 1.98        | 1.06      |
| Vietnam tends to outperform competitors                          | Economic appeal  | 1.98        | 1.04      |
| Vietnam has good roads and traffic regulations                   | Physical appeal  | 2.01        | 1.06      |
| Vietnam offers good healthcare                                   | Physical appeal  | 2.08        | .983      |
| Vietnam's leaders communicate an appealing vision for the future | Political appeal | 2.16        | 1.27      |

Table 4.5. High scores: Variables measuring communication about country identity.

| <b>Item</b>                                           | <b>Construct</b>     | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|
| I talk about Vietnam's cuisine                        | Heritage and culture | 3.67        | 1.29      |
| I talk about Vietnamese as friendly and welcoming     | Human capital        | 3.50        | 1.30      |
| I feel proud of Vietnam when I talk with foreigners   | Emotional appeal     | 3.19        | 1.17      |
| I talk about Vietnam's cultural events and traditions | Heritage and culture | 3.14        | 1.31      |
| I talk about Vietnamese as adaptable and tolerant     | Human capital        | 3.12        | 1.30      |
| I talk about entertainment activities in Vietnam      | Heritage and culture | 3.01        | 1.23      |
| I talk with foreigners about diversity in Vietnam     | Heritage and culture | 2.96        | 1.27      |
| I talk with foreigners about traffic in Vietnam       | Physical appeal      | 2.95        | 1.26      |
| I talk about the importance of family in Vietnam      | Heritage and culture | 2.90        | 1.30      |
| I talk about educational opportunities in Vietnam     | Social appeal        | 2.88        | 1.20      |

Table 4.6. Low scores: Variables measuring communication about country identity.

| <b>Item</b>                                                    | <b>Construct</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|
| I talk about manufacturing industries in Vietnam               | Economic appeal  | 1.69        | .929      |
| I talk about taxes in Vietnam                                  | Economic appeal  | 1.80        | 1.05      |
| I talk about Vietnam's leaders                                 | Political appeal | 1.92        | 1.18      |
| I talk about leaders' vision for the future of Vietnam         | Political appeal | 1.94        | 1.21      |
| I talk about Vietnamese innovations in technology and research | Human capital    | 1.95        | 1.08      |

Table 4.7. Emotional appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables.

| <b>Item</b>                        | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Perceptions of variables           |             |           |
| I like Vietnam                     | 4.45        | .904      |
| I respect Vietnam                  | 4.43        | .898      |
| I trust Vietnam                    | 3.94        | 1.19      |
| I have good feelings about Vietnam | 3.85        | 1.17      |
| Communication about variables      |             |           |
| Feelings +                         | 3.38        | 1.32      |
| Likability +                       | 2.68        | 1.27      |
| Respectability +                   | 2.55        | 1.27      |
| Trustworthiness +                  | 2.50        | 1.28      |

+ Overall perception of this variable is positive; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in positive terms

Table 4.8. Heritage and culture: Perceptions of and communication about variables.

| <b>Item</b>                                                                                                                | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Perceptions of variables                                                                                                   |             |           |
| Unique culinary experiences                                                                                                | 4.69        | .664      |
| Rich historical past                                                                                                       | 4.54        | .840      |
| Socially and culturally diverse                                                                                            | 4.40        | .891      |
| Strong families with a family support system                                                                               | 4.37        | .893      |
| Unique cultural events and traditions                                                                                      | 4.37        | .925      |
| Religion as an important part of culture                                                                                   | 4.05        | 1.05      |
| Enjoyable entertainment activities                                                                                         | 3.50        | 1.17      |
| Unique fashion and beauty culture                                                                                          | 3.06        | 1.23      |
| Produces enjoyable movies, TV shows, and/or music                                                                          | 2.56        | 1.21      |
| Communication about variables                                                                                              |             |           |
| Culinary experiences +                                                                                                     | 3.67        | 1.29      |
| Cultural events and traditions +                                                                                           | 3.14        | 1.31      |
| Entertainment activities +                                                                                                 | 3.01        | 1.23      |
| Socially and culturally diverse +                                                                                          | 2.96        | 1.27      |
| Strong families with a family support system +                                                                             | 2.90        | 1.30      |
| Rich historical past +                                                                                                     | 2.55        | 1.19      |
| Fashion and beauty culture                                                                                                 | 2.50        | 1.27      |
| Religion as an important part of culture +                                                                                 | 2.42        | 1.18      |
| Produces enjoyable movies, TV shows, and/or music                                                                          | 2.36        | 1.19      |
| + Overall perception of this variable is positive; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in positive terms |             |           |

Table 4.9. Human capital: Perceptions of and communication about variables.

| <b>Item</b>                                                                                                                | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Perceptions of variables                                                                                                   |             |           |
| Friendly and welcoming citizens                                                                                            | 4.37        | .890      |
| Adaptable and tolerant citizens                                                                                            | 4.04        | 1.04      |
| Hard-working citizens                                                                                                      | 3.55        | 1.12      |
| Well-educated citizens                                                                                                     | 3.34        | .945      |
| Artistic citizens                                                                                                          | 3.24        | 1.12      |
| Notable celebrities                                                                                                        | 3.15        | 1.28      |
| Athletic citizens                                                                                                          | 3.09        | 1.16      |
| Citizens as creative and critical thinkers                                                                                 | 3.00        | 1.12      |
| Citizens as innovative in research and technology                                                                          | 2.76        | 1.25      |
| Communication about variables                                                                                              |             |           |
| Friendly and welcoming citizens +                                                                                          | 3.50        | 1.29      |
| Adaptable and tolerant citizens +                                                                                          | 3.12        | 1.30      |
| Work ethic of citizens +                                                                                                   | 2.49        | 1.20      |
| Education levels of citizens                                                                                               | 2.48        | 1.19      |
| Artistic ability of citizens                                                                                               | 2.28        | 1.13      |
| Athletic ability of citizens                                                                                               | 2.26        | 1.10      |
| Citizens as creative and critical thinkers                                                                                 | 2.26        | 1.19      |
| Notable celebrities                                                                                                        | 2.02        | 1.02      |
| Citizens as innovative in research and technology                                                                          | 1.95        | 1.08      |
| + Overall perception of this variable is positive; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in positive terms |             |           |

Table 4.10. Social appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables.

| <b>Item</b>                                                                                                                | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Perceptions of variables                                                                                                   |             |           |
| Responsible member of the international community                                                                          | 3.52        | 1.26      |
| Responsible in international peace and security                                                                            | 3.50        | 1.32      |
| Good social causes                                                                                                         | 3.37        | 1.29      |
| Responsible policies for environmental protection                                                                          | 3.19        | 1.36      |
| Good educational opportunities                                                                                             | 2.57        | 1.25      |
| High standard of living                                                                                                    | 1.98        | 1.06      |
| Communication about variables                                                                                              |             |           |
| Educational opportunities                                                                                                  | 2.88        | 1.20      |
| Standard of living 0                                                                                                       | 2.86        | 1.19      |
| Social causes                                                                                                              | 2.27        | 1.20      |
| Involvement in international peace and security +                                                                          | 2.20        | 1.21      |
| Policies for environmental protection                                                                                      | 2.14        | 1.18      |
| Member of the international community +                                                                                    | 1.97        | 1.12      |
| + Overall perception of this variable is positive; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in positive terms |             |           |
| 0 Overall perception of this variable is negative; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in negative terms |             |           |

Table 4.11. Economic appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables.

| Item                                     | Mean | SD   |
|------------------------------------------|------|------|
| Perceptions of variables                 |      |      |
| Inviting place to do business            | 3.83 | 1.04 |
| Well-developed agricultural industries   | 3.55 | 1.13 |
| Strong prospects for future growth       | 3.53 | 1.20 |
| Well-developed manufacturing industries  | 2.78 | 1.19 |
| Provides high quality goods and services | 2.73 | 1.15 |
| Low tax rate                             | 2.73 | 1.25 |
| Tends to outperform competitors          | 1.98 | 1.04 |
| Communication about variables            |      |      |
| Goods and services                       | 2.63 | 1.23 |
| Agricultural industries +                | 2.16 | 1.08 |
| Prospects for future growth +            | 2.09 | .727 |
| Place to do business +                   | 2.09 | .733 |
| Outperform competitors 0                 | 2.05 | 1.16 |
| Tax rate                                 | 1.80 | 1.05 |
| Manufacturing industries                 | 1.69 | .929 |

+ Overall perception of this variable is positive; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in positive terms

0 Overall perception of this variable is negative; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in negative terms



Table 4.12. Physical appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables.

| Item                               | Mean | SD   |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| Perceptions of variables           |      |      |
| Beautiful landscapes and scenery   | 4.68 | .675 |
| Safe place                         | 3.79 | 1.19 |
| Good communication infrastructure  | 2.79 | 1.16 |
| Good service businesses            | 2.73 | 1.08 |
| Good housing                       | 2.70 | 1.07 |
| Free of natural disasters          | 2.61 | 1.36 |
| Good healthcare                    | 2.08 | .983 |
| Good roads and traffic regulations | 2.01 | 1.06 |
| Communication about variables      |      |      |
| Roads and traffic regulations 0    | 2.95 | 1.26 |
| Safety +                           | 2.74 | 1.22 |
| Housing                            | 2.52 | 1.10 |
| Service businesses                 | 2.49 | 1.22 |
| Landscapes and scenery +           | 2.35 | 1.16 |
| Natural disasters                  | 2.24 | 1.12 |
| Communication infrastructure       | 2.21 | 1.16 |
| Healthcare 0                       | 1.98 | 1.07 |

+ Overall perception of this variable is positive; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in positive terms

0 Overall perception of this variable is negative; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in negative terms

Table 4.13. Political appeal: Perceptions of and communication about variables.

| <b>Item</b>                                                                                                                | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Perceptions of variables                                                                                                   |             |           |
| Politically stable country                                                                                                 | 3.51        | 1.28      |
| Upholds international laws                                                                                                 | 3.48        | 1.25      |
| Charismatic leaders                                                                                                        | 2.34        | 1.27      |
| Well-managed country                                                                                                       | 2.30        | 1.26      |
| Leaders communicate an appealing vision for the future of the country                                                      | 2.16        | 1.17      |
| Communication about variables                                                                                              |             |           |
| Stability of the country +                                                                                                 | 2.27        | 1.29      |
| Management of the country 0                                                                                                | 2.03        | 1.24      |
| Responses to international laws                                                                                            | 1.98        | 1.18      |
| Leaders' vision for the future of the country 0                                                                            | 1.94        | 1.21      |
| Charismatic leaders 0                                                                                                      | 1.92        | 1.18      |
| + Overall perception of this variable is positive; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in positive terms |             |           |
| 0 Overall perception of this variable is negative; thus, communication about this variable may be framed in negative terms |             |           |

Table 4.14. Correlations: Perception of and communication about country identity.

|                                   | <b>Talk -<br/>Physical</b> | <b>Talk -<br/>Economic</b> | <b>Talk -<br/>Heritage<br/>&amp;<br/>Culture</b> | <b>Talk -<br/>Human<br/>Capital</b> | <b>Talk -<br/>Political</b> | <b>Talk -<br/>Social</b> | <b>Talk -<br/>Emotional</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Physical</b>                   | -.089                      | -.042                      | .099                                             | .079                                | .109                        | -.083                    | .188**                      |
| <b>Economic</b>                   | .049                       | .102                       | .252**                                           | .172**                              | .245**                      | .048                     | .335**                      |
| <b>Heritage<br/>&amp; Culture</b> | -.034                      | -.022                      | .251**                                           | .134*                               | .139*                       | -.014                    | .289**                      |
| <b>Human<br/>Capital</b>          | -.057                      | -.003                      | .161*                                            | .109                                | .146*                       | -.002                    | .295**                      |
| <b>Political</b>                  | -.154*                     | -.053                      | .007                                             | .001                                | .054                        | -.046                    | .144*                       |
| <b>Social</b>                     | -.223**                    | -.098                      | -.020                                            | -.026                               | .004                        | -.123                    | .141*                       |
| <b>Emotional</b>                  | -.190**                    | -.142*                     | .033                                             | -.064                               | -.041                       | -.184**                  | .234**                      |

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Table 4.15. Correlations: Perceptions of variables in the heritage and culture scale.

|                   | History | Religion | Family | Activities | Media  | Fashion | Food   | Tradition |
|-------------------|---------|----------|--------|------------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|
| <b>Diversity</b>  | .601**  | .425**   | .528** | .306**     | .138** | .229**  | .468** | .499**    |
| <b>History</b>    |         | .431**   | .530** | .194**     | .171** | .313**  | .529** | .634**    |
| <b>Religion</b>   |         |          | .447** | .277**     | .106   | .172**  | .354** | .367**    |
| <b>Family</b>     |         |          |        | .353**     | .169** | .292**  | .468** | .535**    |
| <b>Activities</b> |         |          |        |            | .431** | .412**  | .251** | .335**    |
| <b>Media</b>      |         |          |        |            |        | .585**  | .058   | .284**    |
| <b>Fashion</b>    |         |          |        |            |        |         | .236** | .369**    |
| <b>Food</b>       |         |          |        |            |        |         |        | .532**    |

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Table 4.16. Comparison of heritage and culture scales (with/without family variable).

| <b>Heritage and Culture</b>       | $\alpha$ | B    | SE <sub>B</sub> | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> -value | $R^2$ |
|-----------------------------------|----------|------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|-------|
| Scale with the family variable    | .821     | .743 | .079            | .532    | <.001           | .283  |
| Scale without the family variable | .793     | .088 | .010            | .507    | <.001           | .257  |

Table 4.17. Correlations: Perceptions of variables in the human capital scale.

|                            | <b>Hard-Working</b> | <b>Notable Celebrities</b> | <b>Artistic</b> | <b>Athletic</b> | <b>Critical Thinkers</b> | <b>Innovative</b> | <b>Adaptable</b> | <b>Friendly</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Educated</b>            | .525**              | .355**                     | .385**          | .320**          | .365**                   | .343**            | .370**           | .365**          |
| <b>Hard-Working</b>        |                     | .387**                     | .456**          | .366**          | .522**                   | .416**            | .434**           | .334**          |
| <b>Notable Celebrities</b> |                     |                            | .584**          | .373**          | .354**                   | .440**            | .294**           | .289**          |
| <b>Artistic</b>            |                     |                            |                 | .429**          | .461**                   | .521**            | .391**           | .341**          |
| <b>Athletic</b>            |                     |                            |                 |                 | .579**                   | .418**            | .259**           | .170**          |
| <b>Critical Thinkers</b>   |                     |                            |                 |                 |                          | .587**            | .367**           | .266**          |
| <b>Innovative</b>          |                     |                            |                 |                 |                          |                   | .385**           | .298**          |
| <b>Adaptable</b>           |                     |                            |                 |                 |                          |                   |                  | .645**          |

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Table 4.18. Comparison of human capital scales (with/without work ethic variable).

| <b>Human Capital</b>                  | $\alpha$ | <b>B</b> | $SE_B$ | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> -value | $R^2$ |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|--------|---------|-----------------|-------|
| Scale with the work ethic variable    | .856     | .706     | .063   | .595    | <.001           | .354  |
| Scale without the work ethic variable | .836     | .008     | .008   | .565    | <.001           | .319  |

Table 4.19. Regression analysis: Influencers of feelings about country identity.

| <b>Item</b>                                              | <b>Construct</b>     | <b>B</b> | <b>SE<sub>B</sub></b> | <b>β</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| Vietnam has strong families with a family support system | Heritage and culture | .231     | .066                  | .238     | .001           |
| Vietnam has well-educated citizens                       | Human capital        | .199     | .059                  | .209     | .001           |
| Vietnam's citizens are creative and critical thinkers    | Human capital        | .161     | .058                  | .201     | .006           |
| Vietnam has athletic citizens                            | Human capital        | -.139    | .047                  | -.180    | .004           |
| Vietnam is a politically stable country                  | Political appeal     | .131     | .050                  | .186     | .010           |
| Vietnam has citizens with a strong work ethic            | Human capital        | .122     | .055                  | .150     | .029           |

*Model  $R^2 = .693$ ,  $p < .001$  when controlled for biological sex, gender, region of origin, and current city of residence*



Table 4.20. Multicollinearity diagnostic on the country identity constructs.

| <b>Constructs</b>    | <b>Tolerance</b> | <b>Variance of Inflation</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Physical appeal      | .438             | 2.286                        |
| Economic appeal      | .475             | 2.104                        |
| Heritage and culture | .447             | 2.239                        |
| Human capital        | .318             | 3.142                        |
| Political appeal     | .369             | 2.708                        |
| Social appeal        | .339             | 2.948                        |
| Emotional appeal     | .527             | 1.897                        |

Table 4.21. Regression analysis: Constructs as predictors of country identity feelings.

| <b>Construct</b>     | <b>B</b> | <b>SE<sub>B</sub></b> | <b>β</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| Heritage and culture | .353     | .105                  | .247     | .001           |
| Social appeal        | .277     | .076                  | .308     | <.001          |
| Human capital        | .213     | .106                  | .179     | .045           |
| Political appeal     | .111     | .074                  | .126     | .132           |
| Physical appeal      | -.062    | .104                  | -.046    | .549           |
| Economic appeal      | -.012    | .082                  | -.011    | .881           |

*Model R<sup>2</sup> = .474, p < .001*

Table 4.22. Regression analysis: Influencers of talk about country identity.

| <b>Item</b>                                         | <b>Construct</b>     | <b>B</b> | <b>SE<sub>B</sub></b> | <b>β</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| Vietnamese are friendly and welcoming               | Human capital        | .299     | .150                  | .221     | .048           |
| Vietnam has a rich historical past                  | Heritage and culture | -.293    | .145                  | -.215    | .046           |
| Vietnam has well-developed manufacturing industries | Economic appeal      | .194     | .096                  | .203     | .045           |

*Model  $R^2 = .328$ ,  $p = .030$  when controlled for biological sex, gender, region of origin, and current city of residence*

Table 4.23. Regression analysis: Constructs as predictors of country identity talk.

| <b>Construct</b>     | <b>B</b> | <b>SE<sub>B</sub></b> | <b>β</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| Economic appeal      | .599     | .135                  | .426     | <.001          |
| Social appeal        | -.227    | .130                  | .198     | .083           |
| Political appeal     | -.208    | .123                  | -.184    | .093           |
| Emotional appeal     | .091     | .117                  | .071     | .436           |
| Heritage and culture | -.069    | .179                  | -.039    | .698           |
| Physical appeal      | -.037    | .172                  | -.022    | .830           |
| Human capital        | .034     | .177                  | .022     | .849           |

*Model  $R^2 = .117$ ,  $p < .001$*

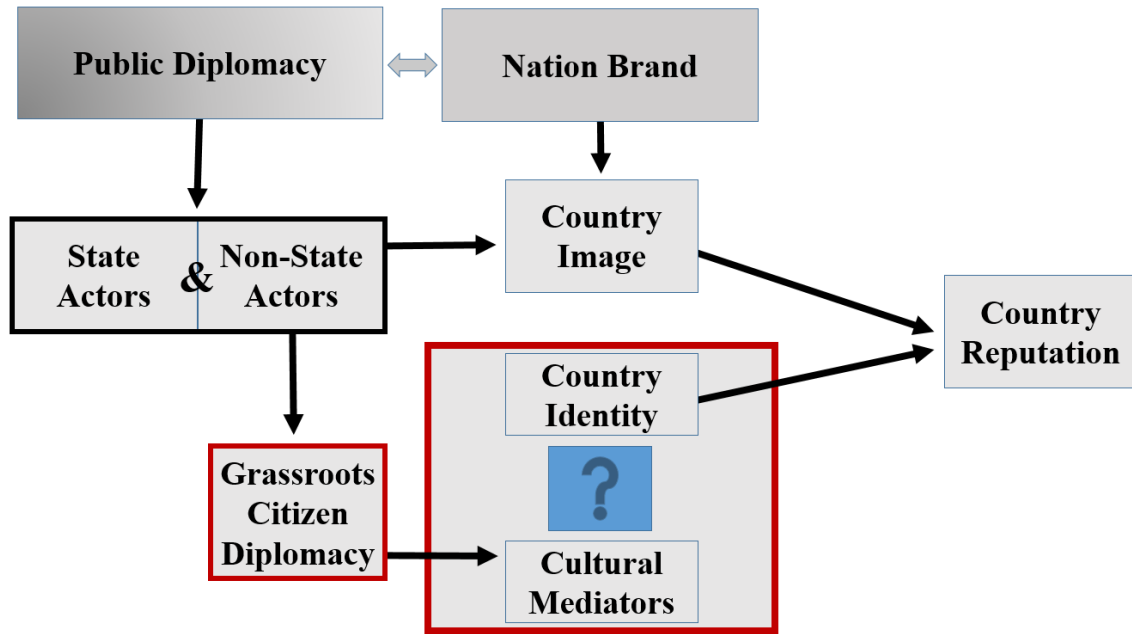


Figure 2.1. Conceptual map of public diplomacy research informing this dissertation.

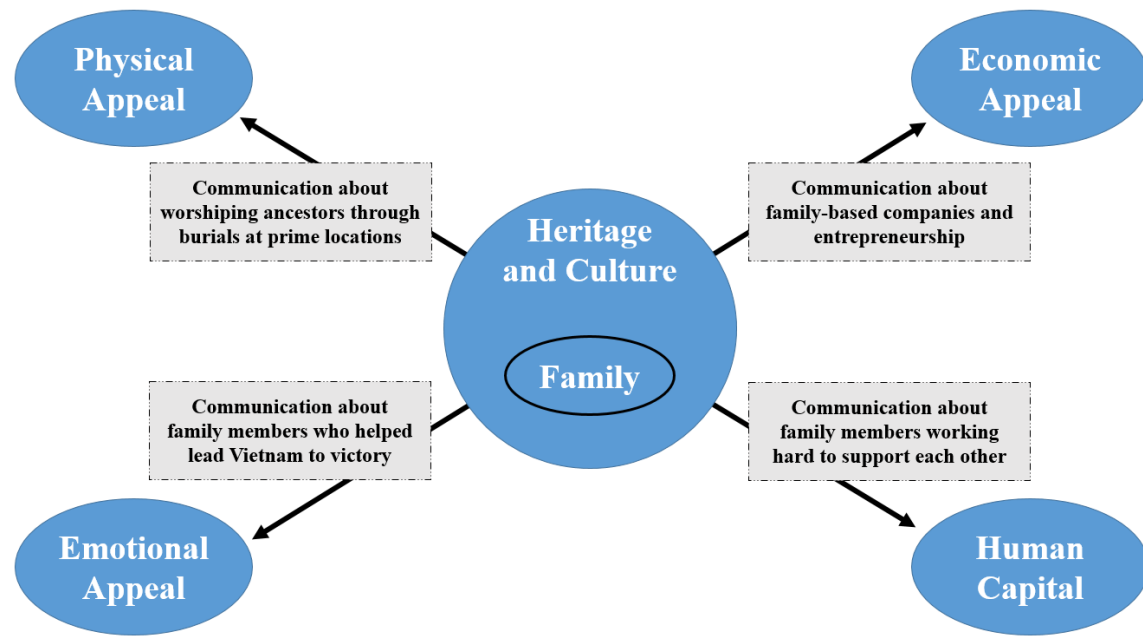


Figure 4.1. Family as the core of the heritage and culture construct.

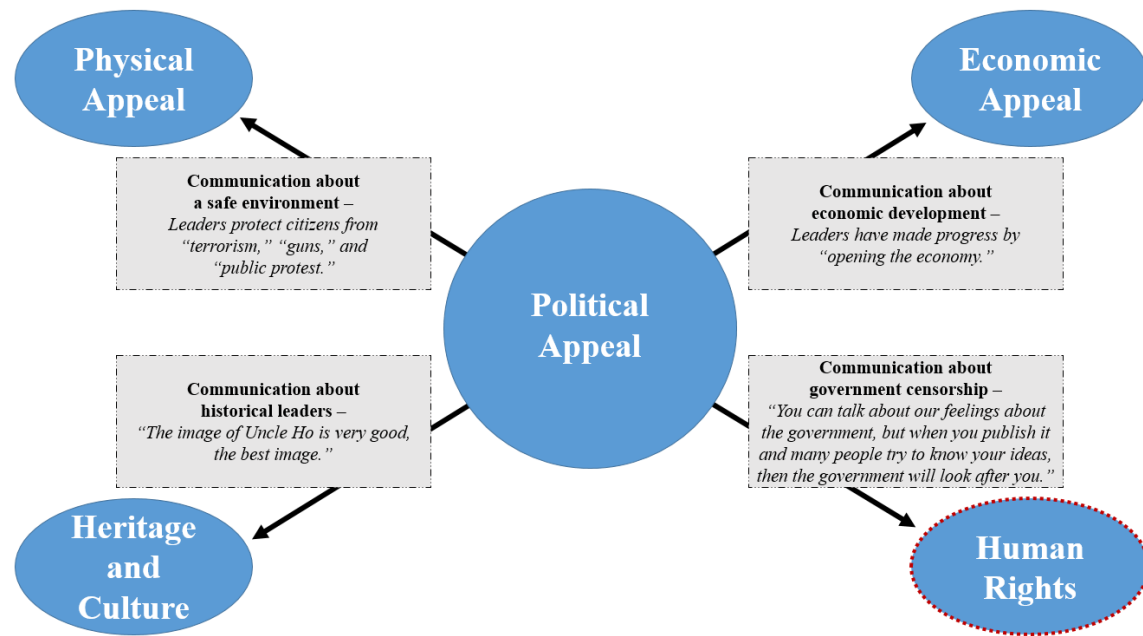


Figure 4.2. Political appeal's overlap with other country identity constructs.

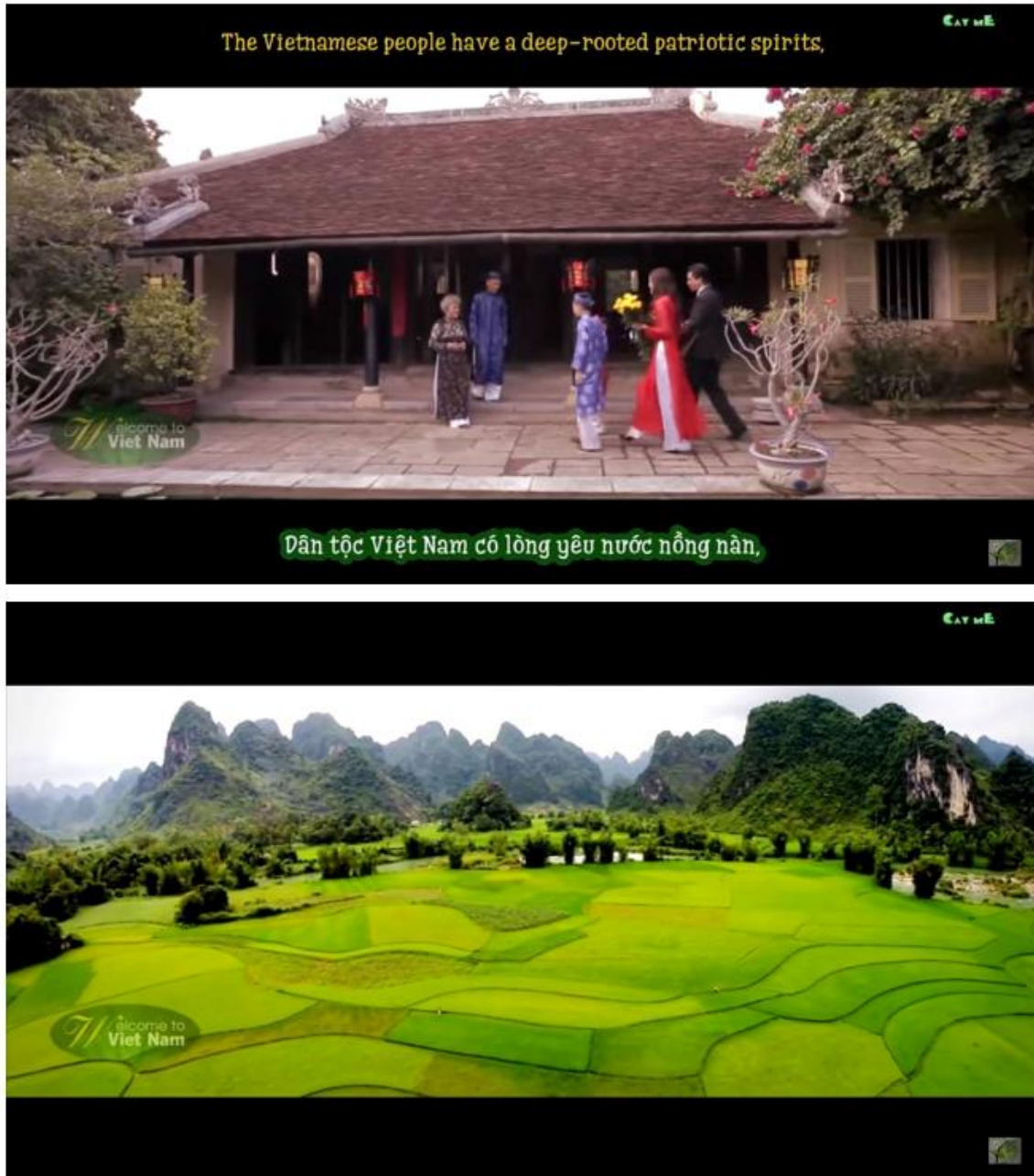


Figure 4.3. Images perceived as authentic representations in nation branding.



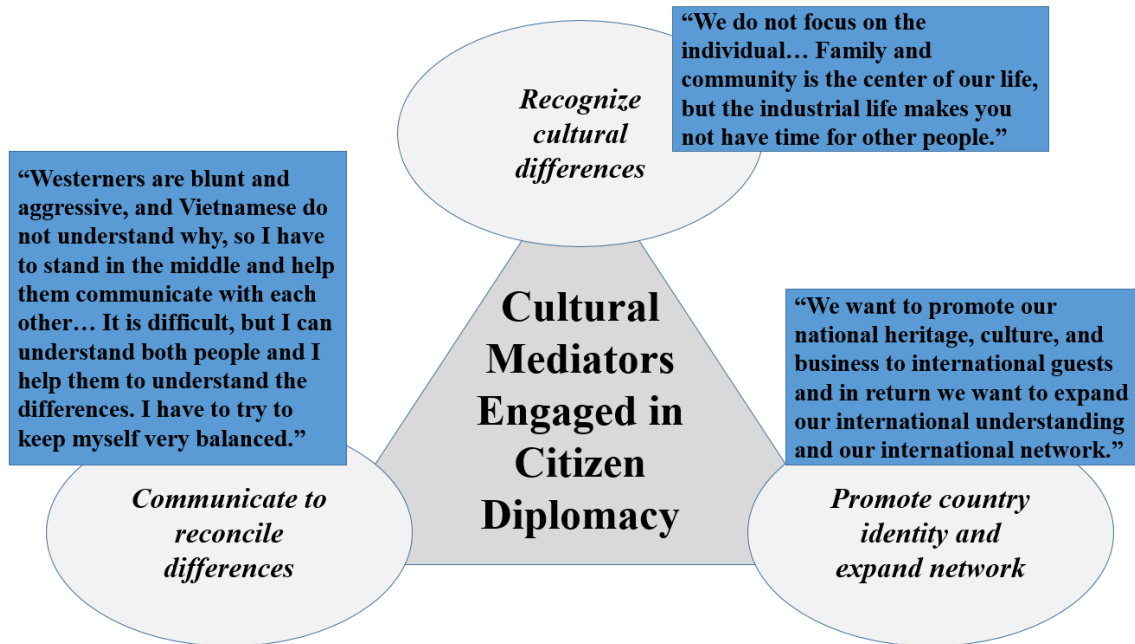


Figure 4.4. Cultural mediators' perceived experiences in citizen diplomacy.

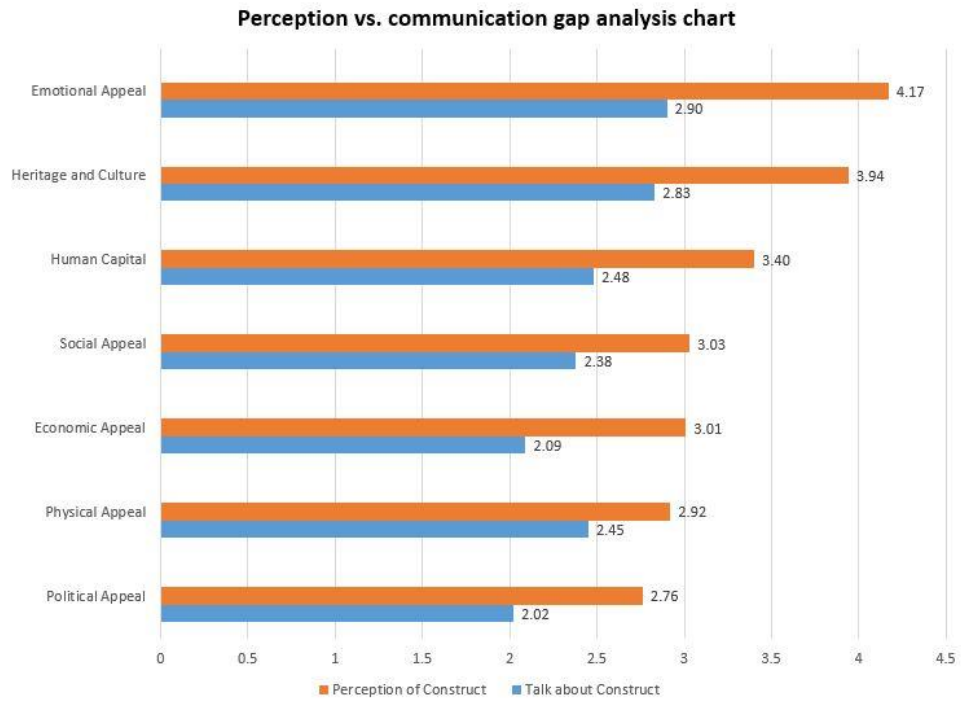


Figure 4.5. Perception of versus amount of communication about country identity.

## **VITA**

Lindsey M. Bier graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy from the College of Communication & Information at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in May 2017. She earned a master's degree in communication and a master's degree in history from Northern Illinois University and a bachelor's degree in English from Judson University.

Lindsey also completed fellowships in Vietnamese Studies at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, in Korean Studies at Korea University, and in East Asian Studies through Columbia University.

With research interests encompassing public diplomacy, country reputation, and empirical methods in international/intercultural contexts, Lindsey has presented at regional, national, and international conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals.

Throughout her doctoral studies, the College of Communication & Information awarded Lindsey a fellowship for high academic performance (2014), four scholarships for graduate studies (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016), a grant for international communication research (2015), and a grant for preliminary dissertation research (2015). In 2014, Lindsey received a U.S. Department of Education Foreign Language and Area Studies Award. In 2016, her dissertation research in Vietnam was funded by a scholarship from the Center for International Education and by a grant from the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

As a consultant, Lindsey has designed cross-cultural communication strategies and training programs and delivered keynote speeches about international engagement for various organizations. Media have interviewed her many times about her research.

Further, Lindsey has accompanied dozens of U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War back to Vietnam and facilitated veteran-to-veteran exchanges. In 2016, Lindsey received the Achievement Award from the Vietnam Veterans of America in Washington, D.C.

Throughout her career, Lindsey has taught courses in public relations, journalism, public speaking, organizational communication, and intercultural communication at the University of Tennessee, Middle Tennessee State University, Nashville State Community College, and Northern Illinois University.

Lindsey's creative interests focus on photojournalism. Her photographs have appeared in regional and national publications as well as in juried exhibits. In 2016, she received the Travel Photography Award from the Arts & Culture Alliance of Knoxville.

Lindsey is looking forward to pursuing her teaching, research, and creative passions in Los Angeles beginning in August 2017: She has accepted a position as an assistant professor at the University of Southern California, where she will support a diverse and international student body to become global leaders.