

¿Helping?
Volunteering With Children in Chile

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ABSTRACT

¿Helping? Volunteering With Children in Chile

Margaret Christison

This thesis provides perspective on helping and international volunteerism. Specifically, research was done with the volunteer organization, Voluntarios de la Esperanza, which recruits international volunteers to work in various hogares, or children's homes, in Santiago, Chile. The experiences of the creators of the organization as well as volunteers are examined through the lens of notions of helping and altruism. The motivations of individual volunteers to participate in such a program are looked at as they play out against the goals of the organization and the hogares themselves. Because the ultimate recipients of the volunteer effort are children, it is particularly important to analyze how much real help is occurring. A second major question that is discussed is the idea of an apparent lack of volunteerism within Chile by Chileans in terms of whether or not this is actually the case, why this perception exists.

Information was gathered through observation in some of the hogares hosting international volunteers, and semi-structured open ended interviews with current and past volunteers. Interviewees were asked to respond to questions involving their motivations to search out an experience outside of their home country, their actual experiences and challenges of volunteering in Chile, and their relationships with the children and the local staff, especially whether volunteers were having a positive impact on the children. They were also asked to reflect on how they felt the knowledge, experience and perspective they had gained through this experience would impact their future.

In the end, it would appear that the volunteers are having a positive impact on the hogares in terms of being extra hands to help with the work of looking after large numbers of children. In generalized terms, the one exception to this is the relationship volunteers and the volunteer organization has with the local staff (the *tias*). The local staff, mainly women, would not be interviewed directly; however it became clear through observation and interviews with volunteers that though some mutual respect did develop on a case by case basis, overall the volunteers and the *tias*, as groups, are not successfully working together. At the same time, it also seems that there is an ethic of volunteerism in Chile; rather it is a question of definition. Therefore, this thesis looks at why volunteer work is not named as such, as well as why the perception of non-volunteerism exists.

This thesis is perhaps the single tangible result of my many years as a student entwined with the adventures and mis-adventures of the rest of my life.

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¿Helping? Volunteering with Children in Chile

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In July of 2004 I arrived in Santiago Chile with my family. Having always wanted to travel with our children, their ages at the time and my work for my master's thesis, along with many other factors, all converged to make this the perfect time to create an opportunity. For sure I could have conducted my research at home in Montreal but I wanted to do it somewhere else, and everything fell into place to allow it to happen at this time.

Chile is a long and narrow country that stretches along half the Pacific coastline of South America. Never far from the sea, the "typical" climate passes through almost every kind of zone, from the Atacama Desert in the north (one of the driest places in the world), to the Antarctic in the south. Bound by the Andes Mountains, Chile shares a long border with Argentina, and also borders Bolivia and Peru. Chile has a market oriented economy, and this country, particularly the city of Valparaiso, is one of the most consumer oriented places I have ever been. Every square of sidewalk, every hole in a wall, had a face in it selling something.

We lived in Valparaiso, which is situated approximately 150 kilometers, an hour and a half bus ride west of Santiago. Chile's, and at one time one of the world's most major ports, Valparaiso is a city of nearly 300,000 people rising seemingly straight out of the Pacific Ocean. Roads, mostly narrow, snake precariously along the edges of cliffs with little to stop an out of control car from pitching over. Housing is colorful and ranges from brick and cement mansions to plywood shacks, all jumbled together, with many improbably perched on stilts, on the sides of cliffs. Our house, while not a mansion, was constructed of sturdy materials with all four sides firmly planted on solid ground. It was

about a kilometer and a half above the center of town, perched on the edge of one of the many Cerros, or hills, that the city is built on. The views, in any direction, were stunning. Any flat area among the houses had either a playground or, more likely, a soccer field. Amazingly, every “futball” that went over the fence seemed to eventually reappear. This neighborhood, like most of the city, had rich and poor living side by side in houses of all ages and qualities. I had the sense that there were only four to five families in this community, and being attached to family and land, people did not seem to move to upscale areas as they acquired wealth. Interestingly though, even though everyone knew each other, perhaps were family, there was a limit to the amount of trust, as most of the wealthier homes were gated. Rain is rare, and the land is dry. More than one out-of-control brush fire, sometimes a little too close for comfort, gave us nothing but the deepest respect for the volunteer fire department. But when fog rolled in from the ocean the neighborhoods below us would disappear, leaving us feeling very much like we were on an island in the clouds. To me it was a wonder that anyone ever tried settling on these hills, never mind that many of these houses stay where they were built in this land of earthquakes.

Santiago, where I conducted research, seems quite different, in contrast. With a population of around five and a half million people, it is a sprawling, modern city. In a basin almost completely surrounded by the Andes, on clear days you can see the mountains. But as the mountains also serve to hold the pollution in, often the view is obscured by smog. Walking into the “metro”, or underground train system was, for me, a bit like taking a short trip home. The trains, the ticket booths, the tiles, probably even some of the ads hanging on the walls, were identical to the Montreal system. The large

network of buses is also a common form of transportation around the city, though as bus companies are privatized needing to transfer from one bus to another can become a costly affair, particularly for those on a low income. As I traveled around the city I observed that neighborhoods seemed to be more delineated along socio-economic lines, at least this is the conclusion I made based on the similarity of housing types in most neighbourhoods. The city center is a hub of commerce and history, but there are big shopping centers throughout the metropolitan area.

My thesis field research was with an organization called Voluntarios de la Esperanza (otherwise known as VE). This organization was started by Luke Winston, a young American who had come to Chile in 2003 to volunteer in a *hogar*, or children's home, in Santiago. While Luke was volunteering at Hogar Esperanza, he realized that there were other homes in the city that might benefit from extra help as well, and so determined that it could be useful to create an organization that would bring volunteers to work in that, and other, homes in the Santiago area. So what was supposed to be a short-term break from university turned into a change in life plan for him. A large part of Luke's motivation to create this organization was due to his relationship with Jorge Daveggio, the founder and director of Hogar Esperanza. For many years, Jorge had been attempting to create a network among some hogares in the city as a way of sharing resources and ideas. He had had some success in doing this but with a full plate already, as all the directors have, it was hard to find time to get the network operational. With Jorge as a friend and mentor, one of the motivations that Luke had in creating a volunteer organization that includes both international and Chilean volunteers was the hope that volunteers could aid in making this connection between the homes. At the time that I

was doing my research this international organization was still in its beginning phases, and the evolutionary process that it went through in the six months of my involvement was incredible. So many changes and developments took place during this period that in some ways it has complicated my data collection and analysis.

Researching within a volunteer organization was not my original research goal. What I had set out to do was to try to gain insight into the lives of individuals who had, or were, growing up in children's homes or institutional settings, their perspective on the world and their place in it. This is a gap in the current research on children, childhood, child abandonment, and government and non-government interventions, and I still believe that it is an important one to examine. However, this idea shifted once I arrived in Chile, and for many reasons that initial goal became difficult. The possible field site that I had set up (or thought I had) prior to leaving Canada fell through. Looking for a new field site I came across Luke's project on a website advertising volunteer possibilities. At this point I was still hoping to continue with my initial research goal. However, this was not a research question that would have been useful to this organization at that moment.

While the research that I undertook transformed from my original research intent, it did develop into a project that held a great deal of interest for me, academically and personally. Having volunteered myself, almost all my life, in different sorts of projects, both in Canada and in other countries, most notably in a Romanian orphanage¹, as well as being a foster parent in Canada, the motivations and goals of volunteers, along with the actual social benefits and costs of volunteer practices has always been a question that I have thought about. To some extent I have come to a better understanding of my own

¹ And also in the Dominican Republic, and Portugal, and Slovenia.

practices through this project, and though this is not a thesis about my experiences, it has been greatly informed by them. Because a lot of the work, paid and unpaid, that I have done in my life has revolved around children, the end result of each experience is, I believe, very important to sort out. Volunteering “abroad” is part of a growing trend to travel for many people, but particularly the youth of North America, Northern Europe, and Australia. This is observable through even a cursory exploration of websites promoting international volunteer opportunities.² However, projects that take volunteers around the world to another country on a very temporary basis to work with a group of kids that may or may not speak the same language I think are especially important to analyze. While the volunteers may have a fantastic experience, at the end of the day are they truly being helpful.

My own interests of the motivation of volunteers and the effects that this type of volunteerism has particularly on the children in an orphanage or children’s home, merged with Luke’s interests on keeping volunteers motivated and involved both throughout and after their volunteer experience, and my list of interview questions developed from the convergence of our interests. Due to the pollution, and also because we wanted to live in a smaller center, I commuted into Santiago for interviews and observation. One downside to this is that I was not able to include my own children in the research process as I would have liked to.

I interviewed volunteers who worked in a variety of hogares in Santiago, and also observed in some of the homes. The majority of these volunteers came from outside of Chile, in fact from outside of Latin America and from cultures and socioeconomic

² See, for example websites such as <http://www.responsibletravel.com>; <http://www.volunteerabroad.com/search.cfm>; <http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/>; <http://www.goabroad.com/>. The last one listed is the one that I located VE through.

backgrounds similar to my own. Also, because I have spent time volunteering with children in orphanages, when volunteers spoke of homesickness, the difficulty of finding a routine in the beginning, trying to function without knowing the language, how they struggled with their own notions of children in coming to terms with local practices, or being torn between wanting to go home to their friends and family and not wanting to leave “this place”, I was not only able to record their thoughts, feelings, and memories, but in many instances I was able to empathize and remember along with them. At the same time, however, looking through the lens of my own experience and academic understanding of such issues, much of what this group of volunteers told me contradicted my expectations.

Through the experiences of volunteers working for VE in Santiago, this research is an attempt to provide perspective on why individuals choose to move around the world, often at great personal financial cost, to work on a short-term, unpaid basis. What inspires a person to volunteer, as opposed to participating in more traditional forms of tourism or pursuing a career or formal education at home? I will also be examining the motivations of the volunteers as they play out against the goals of the volunteer organization and the hogares themselves. Because in this case the recipients of the volunteer effort are children, I am also looking at the effect having volunteers coming and going has on the hogares and those that reside within them. Finally, early in the interview process, and further reinforced by information found on the internet, it became apparent that there is a perception, at least, that there is not a strong ethic of volunteering within Chile itself. This came up randomly in the first few interviews, and finally became a separate research question in itself.

This is a thesis about volunteering – particularly volunteer tourism. The research for this thesis was conducted in Chile, and therefore issues are discussed in reference to social, economic, and political factors in this country. However, I believe that many of the issues concerning volunteerism that I am discussing can be applied to other volunteer projects in general. The main questions that this thesis will be attempting to answer, therefore, include what motivates people to want to volunteer, particularly on short-term intensive volunteer projects away from their home. As well I will endeavor to determine whether or not the volunteers are providing actual help within the context of the hogares. I will also reflect on the question of whether or not Chileans participate in volunteer work, and why there is a perception of non-volunteering – how this relates to the shifts in political regimes over the past century. The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework I have used in my analysis. While VE could potentially be discussed through the framework of many theories, I felt it to be most appropriate to use those of helping and altruism, along with theories of volunteerism. Chapter three then provides a narrative of Voluntarios de la Esperanza – the people, and the organizational structure, followed by a description of the methodology I used in conducting interviews and observations. This is followed in Chapter 4 with a brief social and political history of Chile, trying to address some of the reasons and issues around why children are not residing with their families in the first place. In Chapter 5 I then take a look at the experiences of the volunteers, the children, and the local staff, called tias (literally auntie) by the children, to ultimately attempt to answer the question of whether or not the volunteers are providing help. The conclusion, Chapter 6, will pull all the various threads together.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework

Why Theories of Helping?

Nancy Scheper-Hughes discusses, in The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology (1995) how anthropologists are part of the cross border movement that we also choose to critique. Regardless of whether perceived in a negative or positive light, the modern world is made up of diverse groups of people connected to each other. As such, anthropologists can no longer study groups in isolation, but rather as part of a network of connections, complicated by the interactions between individuals, groups, and nations being fraught with inequalities and injustices. Scheper-Hughes points out that while anthropology can become a means of giving voice to those with less power, at the same time it is dangerous to rely solely on passive observations – just recording what we see. At some point it is necessary for the anthropologist to take a strong – even political – stance. However, this is further complicated by the fact that as anthropologists we strive to be scientists, but as humans interacting with other humans we are necessarily biased. Our research and writing is thus informed both by our own personal experiences and biases, but also by the reflexivity that is part of a discipline currently trying to refute its own colonial roots. She discusses a notion of a “good enough” ethnography defined as anthropologists observing carefully, and doing the best that they can while being aware of their own personal limitations and biases.

Because my research with VE involves individuals who have both the desire and the financial means of crossing borders to “help” others, it does, on some level, fit into the framework of development theories. However, I do not believe that this

is the appropriate framework for this thesis. On the one hand, Voluntarios de la Esperanza (VE) did not begin as a means of imposing “Western” ideologies or civilizing the “other”. In fact, this organization developed directly from the ideas of the experienced and knowledgeable Chilean director of Hogar Esperanza, who simply does not have enough hours in the day to accomplish all of his goals in trying to provide a childhood for the children in his care. I believe that he would have been just as open to a Chilean stepping into the same role.³ At the same time, however, while there has been much discussion in anthropological literature regarding the injustices of international development, and there will certainly be more to come, there is also a certain reality present that children living in children’s homes contend with on a daily basis. It is true that for the most part these children are not living with their families because of local and global structural inequalities, but this injustice is not within the direct scope of this thesis. So while an argument could be made against the existence of VE when viewed through a framework of international development, I believe that it is equally true that if the Chilean government – and any other government working to move away from family and community solutions to caring for children who for whatever reason cannot stay with their own family – were to provide the resources necessary for these children to have the same opportunities available to other children in the society, then there would be no need to rely on volunteers at all. In fact there would be no need for research such as this. Therefore, it is my view that the question of whether or not the volunteers are

³ At the same time, because VE is headed by a non-Chilean and does involve foreign volunteers it does have the potential of acting like an imposing and controlling development organization as it grows, something that I believe should be guarded against.

actually providing help in the way that it is needed becomes the more relevant discussion.

Theories of Helping and Altruism in Volunteerism

In the readings of the theories of helping and altruism it seems clear that notions of help exist along a continuum, with the following two authors representing the poles. Mariana Gronemeyer, in her 1992 contribution to The Development Dictionary, writes of modern notions of helping almost as an evil. While giving and helping are linked ideas, in Gronemeyer's view this is an ideological link that is often not based in reality. There is no good that can come of being helped, as the only reason that someone would set out to help another is to get something for themselves. In her view, any kind of helping, but especially when taken across cultural or national lines, is only in the end going to benefit the helper, and to get what they want the helper will resort to threats and coercion if necessary. In other words, a lot of bad can come from helping, as it is potentially exploitative, particularly when done in the name of “development”. Consider the many examples of food aid or military aid as a means of benefiting the economy of the donors but wreaking havoc for the recipients. In this context, helping is done in response to a defined deficit, and therefore is based in a hierarchy. Helpers have unfair access to resources and knowledge that those receiving the help “need” but cannot attain. In this way the “helped” are continually blocked from being “good enough”. The helped therefore are by definition inferior to those doing the helping. Because the helped “need” what is being offered they are obliged to open themselves up to observation and critique from those doing the giving. In a development context, the fact that the notion that nothing is ever at it's best, and that the “helpers” progress always advances before that of

the “helped” means that the superior/inferior relationship is perpetually maintained. According to Gronemeyer, helpers continually “save” the helped.

From another viewpoint, Janet McIntyre talks, in her book Global Citizenship and Social Movements, (2000), about cooperation helping each other, and the creation of what she calls a paradigm dialogue as being likely the only saviour of humanity and ecology open to us in a globalized world. She discusses how all groups that have interest in a given problem or experience need to have equal access to the process of decision making for issues that concern their lives. The balance of power should not rest with those who have money or academic knowledge. Instead there is a need to take apart an issue, to discover where there is already common agreement, and build on that. Each group or individual, though coming from different values, assumptions, and historical basis, is relevant. There is no one truth and the best that we can do is come to a common understanding of “truth” through paradigm dialogue. Only by respecting diversity and working from common ideas and values can a global citizenship, defined as mutual respect between people, and people and the environment, be created. Two things are imperative in her view: one is to understand the link between social and environmental goals, and the other is to remove the link between power and knowledge.

At first glance these two theories don not seem to be connected. However, on reflection, perhaps the end goal of the ideas put forth by both Gronemeyer and McIntyre is similar, that is to take control out of the hands of the few and powerful, allowing individuals or nations control over their own decisions. While Gronemeyer discusses the shift in power in terms of colonization and development, she does not clearly discuss where the balance of power should shift to – whether it is governments, individuals, or

something in between. The belief system that these two authors, among others, operate from and the viewpoint that they take on this however are radically different. Both are attempting to find a definition of help, as in being truly helpful, and not as “help”, which masks personal goals in the guise of being beneficial to others.

These two examples reflect a rather dichotomous view of helping. Gronemeyer presents the cynical view that true help does not exist. McIntyre, on the other hand, defines help as an honest and open give and take relationship, which is the only chance for survival for the planet. She is describing an impossible scenario, one that cannot exist in the real world. Both are quite radical stances. While I recognize that Gronemeyer is operating from a sense of frustration concerning the damage that has been done to millions of people mandated in the name of “help” by military and government groups, as well as colonial forces, corporations, and religions, at the same time the prospect of a world where every kind gesture is greeted with hostility and suspicion is a rather dismal one. On the other hand, it is a long and arduous, if not an impossible, road to the type of dialogue that McIntyre is suggesting. The obvious critique of this viewpoint is to wonder which government, corporation, or individual with power is going to be first to give it up.

The reality, rather realities, is to be found shifting along a continuum between these two extremes, and the subject of volunteerism seems a good one in which to frame the issues. There is debate in the literature regarding volunteer work and notions of altruism or helping. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find individuals who participate in volunteer work, much less any other activity of life, who do not get, or expect to get, something out of it in return. In fact the only way to be truly altruistic would be to help out in an area that is completely abhorrent to the volunteer and that they hate every

minute participating in. According to Musick and Wilson, (1999) people can donate their time to a cause without expecting anything in return, but this is not to say that they do get nothing out of it. Others add that analysis of volunteer work should take into account what the volunteer gets out of their actions. Helping the self and helping others exist along a continuum, and the volunteer gaining something from the volunteer work does not negate the help they are giving, if they are actually giving help. Altruism and egoism, or selfishness, co-exist, and both are present to some degree in volunteer acts. People choose projects based on their skills, their needs, and their desires. But they also choose projects where they think that they can be of assistance, where they have something to offer. In other words, there are countless volunteer opportunities out there, and people have reasons for choosing the ones that they do. While people may join an organization to help themselves under the guise of helping others, it is possible that the work that they do is truly help (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Rehberg, 2005; Zulueta-Azócar, 2003). In this way, intent becomes an important factor in analyzing volunteerism. Intentions can be defined as either “good” or “bad” in terms of motivation to take on a certain role. In turn, actions can lead to either “good” or “bad” results.

Theories of Volunteerism

Volunteering is a part of what is referred to as the Third Sector, the first two being the private and public (Dreessen, 2000; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Zulueta-Azócar, 2003). Definitions of what makes a “volunteer” are variable. Wikipedia, states:

The term volunteer is contested -- there is no one agreed-to definition, and the term is frequently debated. Some say a volunteer is someone who performs or offers to perform service out of his or her own free will, without payment, usually in support of a non-profit organization, mission-based initiative or community. Others say the term volunteer can apply to someone who receives a stipend for his or her service, as long as the volunteer is engaged in full-time service and have no

other paid job. The term is usually used for such service to non-profit organizations, civil society organizations or even initiatives that originate in the public sector (schools, city offices, etc.), but not for those who work for free for a for-profit business. Some people volunteer formally, through a non-profit organization/charity. Other people volunteer informally, helping a sick neighbor, for instance. Some volunteer for clinical trials or other medical research, and may even donate their bodies to science after their death.

Others agree that the definition is variable, and that rates of volunteering are hard to measure. In the academic literature, most of the discussion analyzing volunteerism is limited to participation in the formal sector. In other words, helping a sick neighbor, and unpaid housework are generally not considered to be volunteer work, or at least would not be found in most academic discussion of it. Therefore, most often it is analyzed in terms of volunteering through organizations (Dreessen, 2000; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Zulueta-Azócar, 2003). In their article Collective and Reflexive Styles of Volunteering (2003), Hustinx and Lammertyn discuss this in their attempt to create a new framework that will be useful to analyze modern day volunteering. These sociologists define volunteer work as occurring along a continuum that takes into consideration the degree to which the work is undertaken by choice, the nature of remuneration for the work being done, whether it is part of a formal or informal network, and who the intended beneficiaries are. This last point focuses on the issues of the degree to which volunteer work is helping the self or helping others (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). Wearing (2002) adds that a concern for others can have a positive impact on the self as well. Hustinx and Lammertyn discuss most analysis of volunteerism as being framed in a rigid traditional, collectivist paradigm that focuses on structural reflexivity and collective monitoring. By this they mean that notions of volunteerism developed with the shift to industrial society, and volunteer activity traditionally followed the same hierarchical

patterns of the “working” world. Initially volunteer work had little to do with individual motivations or preference, but was initiated, dictated and monitored by groups with shared needs and wants. In this way, volunteering became a part of community life and a reinforcement of social boundaries.

However, these authors argue that current notions and experiences of volunteering are much more complex than this framework will allow, and that in order to account for the real, lived experience of volunteers, it is necessary to develop a more flexible, subjective framework in which to conduct an analysis. They do not argue that traditional forms of volunteering have disappeared, or that collectivist volunteering is the polar opposite of a newer reflexivity, but rather, “there exists a flexible continuum reflecting a fundamentally pluriform and dynamic volunteer reality in between the theoretical ideal-types” (2003: 171). As volunteers have become more reflexive in their actions and the collective blends with the reflexive, it is important to have a framework that accounts for these shifts. Though millions of people around the globe participate in volunteer work to one degree or another, without a shift in framework of analysis, the “volunteer” will become extinct, at least in terms of academic discourse (2003).

As volunteer work has become a complex issue in itself it is imperative to have a multi-dimensional framework including the frame of reference of the volunteer, motivational structure, time and intensity of commitment, the organizational environment, choice of activity, and the relation to the paid worker. Again these authors stress that volunteer work occurs along a continuum, however, these factors need to be taken into account. Therefore, a traditional collectivist framework would look at volunteerism as being group directed, stemming from a sense of community duty and

dedication to the common good. Commitment to volunteer work would be long-term, perhaps life-long, with volunteers being representative of and dedicated to the organization as a whole. Authority would be delegated within the volunteer organization, and the division of labour would reflect that of industrial life. Individuals volunteering together would share common ideologies and collective identities, along with notions of inclusion and exclusion of others. In general volunteer work would be considered to be amateur, based in common sense, and auxiliary to that of paid workers. In other words, volunteers would take care of the minor details, while paid workers do the “important” work.

Modern volunteering, on the other hand, is more self-centered and reflexive in that it can be used as a means of self-realization, meeting personal goals, reacting to a life crisis, or coping with life’s uncertainties. However, this does not negate compassionate forces or sense of duty. It means, rather, that volunteers have become more reflexive regarding how volunteer work can be useful to both the “other” and the “self”. Because of notions of individualization and self-fulfillment, volunteer organizations have become more aware of the need to de-centralize authority and create opportunities that will fit the needs of the volunteers. Commitment to projects become more irregular and individuals demand more project-based types of activities that lead to a specific goal. The organization, in fact, becomes a mediator between the volunteer and the goals of the project. Volunteers move out of collective, community based projects to social and environmental concerns based on individualized perceptions of “sameness”. Globalization, together with the post-modern detachment from traditional frames of reference, has led to a rapid increase in international organizations and volunteer

exchange programs. At the same time, however, volunteer work has moved from the periphery of organizations, to the center, becoming part of how “work” is defined, and demanding more specialization and efficiency. In fact volunteers are now responsible for many tasks that governments and NGO’s no longer have the funds to cover, and in this way volunteers become critical to the social welfare of a society. Reflexive volunteering increases the gap between the goals of the volunteer and the organization, but at the same time increases the possibilities for volunteers to be useful (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

It has been believed that rates of volunteer participation would drop due to the alienation and sense of social discontinuity that is assumed to be a result of post-modernity (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Salamon and Sokolowski (2001)). Salamon and Sokolowski, (2001) refuting Robert Putnam’s claim that free acting citizens continually frustrated by government imposed restraints eventually drop out of any type of civic participation, state that volunteer actions are in fact important contributions to the functioning of society in most countries. Others agree. In the literature, volunteering is discussed as an important act of citizenship for building social capital,⁴ and creating social cohesion by working on social, cultural, political, and economic issues (Dreessen, 2000; Rehberg, 2005; Zulueta-Azócar, 2003). Zulueta-Azócar (2003) states that in fact the volunteer sector has gained importance because it has more autonomy than either the public or private sector, is more closely involved in the communities in which it works, and has a large capacity to form mobilizing social networks, providing services at smaller

⁴ Social capital, as defined by Robert Putnam (1993; 2000) and Pierre Bordieu (1986), among others, refers to the creation and use of social networks, or connections between individuals based in mutual reciprocity in order to achieve a specific goal. Through the development of collective trust individuals co-operate for mutual benefit, committing people to causes and to each other.

economic costs.

Salamon and Sokolowski (2001) compare volunteerism in 24 countries on 5 continents. Chile is not a country in this study, though the results of this study can be applied here. Sebastian Zulueta-Azócar, in his 2003 sociology masters' thesis entitled La Evolución del Voluntariado en Chile entre los años 1990-2002, refers to the World Values Survey in his study of volunteer behavior in Chile. The World Values Survey based in standardized, but subjective surveys done with randomly selected citizens in 43 countries, covers a wide range of topics, attempting to discover and analyze socio-cultural and political shifts on a global level. Zulueta-Azócar is using the results of the 1990 - 2001 survey. One section of the survey is dedicated to questions about volunteerism regarding time spent in volunteer action, and the types of activities chosen. In general terms the World Values Survey has determined that the motivation to volunteer involves personal social connections (World Values Study; Zulueta-Azócar, 2003). Believing in a cause, using or learning skills, and being personally affected by an issue, or helped by an organization all encourage volunteer participation. In the same vein, rates of higher education, income and employment, as well as religious involvement all seem to be correlates of increased volunteer activity (Salamon and Sokolowski, 2001; Zulueta-Azócar, 2003). Salamon and Sokolowski add that socio-political conditions are another important predictor of volunteer rates. According to these scholars, in social – democratic regimes a high level of services are provided by the government, thereby decreasing the need for non-profit organizations, whereas in corporatist regimes many services are provided by the non-profit sector. Liberal governments can work to both encourage and discourage the volunteer provision of services. Statist or military regimes,

on the other hand, generally repress the development of the volunteer sector as a threat to their own authority (Salamon and Sokolowski, 2001). This last point is particularly important in the case of Chile.

According to Dreessen (2000), in the year 2000, 30% of Canadians, for example, were participating in some type of volunteer effort in the formal sector, and the motivations and abilities to do so reflect the norm set out by the World Values Survey. Zulueta-Azócar, by comparison, discusses the rates of and issues influencing volunteerism in Chile. According to him, data from this survey shows that 30% of the population is participating in volunteer work, and that volunteer work is, in fact, very important to the “third sector” in Chile. In his qualitative and quantitative study, he examines the social and cultural factors that influence how volunteering is defined and practiced in Chile. The quantitative portion of his research is based in the World Survey of Values 1990 to 2001. The qualitative portion was the result of interviews with volunteer recruiters for a variety of organizations in Chile.

Volunteerism in Chile

According to Zulueta-Azócar (2003), prior to the coup that placed Pinochet in power in September 1973, there was in fact a notion of volunteerism in Chile. For the most part it took the form of working for the advancement of various political parties. According to his research, while in 1999, 29.6 % of the population aged 18 or over declared that they participated in volunteer work, in the year 2000 this number had risen to 42.6%, rather a large increase. He claims that this increase is in fact due to improvement in the factors of social, cultural, economic, and political situation of the country in general. This would in fact be in line with theories of volunteering, that with

increased levels of education and an increased sense of security, people are more likely to give their time to others. The only variable that differed between Chile and most of the other countries in the World Values Survey, were notions of trust. According to the survey, countries in which the population claimed to have high levels of trust of their fellow citizens in general, tended to also have higher rates of volunteerism. Chile in fact scored very low on the issue trust, and yet has relatively high rates of volunteerism.

During the military period, however, Zulueta-Azócar writes about a decrease in volunteerism – or at least in people naming it as such. Rates of volunteerism are thought to increase as volunteer organizations increase in visibility, promoting their cause and the potential work to be done. According to his research however, throughout the Pinochet regime, the most highly visible volunteers were the Damas de Colores. These groups were lead by the wives of the military leaders and those allied with them, developing projects for the betterment of health and social services, as well as volunteer work in the political realm. Most citizens, on the other hand, did not want to have their work aligned with these political groups, and therefore declined referring to themselves as volunteers. Between the years of 1990 and 2001, with the help of the United Nations International Year of the Volunteer, a fresh face was put on volunteerism. Organizations that had been recruiting volunteers in some way or another for years gained visibility, distancing the concept of volunteering from the military regime. Slowly, especially for the younger generations, within the ten years of the study, there was a drastic increase in volunteerism. This is due to both a change in how volunteering is thought of, and in actual rates of volunteerism (Zulueta-Azócar, 2003).

Theories of Volunteer Tourism

Writings by and about travelers can be found almost from the beginning of recorded time. Traveling is nothing new (Kuhn, 2002; Picard, 2002; Wearing, 2002). The tourist is a social fact that symbolic anthropologists have theorized in terms of factors that pull tourists through desire, or push them with need, to step outside what they know. Anthropologists, too, can be defined as a category of traveler (Picard, 2000). Wearing (2002) dates the beginnings of mass tourism to a Thomas Cook train excursion in July of 1841, and certainly there have been no lack of opportunities since then. It is with modernity that tourism took on negative connotations, as it became entwined with notions of globalization, imperialism and colonialism, and notions of the “other” began to be defined selectively (Picard, 2002). It was not until later in the 20th century that alternative travel, including volunteer tourism – defined as travelers participating in social or environmental projects while away from home - developed as a means of resisting the pitfalls of mass tourism while still justifying the desire to travel (Wearing, 2002).

Wearing discusses travel and tourism as a means of establishing identity, and volunteer tourism as focusing on interrelationships as socially constructed experience. He writes:

In a global society that increasingly uses dogma and marketing to instill values and exploit social relations, volunteer tourism represents both an opportunity and a means of value adding in an industry that seems to represent consumer capitalism at its worst (2002:238).

In other words, volunteer tourism offers travelers a chance to have stronger interactions with local people, called “hosts” in the literature, and perhaps perpetuate less inequality

than mass commercial tourism.⁵ At the same time, it is possible for the volunteer to effect personal changes in themselves, some of which will be maintained after they return home. While some may think of this kind of travel as a way of having an inexpensive vacation, in reality the costs can be much higher than a regular vacation as most volunteers pay their own travel costs, room and board, as well as sometimes substantial administration fees (Wearing, 2002).

In this type of travel, the tourist is no longer just taking a look; rather there is potential, if not real room for mutual growth, as both the volunteer and the host gain new perspectives through social interaction. In citing MacCannell, Wearing discusses volunteer tourism as “an altruistic attempt to explore the self” (2002: 242). As such, it is often a chosen activity at times of life transitions, most often at the end of adolescence, but also after such events as divorce or death of a loved one, and as a means of breaking away from the familiar for personal change and growth (Picard, 2002; Wearing, 2002). The major limitation of this, though, is that for the most part the tourist is still representative of a dominant group, with the host representing a “change”, therefore while the voice of the tourist is clear, the voice of the host is not always audible. Another difficulty is that while many volunteer tourists return home feeling changed, these changes are not observable and recognized by those they return to (Wearing, 2002).

Leslie Kuhn (2002) agrees that volunteer tourism can lead to an expanded sense of tolerance in the volunteer in that they return home changed. However she discusses notions of trust, as they develop in personal relationships, as being a determining factor regarding who is changed. Trust, she claims, is important whether individuals are

⁵ I would add however that given the number of websites and companies promoting this type of travel activity, that volunteer tourism is to some extent becoming a mass industry of its own.

conscious of it or not. As trusting another depends on believing their self-representation, believing in their truthfulness, it becomes problematic in short-term tourist/host relationships, where due to the limitations of time “facts” are not as verifiable as they are in long-term relationships and mis-trust becomes equally possible. Therefore, considering volunteer tourism as socially constructed lived experience in which all parties are operating outside of their own status quo, direct interactions with another can be either the most reliable means of establishing trust and expanding world view on many fronts, or can become a source of mis-trust, abuse, and sabotage.

Social entrepreneurship

The notion of social entrepreneurship has often been distinguished from business entrepreneurship in terms of how ideas are generated and acted upon. In business it has long been assumed that an individual acts on an idea. For the social realm, the assumption has been the opposite; the idea pushes the project, and individuals are just one part of the process. There is now discussion in the literature showing that this distinction may not in effect be true, but rather that this means of effecting change is in fact due to the momentum created by individuals who have an idea and put it into action. In fact, the same kind of competition exists in social entrepreneurship as is found in the business world. Social issues abound, there is no lack of opportunities to work for a cause. More often it takes an individual with an idea, and the motivation to follow through, to get a plan off the ground.⁶

⁶ See for example, http://www.ashoka.org/fellows/social_entrepreneur.cfm

Chapter 3 - Methodology, Descriptions and Observations

The People – Introducing the Faces of Voluntarios de la Esperanza

Jorge

Though not a volunteer in the same context as the others I will be discussing, Jorge needs introduction here as he plays a significant role in the founding of VE. Founding Hogar Esperanza with not much more than good intentions, for many years he worked voluntarily himself. Jorge does not accept government funding as it would mean that he would then be required to follow many of the government policies. One of these is that when a child turns 18 they can no longer reside in the home. He told me that by not accepting funds he could keep the children longer, allowing them to complete further education, rather than being forced into the labour force with very limited skills. For several years Jorge has been attempting to create a network between some of the other smaller children's homes in Santiago, in order to share ideas and resources. However, this is a goal that has generally been put off due to lack of time, but is something that Voluntarios de la Esperanza is able to help work on.

Luke

Voluntarios de la Esperanza was developed by Luke Winston, a 24 year old American, after his own experience as a volunteer in Hogar Esperanza. Raised in a large, poor family in a small town in New Mexico, Luke earned a scholarship to Harvard University, where he studied chemistry and physics. He was further awarded a Rockefeller Scholarship in order to participate in a volunteer project before beginning graduate school. Fluent in Spanish, he located this Chilean hogar on the internet and arranged with Jorge to participate as a volunteer. While not the first international

volunteer to have arrived at this hogar in this fashion, he remarked that the flow of volunteers was sporadic, and therefore, to his mind, their value inconsistent. Jorge became a friend and mentor to Luke, giving him the opportunity to visit other homes in the city while sharing his ideas of creating a network. Luke saw the creation of VE as a means of bringing volunteers on a more regular basis to a variety of homes, some of which he perceived as being more in need of extra hands than Hogar Esperanza. At the same time, he viewed it as a means of working in collaboration with Jorge to create this network. As mentioned already, this is a new organization and as such is still evolving at a rapid pace. Many of the policies, rules and regulations altered or evolved in vast proportion, even over the few months I was involved, increasing the level of organization and continuity within the homes.

While Voluntarios de la Esperanza is Luke Winston's conception, there are many others involved in the process as well. There are the volunteers, whom I will describe in more detail a little further on. But there are a few individuals who play particular roles in the development of the organization and so who need personal introduction at the outset.⁷

Rodrigo

Rodrigo, a nineteen year old Chilean, had recently returned from the U.S., where he had finished his high school education as part of an exchange program with United World College. Studying with students from around the world, he credits this experience with expanding his perspective of the world. Incidentally, the school he attended was in the same small town in New Mexico that Luke is from. In fact, when he was young, Luke's family housed international students from this school. While this fact has nothing

⁷ Clearly there are key individuals that I am missing out here. However, these descriptions are those that I became aware of through my interview process and observations.

to do with them meeting, it did serve to strengthen the connection between the two of them as they could share experiences. While he comes from a family that did not sit quietly in fear throughout the Pinochet years, he also believes that his own family does not fully understand the situation of poverty in Chile. However, he expressed that the combination of his educational experience in the U.S. and the open mindedness of his own family combined to increase his awareness of the situation and teach him the tools to get involved in a useful way. He began as a part-time volunteer at Hogar Esperanza, and has, over time, become more involved in the administration of the volunteer organization, particularly in the capacity of trying to attract Chilean volunteers.

Daniela

Hogar Esperanza is in fact made up of two homes, Casa Grande for children in fairly permanent care and Casa de Lactantes for infants being prepared for adoption, mainly within Chile. As the social worker for Hogar Esperanza a good deal of Daniela's job involves finding adoptive families and arranging adoptions. She has also taken on roles in the administration of VE, and it seems that a large part of her motivation to do so is that she does not completely agree with the role of the organization. Her issue is not with the volunteers, Chilean or foreign, but rather she conveys the idea that the creation of a volunteer organization takes the emphasis and energies away from the children. This is a point of dissension between herself and Luke, although it seems clear that a meeting of the minds seems to be slowly emerging. Daniela feels that the volunteers should be there for the children and the children only and that the creation of an organization that has expectations on volunteers aside from spending time with the children is detrimental. Luke, on the other hand, believes that happy volunteers make happy children, and that by

working for the volunteers, they will in turn do a better job for the children. It is interesting to note that the role of the bias is completely lost in their ideological discussion.

Jen

At the age of 24, Jen volunteered with Hogar Esperanza prior to the development of VE; her time in Chile happened to overlap with Luke's arrival as a volunteer. She discusses her eight months in Chile with such passion that it is clear it was a very powerful experience for her. Present during the preliminary phases of the volunteer organization, Jen did not extend her stay in Chile but remains very involved in the operations of the volunteer organization from her home in Canada. Due to the wonders of technology, she is able to take charge of the application and interview process for international volunteers.

The Volunteers

While I am always uncomfortable describing several individuals together as if they form one homogeneous group, for reasons of space, and to a lesser degree of confidentiality, I will summarize the general traits of the volunteers here. However, each of the twenty volunteers I interviewed responded to my questions openly and, I believe, honestly from their own knowledge, background, and world view. Therefore, while I describe the demography of this group in general terms, I will attempt to portray their perspectives and experiences as individually and faithfully as possible. I am indebted to all the volunteers who agreed to participate in this process. In the interests of confidentiality for those who requested it, I have changed their names in this thesis.

I interviewed volunteers who were currently in Santiago, as well as some who had already returned home, for a total of twenty-two interviews, including those conducted with the people named above. Volunteers ranged in age from 19 to 36 with the majority in the 19 to 26 years old age range. Five were over the age of 26. Seventeen were female and five were male. Two were Chilean, one of whom was also an employee of Hogar Esperanza. The rest of the volunteer pool interviewed was from North America or Western Europe. Eight were American, four were German, two were Canadian, and two were British, with one each from Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, and Ireland. In addition, occasionally I would meet a Chilean volunteer, not at all affiliated with VE, working in a hogar.⁸

The first international volunteer arrived at Hogar Esperanza in 1999, and most discovered Voluntarios de la Esperanza through the internet. International volunteers had already been present in Hogar Esperanza for several years prior to the emergence of the volunteer organization, and some of these volunteers were still there. Nine of the non-Chilean volunteers I interviewed had come to Chile under the auspices of VE while eleven had contacted Jorge directly, either through the internet or personal acquaintance. Sixteen volunteered in one or both of the homes comprising Hogar Esperanza. Two had volunteered in Nuestra Señora de la Paz, two in Hogar San Roque, and one in Los Navios Community Center. The uneven distribution of volunteers is due, in part, to Hogar Esperanza recruiting volunteers prior to the creation of VE, along with the volunteer organization being very new. In the beginning phases of VE there were still several

⁸ One of these volunteers was integral in a specific incident at one hogar, which will be explained later. Though I did not formally interview him, through observation of interactions and conversations his perspective regarding volunteers in the hogar became clear.

volunteers who had arrived prior to the creation of the organization. At the same time, it is the home that Luke has the strongest connection with, adding to the ease of placing volunteers there. As the organization solidifies it is apparent that volunteers will be balanced more evenly between the homes.

Prior to the development of VE most international volunteers stayed in Hogar Esperanza. This option brings down the cost to the volunteer as their room and food is provided. However, as the organization expands it is necessary for volunteers to have other places to stay. Some still live in the hogar, while others live in the volunteer house. This is a house that was rented under the auspices of VE and those volunteers residing there share the rent and the bills, organize their own food, and share in the household tasks. Like any group living situation, it seems that there could be tension around these points, though none too extreme from what I observed. These were the most common options for living arrangements, though some volunteers also made their own arrangements. Of the volunteers who participated in my research, eight lived in the hogar where they worked, two lived in the volunteer house, three had an apartment, one lived at a university residence, and one with some nuns, while four had lived in more than one of these places. As for education, eight respondents had finished high school, the majority taking a break before continuing to further education. Fourteen had completed university degrees, and were taking a break before beginning work or grad school. Three of this group however, were planning to move to South America for a longer term, and this was their first stop. Volunteers stayed for between three and ten months, with the most common stay being between four and six months. Two had returned for a second stay, and others had plans to return in the future.

The Tias

The word tia means “auntie”, and is a term widely used in Chile by children respectfully addressing adult women in authority, or whom they do not know. Most of the staff working in the various hogares, and all the staff working directly with the children, are women, and are individually and collectively referred to as tias. Like any home where children are being raised there is a great deal of work to be done. Meals need preparing, clothes need washing, children need discipline and care. While each hogar is formally run by a director, the responsibility for these day-to-day tasks mainly falls to the tias. Though I do not know their exact ages, the tias that I came in contact with appeared to range in age from early twenties to late fifties. Many were, or had been married, and most had children of their own, meaning that after a day of work raising other peoples children, they went home to do the similar work for their own families. In Hogar Esperanza many of the tias had worked there for years, in Nuestra Señora de la Paz the turnover rate was apparently much more rapid. In both places, there were tias who had once been children in the hogar, had grown up there and had stayed to work as an adult.

The Children

There really is no one picture that can be painted of the children in the hogares I visited in Santiago, except perhaps to say that they do not fit the popular media notion of orphans. It is certain that the type and quality of care differs between homes. It is also certain that most of the children are not orphans in the true sense of the word but rather have been brought to or left at the home for reasons of abuse, poverty, or illness in their family. While some receive either regular or occasional visits from the birth parents, for the most

part there is little chance that they will return to their family of origin. However, the daily needs of the children are being more than provided for, and much of the time they are so much like any children, that it is difficult to remember that they are missing the very important link to their future and with their past – their family. With their basic requirements met, each child is more than capable of developing their own personality, and after one visit to any of the homes it is clear that there is impracticable to think of these children in homogeneous terms.

Voluntarios de la Esperanza - The Organization and Their Objectives

I conducted research with Voluntarios de la Esperanza between January and June of 2005, when the organization was still in its beginning phases. The objectives of VE are multi-fold. Three main goals were stated in discussions with Luke, Rodrigo, and Jen. The first, and most obvious, of these is to bring volunteers to help out in children's homes and community centers in the Santiago area. Volunteers are, in general, extra hands to contribute to the work of raising so many children. The notion of whether or not this constitutes actual help will be discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis. Secondly, the idea is to generate a greater understanding of the world for volunteer participants. Through their work with disadvantaged children in Chile, volunteers aim to broaden their own view of the world in a way that will inform their future life choices, personal interactions, and careers. Of course one desired result of VE is to encourage volunteers to return home promoting the idea of volunteerism, encouraging others to volunteer at home, and perhaps even become a future source of volunteers for VE. The third objective of VE is to promote the idea volunteerism within Chile. Though it is very

difficult to source actual statistics on rates of volunteerism, I was of the opinion, which was reinforced by statements made by volunteers, that Chile has one of the lowest rates of volunteerism in the world, certainly as compared to the rest of the Americas, North and South. However, it now seems that this was a false supposition, and this is a theme that is definitely to be re-addressed at a later point in this paper.

The Board of Directors for VE is made up of individuals in Chile working to develop local projects, and in North America working on fundraising and volunteer recruiting. As a bit of an aside, in an effort to save both space and resources, almost everything concerning this organization is done electronically. Applications are processed via the internet, and all records are kept on the computer. While Luke acknowledges that this is scary in terms of what happens if the laptop is lost it does mean, at least in the beginning phases of VE, that administration costs are minimal and that the entire organization can operate in an 8X10 foot space, shared with the social worker of Hogar Esperanza. As well, much of the organizational work is done by various volunteers, who take on administrative tasks aside from their work in the hogar.

The Process – Interviews and Observations

As already stated, a great portion of my information was gathered through detailed, informal, semi-structured interviews. One interview was conducted in Spanish; the rest took place in English. The majority took place in Chile, though I also conducted seven interviews with former volunteers who had already returned home or were no longer volunteering on-site. Five of these were done by email survey, one was done by phone, and one was done in person in Montreal after I returned home. I wanted to

include feedback from former volunteers as it is possible that people's viewpoints can change post-experience, as well as to evaluate whether or not people stay involved with the organization after returning home.

Interviews were taped, and questions (see Appendix 1 and 2) were open-ended to give individuals space to add what they felt to be important. For the most part, it was not a difficult interview process. Most, though not all, the volunteers were very willing to be interviewed and generally very open with their responses. Several expressed that the interview process in fact gave them a chance to explore their own motivations and experiences. There were two or three volunteers who were a bit more reluctant, mostly I feel because they did not know me and also did not see the need or relevance for such a research project. However, they still participated. Of the nine former volunteers that I requested email interviews of, six agreed. Of those six, five followed through.

Interviews were conducted in places that were convenient or comfortable to the interviewee. One took place in a public park, and another at my home in Valparaiso, but otherwise discussions occurred at the volunteer house where several volunteers lived or at the hogar where the individual worked. The latter facilitated observing how the volunteers located themselves within each site. Interviews were conducted individually or in pairs. The latter proved to be more detailed as a casual comment from one would spark lively debate from the other, eliciting information or perspectives that may not have come up otherwise. Individuals were not generally worried about confidentiality when voicing their opinions and many stated that they discussed issues often with each other, as well as with Luke. The joint interview with Luke and Rodrigo was particularly

informative regarding the lines drawn, mostly unintentionally, between Chilean and international volunteers both ideologically and in terms of role.

While interviews were very loosely structured, they generally flowed along the same spectrum. We would begin by discussing the volunteer's personal background, the hogar they work in, their living arrangements, and the length of their stay. The conversation would then move to the volunteers motivations for searching for an experience outside their home country, in particular in children's homes in Santiago. We would then move into questions regarding their actual experiences and challenges volunteering in Chile, in terms of integrating into the hogar with the tias and the children, and their relationships with each other and the volunteer organization. I would then ask them to try to project into the future anticipating their return home, the challenges they may face, and what they thought they might do with the knowledge, experience, and perspective that they gained volunteering in Chile. In the case of the email surveys, of course this would be done in the present rather than the future tense. Throughout the first interviews ideas on the subject of Chilean volunteers, or the seeming lack of them, came up often, so for the remainder I added questions on this theme.

In my opinion, it was important to also have the perspective of the tias, the women who work with the children on a daily basis in the hogares. However, almost all refused to talk to me. Attempts to get the standpoint of the tias through an anonymous survey also failed. Though I can only assume their reasons for this, it is quite understandable. I believe that to them I was just one more outsider coming in. My knowledge of the language is minimal, and I was not at the hogar for any length of time necessary to develop a trusting relationship. In no way observable to them was I there to

make their lives easier. Working long hours for minimal pay, perhaps at one of the few jobs available to them they had no reason to trust what I was going to do with information and opinions shared with me.

Attempts to interview tias at Hogar Esperanza were, for the most part, met with silence. During one interview with Luke one of the tias entered the room. After a brief conversation between the three of us Luke explained my project to her and asked if she would be willing to talk about her experiences with the volunteers. She threw her hands in the air, made a disparaging sound, and quickly left the room. And that was the most that was ever said, to me, by a tia in Casa Grande on the subject. At Nuestra Señora de la Paz, while introducing me to the tias, volunteers explained why I was there and the idea was put forth that I would like to have their perspectives as well. This was ignored, perhaps because they were introduced as a group and none wanted to be seen to step forward. Eventually, and with the encouragement of a trusted volunteer, two of the tias in the Baby House agreed to talk to me briefly and informally, without a tape recorder. When I arrived at the appointed time, they initially refused, but then suddenly agreed. This change of heart coincided with the social workers departure.

The Places – the Hogares

At the time of my research volunteers recruited through VE were present in seven different homes or community day centers in Santiago, with more sites due to be added with the group of volunteers arriving in September 2005. Each of the places is unique, begun through different motivations, and funded by diverse sources. But one thing they all had in common was lack of human and/or material resources. Homes operated through continual private or church-based fundraising efforts. The majority of homes

have a religious (Catholic) basis in their founding. VE however, has no religious attachment. In fact several volunteers stated that one reason for applying through this organization is that there was no religious requirement – no connection to any church. I did not witness any observable tension because of these differences in philosophy.

Hogar Esperanza – Casa Grande

The bulk of my observations occurred at Casa Grande (also called the Big House), one of two homes making up Hogar Esperanza. Founded in 1984 by Jorge, when he was just 20 years old himself, it was created in response to the need he saw for giving children a good safe environment to live in. Located in a middle class community in the neighbourhood of La Florida, this house was custom built on donated land, to house the thirty children aged three years and up that live here. At the end of a long road, with neighbours across the street, the house is otherwise surrounded by fields, with a clear view of the mountains behind. Entering from the street, the playground equipment on the property is the first indication that there may be several children living here. While the house does not appear particularly large from the outside, it is spacious inside with lots of room for the kids to move. Only when they all congregated in the dining room for lunch did it become evident what a large group it was.

Being let in through the front door on my first visit by one of the tias I found myself in a large foyer. Behind the door a staircase leads to the small upstairs room that currently serves as the office for both VE and Daniela. To the left of the front hall is a rather formal living room. Beyond this are the dining room and the kitchen. The kitchen is large and functional, and on my second visit, helping a volunteer and some of the kids unload the van after their trip to the market, I found myself in an almost larger pantry,

necessary when potatoes and carrots are being bought in multiples of sixty pounds. The dining room is sparsely decorated and consists of two long tables with enough space to seat all the children and any guests. The children and volunteers take their meals as a group and all are expected to sit together for the entire meal period, with one of the tias presiding at the head of one of the tables. The big meal of the day is at noon, the evening meal is much less formal. Anybody extra in the house over a mealtime is offered a plate, as I was on my first and subsequent visits. The tias eat in the kitchen afterward, one of the few reminders that this is actually an institution. All the kids scrape, rinse and stack their own plates after a meal.

Across the foyer from the living room, a short hallway intersects with a longer one leading off in two directions, one for the boys bedrooms, the others for the girls, with small bathrooms interspersed. Each bedroom sleeps two to four children, all having their own bed, clothing, and personal belongings. Posters of current Chilean and American pop stars can be spied through almost every doorway. At the end of each hallway is a homework room, filled with books and resources, tables and chairs. The interviews that I conducted in this house occurred in one of these two rooms. In the center is a much more casual living room with comfortable looking couches and chairs, as well as a television. The kids are expected to clean their own rooms, and have other household chores depending on their age. They help each other out, bug each other, and fight with each other, just as in any family.

Other than the fact that there are so many children living under one roof, there is little that is institutional about this place – outwardly anyway. Jorge is friendly and interested, and runs the home with a very open door policy. At one time he lived in the

home himself, but now is married, has a child, and lives elsewhere. He has deliberately refused to accept government funding in order to maintain autonomy, particularly in regards to allowing children to remain in the home once they have passed their eighteenth birthday. In this way they can continue on for training in a career without being put out in the streets with little abilities for employment. One, in fact, had just completed her nursing degree. It forced me to reflect on what her life might have looked like if she had been forced into the workforce as soon as she turned 18. However, refusing government funding leaves the brunt of fundraising on Jorge and any connections he makes. Seemingly a master of networking he has many local sources for money, food, and other needs.

The head tia lives in the home herself, along with her three children, a necessity for her rather than a requirement for the job. Many of the volunteers also live in the home, usually sharing a bedroom with one or more of the children. The children attend a variety of different schools – some of them private - depending on their needs, abilities, and where there is space. They go out to play and have friends in to play. In summary the feel of this home is so much like many family homes that it can be hard to remember the reasons the children are here.

Hogar Esperanza – Casa de Lactantes

The Casa de Lactantes, more commonly referred to as either the Casa de Guaguas or the Baby House, was created for a very different purpose than the Casa Grande. Opened in 2001, the role of this home is to prepare very young children for adoption. There is very little international adoption involving children sent from Chile to other countries, however many infants and young children are adopted by Chilean families.

This home can house up to twelve babies at a time, but most of them are there for relatively short amounts of time, though at the time of my research there was one older child of nearly four who had never been adopted and seemed to be becoming more of a permanent resident.

Coming in through the front door I found myself in a small entryway that immediately set the tone for this house. With a couple of strollers resting by the door stacked with blankets and toys, there was a corkboard on one wall with photos, names and birthdates of the hogares current residents. On the facing wall, another had photos with the same information plus the date of adoption of children who had left. Arriving the first time with a volunteer who immediately went off to check on babies, I was greeted in this foyer by Julia, a very friendly and chatty tia. In between chatting about Chile, Canada, and children, she gave me a tour of the house. Unfortunately, for both her and me, on my second visit she was off on an illness leave, unfortunate for me as she might have been open to participating in an interview that might have helped me understand the tias.

The house consists of two large rooms, one at either end of a long central corridor. One is where the babies all sleep, each in their own separate crib. The other is where they play. Off of the bedroom there is a large bathroom/ diaper changing room with two counters for changing babies, and a large sink with a rather heavy duty looking shower head attached for showering off dirty babies. Across the hall from the entry is the kitchen, more than functional for a home where the majority of residents are on a liquid diet. Down the corridor to the left are two smaller rooms. One is used for therapies and one-on-one play time with children. The other is a bedroom for the volunteer living in

the house, basically large enough to hold a single bed. Across the hall is a bathroom, and off the playroom is a third bathroom. On my last visit, there were packages of disposable diapers everywhere; in fact two of the bathrooms were impossible to enter, because the hogar had just received a rather large donation. Another regular donation from a local church group is knit and crocheted blankets, given to each of the children and following them to their new family.

Nuestra Señora de la Paz

For my first visit to Hogar Nuestra Señora de la Paz, Luke suggested I meet the two volunteers currently working there on the corner of Bellavista and Florida to wait for the bus. Being unfamiliar with Santiago, this first step was a bit like finding a needle in a haystack, but was only the beginning of an even longer journey. After a long wait followed by an interminable bus ride lasting close to an hour through varying neighborhoods of Santiago I was certain we had arrived at the end of the earth. It turned out though that we were in the community of Puente Alto, not quite the end of Santiago. I found myself entirely in awe of these two volunteers who make this trek, sometimes in the crowds of rush-hour, twice a day between the volunteer house and the hogar. This hogar is situated miles away from Hogar Esperanza, but in many ways the distance is not only geographic. This visit was the first and longest of the three visits I made to this home, and it seemed like a world unto itself.

Disembarking onto the unpaved street at noon⁹, we walked a dusty block to the hogar. Entry to the property is gained through an iron gate leading from the street, though you do not immediately find any doors into the houses. The three of us, together

⁹ Most of the girls in this home are in school in the mornings, so there is no need for the volunteers to arrive before noon, they then stay until somewhere between six and eight in the evening depending on what is happening

with two young girls returning from the “botilleria”, corner store, walked around to the end of the building and entered the director’s office. The director was not there, however all of the tias plus a member of the board of directors, were. The volunteers later expressed that the tias spend most of their time in this room, watching soap operas in the afternoons. While I did not see a television, the tias did spend the better part of this afternoon in the office. Carmen, the director, is part of a foundation that supports various social service projects in the area, and while she did appear to be a kind and caring person (when I eventually met her towards the end of my first visit), her presence, by all accounts, is minimal due to her responsibilities to the funding foundation.

Nuestra Señora de la Paz is home to 32 girls, ranging in age from 4 – 17 years. In an attempt to decrease the institutional feel, the L-shaped building had been constructed as two separate, though identical houses, each for 16 girls. All of the doors, and most of the windows faced away from the street, towards what was intended to be a garden, though I use the word garden in its loosest sense. It was possible to sense the thought that had been put into this design, but with little success at making the grass grow in this arid environment and with so many children running over it, the lawn mainly consists of dirt. The exception is the one day a week when the gardeners water, though I would have to say that “flood” would be a more appropriate term.

Four tias work here, covering day and night shifts, meaning that often there is only one tia per 16 girls as they rotate through their shifts. In fact, at the time of my first visit one of the four had been hospitalized for several weeks and as there is no replacement staff the other three were left to compensate for her time. Two of the tias appeared to be in their early to mid twenties, the other was older and seemed to have

more seniority. One of the younger women had herself grown up in this hogar, and though she no longer lived there she did have a young son that she brought to work with her most days, and who appeared to consume a great deal of her time.

While I would not have expected the tias to be overjoyed to meet me, yet another foreigner walking in unannounced, I expected them to receive the volunteers who come in five or six days a week with a bit more enthusiasm. However, interactions, though cordial, were forced. We chatted for about ten minutes, the volunteers introduced me and explained my presence, and then we made an exit and continued around to the yard. It seemed that as we arrived the girls were in transition between activities. Most had finished lunch, though one was walking across the yard eating a bowl of rice pudding. Two others were demanding our attention through the barred windows. While the bars were for the safety of the girls it unfortunately gave the impression of inmates, and I wondered if they had any concept of that idea. One of the volunteers went inside immediately to interact with the kids, while the other gave me a tour of the houses and introduced me to some of the girls, most of whose names I forgot almost as quickly as I learned them, though one gave me the gift of a drawing.

The two houses are basically replicas of each other. Stepping in the front door, immediately to the right, is a long, narrow kitchen, designed for utility, not to gather in. A large window over the sink faces out to the yard, and a sizeable opening over the counter in the opposite wall allows for communication and the passing of things into the living and dining area. The living area, the largest space in the house, is the place where the eating, playing, homework and leisure activities of the kids took place. In the living and dining area there were two tables with enough chairs for the residents of that home to

sit. There was also a couch, a couple of armchairs, and one wall was a built-in bookcase full of books. One of the houses had a very small television set.

From the living room a corridor led to a hallway of bedrooms, each for three or four girls. At the end of this corridor was a large bathroom and shower room with stalls for both. Off of the back was a covered porch room, which appeared to be used for hanging laundry and shining school shoes. Throughout the two structures the walls were all painted a similar shade of off white, and the rooms were all sparsely furnished and decorated. Though we did not take a tour of the bedrooms I did not notice too many posters or decorations hanging on the walls. Though these two buildings were apparently only three years old, they appeared to be much older with cracked tiles, chipped paint and dented walls.

For most of the rest of my visit the tias and the volunteers worked very separately. The tias more or less ignored the volunteers, and to a certain extent the kids. With lunch over, it appeared that some of the girls had chores to do. When I commented on the fact that they were disciplined, the volunteer replied that it was a discipline of fear, not knowing when a tia would enter. In the kitchen of one of the homes a girl of about 10 years old was alone, cleaning up after lunch. There was water everywhere and she had broken a glass on the slippery tiles. In her bare feet, she seemed oblivious to the danger. In the covered courtyard in the back of one of the homes a girl of about eight years was polishing several sets of school shoes. In the bathroom of that same house, a young teenager was combing lice, apparently a chronic problem in this house, out of another girl's hair. Other girls were talking and playing together, or organizing their school stuff in order to get ready to do homework.

After a few minutes one of the tias entered and directed the girls to do their homework. Instantly they came to the dining room with their books, and with a flurry of papers flying everywhere, jostled for space at one of the tables. This was the first indication I had that the life in this home at least somewhat operates on the basis of survival of the fittest. From the minute that I entered I could tell that the girls were quite aggressive with each other. At this point I realized that they could also be quite aggressive with the volunteers, likely because they knew that the volunteers had no real authority over them, and also because of the language issues. The biggest took the space they wanted even if they were not the first to arrive. The tia left, leaving myself and the two volunteers to supervise the kids, though I doubt the girls recognized that any supervision was occurring at all. A few minutes later a Chilean teacher who volunteers once or twice a week to help the girls with their homework, arrived. The girls were obviously overjoyed to see him, craved his attention, and respected everything he had to say. Whether this was because he had a respectful, open manner with them or because they were desperately in need of a male role model, or a combination of factors, was impossible to tell.

A few minutes later, the girls were asked to shift again as the tables were needed for the adults to eat. The volunteers and I were invited to eat with them. I had eaten prior to coming, but sat and had coffee with the group. The two volunteers both had lunch today, but stated that they decided this on a day-to-day basis, depending on their own plans after they finished work. There was constant conversation at the table, and the tias did interact with us, though a good part of it was a thinly veiled desire to poke fun at me and one of the volunteers for our lack of Spanish ability. The rest of the conversation

revolved around the medical problems the child of one of the tias is having. In this case, the two older women were compassionate and concerned in trying to give her advice. After lunch, one of the volunteers attempted to wash the dishes, but was firmly shooed away from the task. The tias cleaned up, and then quickly made their exit.

Clearly there was tension between the tias and the volunteers in this home, and the day of my first visit it came to a head. Next door to the hogar was a run-down gymnasium that the community, including the girls of the hogar, were allowed to use. The two volunteers had devised a plan to get a group of volunteers from VE together for a week-end to paint the gym, to make it a little more welcoming. On this particular day, they wanted to get a group photo of the girls, in the gym, to show when trying to get paint donated from local stores. But the tias, one in particular, blocked every attempt to gather the girls together. Basically ignoring them until this moment, it was suddenly necessary to herd the girls inside to do an activity with them. The volunteers were frustrated, and for a brief moment I was worried that there might be a fight between a volunteer and a tia. The Chilean teacher was able to be a go-between to some extent. While he did not mediate between the two entities, he was able to empathize with the feelings of volunteers, but at the same time put some local perspective on why this was occurring. He expressed the feeling of the tias that they have no choice in having volunteers come into the home, so things might be easier if the volunteers came in “more quietly”. In other words, while for the tias this is a job, they see that the volunteers are there by choice, for a short time, and with a great amount of energy, which is threatening to the staff.

After all of this had settled down, it was finally possible to conduct the interview with the two volunteers. They chose to be interviewed together. It would have been impossible to tape a conversation in the house, so we tiptoed our way through the mud to the back of the yard, where there was a table and chairs under a big shade tree. The added benefit of this location was that it was somewhat hidden behind a shed, so it took some time for the girls to find, and interrupt, us. One of the girls did find us, a young one of about six years old. She hung out in the shade with us, played with a couple of sticks she found lying around, interrupted to talk to the volunteers now and then, but mostly just seemed happy to share the relative quiet. About half way through the interview one of the oldest girls found us. She was about 15 years old, and was craving attention in whatever way she could get it. The volunteers explained that they were talking to me, and that the conversation was being taped and that she was welcome to stay, but that they needed a bit more time to finish our discussion and then they would be happy to have a conversation with her, do her hair, play a game, whatever she wanted. This satisfied her for about three minutes, and when she could not get the attention of the volunteers, she started picking on the younger girl. She teased her, poked her, and threw things at her, all in an attempt to get the attention of the adults. It worked when she made the other one bleed and cry – and though the attention she received was negative, she clearly sensed she had won. We stopped the tape to tend to the injured child and the older one was asked to leave. She wandered off in the direction of the house, but soon returned. Although she left the other child alone and did not interrupt our interview to a great degree she did all she could to intimidate us into paying attention to her. She found a hoe left in the garden by one of the gardeners and spent the next 15 minutes of the interview

staring at us in hostility, while repeatedly picking the rake up over her head and smashing it into the earth with as much force as she could. As she was standing fairly close to us her actions were very distracting to say the least. While the volunteers just behaved as if this was normal behaviour to them, and perhaps it was becoming so, I can honestly say it is about the only time in my life that a child has manifestly been able to frighten me. Finding it difficult to predict what she might do next, through sheer force of will I continued the interview. As none of us paid any attention to her, she finally put the rake down, then came over and picked up the tape recorder. Again it took all my will not to react, this time as I thought it would quite literally be the end of the interview and the tape recorder. However we just carried on talking and she just carried on playing with the tape recorder. Once the interview was over, one of the volunteers went off to spend some quality positive time with her.¹⁰ I followed the other volunteer around as she finished up her day and prepared to leave for the evening. It seemed in some ways to me to be a very unproductive day for this home, and I think that my presence created a distraction for the volunteers, the tias, and the children that played a large role in that.

New Volunteer Orientation – Visiting Other Hogars

In June of 2005, VE had their first ten day orientation. For the first time a group of volunteers arrived together, and participated in a week of activities with each other and current volunteers. Run with a very small budget, the newcomers bunked in at the volunteer house, and meals were prepared by the entire group in rotation. The aim of this orientation is two-fold, to make the process of integration more efficient for both the volunteer organization and the volunteers. Much of the activity was around socializing, a

¹⁰ While my initial instinct was that this type of behaviour should not be rewarded, I quickly realized that it was the circumstances of her life that led her to this type of behaviour, and that rejecting her further no matter how justified would just lead to more of the same issues.

chance for new volunteers to get to know each other, and experienced volunteers to share their perspectives. There were also more formal discussions led by Luke, Daniela, and Rodrigo, regarding the political history of Chile, the role of the volunteer, and the motivation of the volunteers in regards to the children.

Several days into the orientation, two afternoons were spent touring various homes where VE either has a volunteer presence, or plans to in the near future. I was able to squeeze into the van for one of these tours, visiting three homes I had not been to before. Our first stop was Hogar San Roque. I chose this particular afternoon to tour with the group specifically to visit this home. I had heard a great deal about it, and had interviewed two volunteers who worked here so was happy to be able to put it into perspective. At the same time, in my short stay I could clearly sense that the picture painted by the volunteers was accurate.

Hogar San Roque was founded by Norma, a Catholic nun, and had initially been backed by a foundation that has since removed its support. With very little funding, along with being a difficult place to work, there are no tias, and Norma is basically on her own except for help from her brother and sister who help with cooking, laundry, and driving. They also receive regular donations of food and clothing from those around them in the community. There are eleven children in this home, several of whom have been in her care since they were infants. To Norma they are her children!

The oldest in this home is a fourteen year old boy with autism, who has some quite severe behavioural issues. He is not able to attend school on a regular basis because of his inability to cope there, and Norma has no training on how to deal with such concerns. As his sleeping is very erratic Norma is constantly exhausted, and because he

destroys the house on a regular basis, the sleep of the other children must also be disturbed. Our tour basically consisted of us following her following him on his path of destruction. One of Norma's strategies, she explained to us, for dealing with this is to give each of the other children a lock on their bedroom doors. This does nothing to help in the main part of the house though, and the damage to the house and its contents, as well as the impossibility of having any sort of system of organization, makes it quite a dismal place. On our way out after our tour, he was putting the living area back together, as he apparently does after one of his tirades, and Norma's comment was, well at least he gives himself something to do.

I do not want to paint a negative picture of Norma. She is a cheerful, optimistic woman, a clearly caring individual who takes the needs of the children to heart. Every waking hour of her day is dedicated to them. The difficulty is that she has been dealing with this one child for so many years the situation has become normalized for her. However, the effect of this on the other children is worrisome. Over the prior several months there have been three volunteers (not all at the same time), the last of whom had recently left. While there was some concern, perhaps conflict, on the part of a volunteer regarding how this autistic boy should be dealt with, for the most part anxiety revolved around the safety of the other children. As the person responsible for the volunteers, including feedback from past volunteers, Luke expressed concern about placing others here, both for the experience of the volunteer and for the potential damage that could be done if clashes developed between Norma and volunteer. Therefore in this new group of volunteers, none would be working here, and he was not certain that he would be sending volunteers to this hogar in the future.

The other two homes we visited this same afternoon had plans to integrate international volunteers into their program in the near future. For this reason I will just mention them peripherally. The first of these, Hogar San Francisco de Regis, founded in 1889, is part of a Catholic based foundation and is home for thirty girls. Our “tour” mainly consisted of standing in a central courtyard while the director explained the philosophy and functioning of this home. This was followed by a brief, perfunctory tour of the house in which we saw a couple of the children at a distance, but had no interaction. It seemed a bit of a cold introduction but at the same time perhaps causes less distress for the children and the staff. And after our next stop, it clearly seemed the less invasive strategy.

We arrived at Fundación Pléyades, our third and final stop, in the early evening. This hogar, in the neighbourhood of Nuñoa, provides a home to street children, working both with the children and the child’s family to encourage reunification of the family. The staff was very welcoming though it was not clear that they were really expecting us, or may have been expecting us earlier, as it seemed that the director had left for the day. We sat in the living room while one of the women tried to explain the home to us, but with the bouncing children making her task impossible, she showed us all to a smaller room with a closable door. After she explained the program of the hogar, a relatively new place, we were taken on a tour. The employees were all young, most seemed to have had formal education in psychology or child care, and this was the one home where I saw a male child care worker. The children were loud and rambunctious, mostly due to our presence. We came, we saw, and we left, some of us feeling very badly about leaving the women to deal with the resulting chaos.

Volunteer Meetings

Luke attempts to hold volunteer meetings once a month. The meeting that I went to was attended by fifteen volunteers, three of whom were Chilean, plus Luke. There was also a visitor, a friend of one of the volunteers who sat in on the meeting. Most of the meeting was conducted in Spanish, despite the fact that many of the volunteers only had the basics, as a means ensuring the inclusion of the Chileans and to promote language learning by the volunteers. This meeting was brief, although two volunteers said that most of the meetings were longer than this because they included team building games and activities. While I never asked the majority of volunteers about this, the two who brought it up did so because they found these activities frivolous and unnecessary.

Though the meeting was directed by Luke almost everyone either had something to say, or was asked to speak. These meetings are considered to be a place to share experiences, ask questions, and plan projects. One of the volunteers presented her plan for painting the community gym, asking for help from others. Two others, who had recently returned for a second period of volunteering, discussed what it had been like to return to their home country. I, in extremely faltering Spanish, explained my research project. One of the Chileans spoke about her work with a local university attempting to attract volunteers or practicum students.

Before, during, and after my own volunteer experience in Romania if asked about my motivations (or when told what a “wonderful thing” I was doing), I always responded that I got more out of the experience than I could possibly have given. In fact, I often wondered about the damage that might be being done to the children by the frequent change-over in volunteers. We entered, each with our own histories and personalities,

stayed as long as we wanted, and then disappeared from the lives of both the children and the Romanian women who worked in the orphanage. So when I began this research with volunteers in Chile one of the obvious questions to ask was how these they felt about the transient role of the volunteer in the lives of the children.

To be sure, the circumstances of institutionalized children in the two countries were vastly different. The children in Romania were living in orphanages built for one hundred to a few hundred children. They were all state owned and operated, many existed inside hospitals, increasing the sense of institutionalization that they lived in. Further, the system operated in such a way that children were moved from home to home based on their age and academic abilities. In other words, the children themselves could be moved several times throughout their lives. They were, not intentionally but as a result of the system, often separated from any siblings that were also being raised by the state. While many of the women who worked in the orphanage – the orphanage being one of the few employment opportunities for women in this mining town - had been there for years, the children came and went. The consequence of this was observable actually in that it affected the way that they interacted with and attached to the children. In cases where they did become particularly attached to a child, they were devastated when that child had to move. In light of this kind of system, I always thought, that what we were as volunteers – to the kids at least – was an extra pair of hands to hold, feed, and change them. The staff likely had a very different view of us.

By contrast, the children's homes that I observed in Chile, while they differ in terms of quality of care for the children, do generally have more of a feel of a home, rather than a temporary resting place. Most children come into the hogar with many

emotional scars that are not always easily dealt with, but once there are welcome to stay. The homes house from eleven to thirty-two kids each and I did not see one dormitory type bedroom.¹¹. Because of this there is a stronger connection between the children, the children and the tias, and the children and their community than I found in Romania. So how did a volunteer fit into this?

¹¹ Except in the “Baby House”, this was a whole different scenario as it was a very short term stop on the way to an adoptive family for most of the babies living there.

Chapter 4 - History and Demography of Chile

Today, Chile is a country with a population of 15.3 million inhabitants. Eighty-five percent of the population lives in urban areas, 6 million people in Santiago alone. Catholicism is the dominant religion, with somewhere between 77-89% depending on the source. Twenty-seven percent of the population is 14 years of age and under, while 9.36% is over 65. The literacy rate is high at 95% and infant mortality is 9.4 per 1000 - as compared to Canada at 5.1 per 1000. Chile is a Republic, with a multi-party political system. The major political parties are the Christian Democrat, National Renewal, Party for Democracy, Socialist, Independent Democratic Union, and Radical Social Democratic. Most Chileans have Spanish ancestry, and there are also about 800,000 Native Americans, mainly Mapuche.¹²

The first Europeans entered Chile in 1541, looking for gold. Pedro Valdivia of Spain officially conquered Chile in 1550 and it remained a Spanish colony until becoming an independent republic in 1818. Independence brought little social change, however, as Chile retained its stratified colonial social structure influenced by family politics and the Catholic Church. The government in Santiago was able to consolidate its power throughout the 19th century. By suppressing the Mapuche Indians, Chile expanded south. An 1881 treaty with Argentina gave Chile control of the Strait of Magellan, and the 1879-1883 "War of the Pacific" with Peru and Bolivia allowed Chile to expand north and gain control of nitrate deposits, thereby increasing the nation's wealth.¹³

¹² Countries of the World and Their Leaders Yearbook (2004); Hickman (1998); <http://chilean.adoption.com/files/history/Chile.php?country=Chile> 7/9/2003

¹³ Countries of the World and their Leaders Yearbook (2004); Hickman (1998)

In the late 19th century, Chile began parliamentary style democracy; however this degenerated quickly into a system protecting the oligarchy. However, by the 1920's the middle and working classes were becoming stronger and by the late 1920's there were strong Marxist groups. In 1932, a strong middle class party, the Radicals, were elected. They remained strong for twenty years and increased the role of the State in the economy. In 1964, Eduardo Frei-Montalva, a Christian Democrat, was elected with absolute majority, and this was another period of major reform, especially in education, housing, and agriculture. In 1970, the Popular Unity Coalition (U.P.), headed by Salvador Allende of the Marxist-Socialist Party was elected, with only 36% of the vote. The intention of the socialist coalition was to take control of the means of production from private industry and place it in the hands of the government and the workers. For the first year, this worked to increase production and individual wealth. However, soon after, demand was greater than supply and the economy quickly crumbled. Although socialist, Allende tried to maintain good relations with the U.S. along with Communist regimes such as the Soviet Union and Cuba. While the U.S. covertly worked to have Allende ousted, some suggest that there is little evidence to that they were responsible for the socialist downfall in Chile, though others believe Washington was highly involved. In any event, not having a majority government left room for unrest both within and outside the party. The opposition was able to easily block legislation for reform, and many socialists wanted the economic shift to happen more quickly or differently. Allende was forced to call a mid-term election in 1973, which the opposition expected to easily win. However, not only did this not happen, Allende's power was strengthened by his receiving 43% of the vote. The opposition became more aggressive leading to increased popular unrest as private

owners and socialists continued to clash. The economy declined until inflation reached 500%. An attempted military coup in June 1973 failed, but from this point on Allende was encouraged to resign. On September 11, 1973 the military, led by Augusto Pinochet, staged a second, this time successful, coup during which Allende allegedly committed suicide. While many had predicted civil war to follow, what came were many years of violence and repression.¹⁴

The aim of the military coup was to eradicate Marxism and restore order on its own terms. Although this regime allowed the economy to remain in civilian hands, the government, military, and police were under total military rule, with Pinochet quickly declaring himself president and dictator. Anyone in power owed it to him. Human rights abuses were common and violence was especially prevalent in the early years. Dissidents, particularly members of the previous government, became the enemy, and citizens lived in fear of torture and disappearance. Pinochet's power was so far reaching that he was able to have the former ambassador to the U.S. assassinated in Washington. Communist, socialist, and Marxist groups were persecuted, splintered, and almost disappeared internally, although the Marxists were responsible for keeping world opinion involved and alive. The Catholic Church, while officially remaining neutral, unofficially gave sanctuary to the persecuted, so also became an enemy of the State. The ousting of Allende and his socialists quickly improved Chile's relationship with the U.S. and led to increased aid and support for the first few years. However, when Jimmy

¹⁴ Arriagada (1998); Hickman (1998); <http://chilean.adoption.com/files/history/Chile.php?country=Chile> 7/9/2003; <http://chilean.adoption.com/files/people/Chile.php?country=Chile> 7/9/2003

Carter became president, he had an increased focus on human rights and the relationship between the two countries quickly deteriorated again.¹⁵

Throughout the 1980's, Pinochet's control weakened and democracy slowly began to re-emerge. There are several reasons this occurred. Economic collapse and a recession in 1982 created protest. There was a weakening of support for authoritarianism, even within the government itself. This coincided with dictatorships in other South American countries collapsing, leaving Chile isolated and increasing Western pressure for democratization. Civil society became bolder, and political parties that had almost disappeared gained new life. By 1990 support was almost completely eroded. In Oct. 1988 Chileans voted to have an election, and Dec. 14, 1989 Augusto Pinochet was voted out of office, though the constitution was amended to give him a lifelong seat in the senate. What his regime left behind was a wide gap between rich and poor but also a desire for democracy, the free-market, individualism, and consumerism.¹⁶

In 1989, Patricio Aylwin, a Christian Democrat, led a coalition of 17 parties to power. In Dec 1993 Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle of the Concertacion coalition was elected for a six year term. In the next election, on Dec. 12, 1999 no party obtained a majority, so in a run-off election on Jan. 16, 2000 Ricardo Lagos Escobar of the Socialist Party and Party for Democracy gained a narrow victory (51.3% of the vote), making him president for six years.¹⁷ In the elections of January 2006, Chileans

¹⁵ Arriagada (1998);Hazuka (2000); Hickman (1998);
<http://chilean.adoption.com/files/history/Chile.php?country=Chile>
7/9/2003;<http://chilean.adoption.com/files/people/Chile.php?country=Chile> 7/9/2003; Sagaris (1996)

¹⁶ Arriagada (1998);Hazuka (2000); Hickman (1998);
<http://chilean.adoption.com/files/history/Chile.php?country=Chile> 7/9/2003; Sagaris (1996)

¹⁷ Arriagada (1998);Hazuka (2000); Hickman (1998);
<http://chilean.adoption.com/files/history/Chile.php?country=Chile> 7/9/2003;Sagaris (1996)

elected their first female president, Michelle Bachelet, who as a single mother and an agnostic is being held up, by the Chilean media at least, as representative of the social changes to come in Chile.

This brief summary of Chilean history is obviously incomplete and lacking nuance. The main purpose of including it is to contextualize this research within the large number of political shifts Chile has gone through, especially during the last century. Each of these shifts has, among other things, necessarily involved changes in how the government perceives and manifests its role in the social welfare of its population. Throughout the Pinochet regime the government took little responsibility for the social welfare for its citizens, and other, mainly Church-based, organizations built up an extensive social services network to care for the poor, the elderly, and the disabled.¹⁸

Since democracy has replaced dictatorship, the government has been reforming its role in social services. In order to improve services for children and families, the Servicio Nacional de Menores (SENAME), the ministry responsible for child welfare, has been changing and adding to its policies in order to “modernize” how children, particularly vulnerable children, in Chilean society are cared for. Chile signed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and in 2002 President Lagos instituted changes in government policies regarding children, to align them with the U.N. declaration. This is discussed in Un Chile apropiado para los niños, published by SENAME in 2004. A major element of these changes has been separating services to children in trouble with the law from

¹⁸ Hogar de Cristo is the most prominent example of these, providing services throughout the country. It is easy for people to donate to this organization in some of the larger grocery store chains by donating the small change when paying for groceries.

those in need of protection, thereby no longer referring to children whose rights have been infringed upon as being in “detention”. As well, there is a shift in ideology, in which children and families are now referred to as subjects of rights, and the state is assigned a role in actively guaranteeing those rights. Reforms have aimed to increase the types of services offered at day centers in order to decrease the numbers of admissions to residential centers, improve systems to diagnose problems and refer children and families to services in order that services go to those who need them, and to incorporate families into the process.

At the same time, this article states that although Chile has experienced economic growth since 1990, there has also been an increase in child poverty, abuse, and abandonment. For example, in 2001, nearly 50,000 children entered the SENAME network of community and residential services, while in 2004 this number increased to 65,194. A portion of this increase, however, can be related to the fact that services are being offered to more families and to how these issues are being reported and defined. In 1999, 62% of children receiving services from SENAME were in residential care, while 38% received services at community day centers. By 2004 this had almost completely reversed, with 32% of SENAME’s users being institutionalized and 68% attending day centers. Another shift has been in the size of children’s homes, with a move to have children placed in smaller homes, and eliminate the larger more institutional ones. In 1999, 77.7% of children in care lived in homes accomodating fewer than sixty children, while in 2004 this had increased to 86.6%.

Chapter 5 - Analysis – The Volunteer Experience

Social Entrepreneurship: Luke's Motivations and the Evolution of VE

Well, you know, my lifelong dream since I was four years old was to be an astronaut. And that was kind of the "x" in my plan. I was going to go get a doctorate, and most people kind of think it's a childish dream but it was actually what I planned on doing. I've always found that to be a lofty goal. But then after being here I realized there's a little more need for my talents than, you know, flying up into space and looking at the earth. Somehow all of it just comes down to "if I don't do it who will" kind of thing. Also I find it very fulfilling, being here through my time I saw that I could help out Hogar Esperanza. It's a home that still needs help to continue what its doing. And I was happy doing that. Then I saw another home that was much worse off and I realized we need more help and I saw that we could bring other people. I saw that there was a huge resource, a huge need, but without the intermediary it's not going to happen. (Luke)

In terms of where VE is at this point, it is quite possibly the case that without the individual the plan would not have occurred. For several years individuals had found their way to Hogar Esperanza to volunteer. I have to imagine that others thought about the work that could be done if volunteers were more consistently present. However, if others thought about the idea of having a constant source of volunteers, it took one person to act on the idea. And at this point if that one person were to walk away from the project, more than likely the organization would collapse. This is not to say that foreigners going to volunteer in these homes would cease, but rather that there would be no organizational structure. Perhaps more homes would receive more volunteers because the volunteer organization had existed but the structure and motivation of VE as in its current form, would not withstand the shift. The same could be said for Jorge. Many years ago he saw a need and responded to it in a way that he could and that he saw as appropriate. In this sense he is Hogar Esperanza and if he were to leave, especially if he had left in the first few years, this hogar likely would not exist in the same form it does

now, if it existed at all. Therefore the individual is the required element to put idea into action rather than the other way around.

The form that VE has taken is very much a reflection of the ideology of its founder, though still far from what he would ultimately like it to be. In very simplistic terms, the only definite traits needed to be a volunteer for VE are motivation and energy. In fact, as a stated objective of the organization is to increase cultural understanding between people, Luke and those working closely with him would like to attract people from all over the world. However, this was not the reality at the time of my research. As already stated, this organization was in its infancy when I conducted my research, and much of its structure was in the process of development. While my pool of respondents was randomly selected on the basis of availability and willingness, it is fairly representative of the entire group of volunteers at that time, the majority being from North America and Northern Europe. As most volunteers found this experience through research on the internet, one of the main reasons, Luke believed, wider interest had not yet been generated was because of the design of the webpage. At that moment it was not eye-catching and professional looking and was only in English. By the time I finished my observations in June a great deal of work had been done on this, the organization was shown in a more legitimate light, and information was given in Spanish as well, a fact that had already attracted a volunteer from Colombia.

According to Luke, as of February 2005 he had received 300 requests for information regarding volunteering with VE, and forty volunteers had been brought to the country. At first, applications were accepted on a rather random and casual basis, but by the time I arrived a plan was in place to formalize the process somewhat. The original

application form included basic questions of personal identification and details of why, when and for how long an applicant wished to volunteer. Though speaking Spanish was not a requirement, they were asked to rate their linguistic ability. These basic questions were followed by a section of six short answer questions asking the prospective volunteer about their motivations for working with children in Chile, prior experiences with children, the skills they can bring to the hogar and the volunteer organization, and how they see themselves integrating into the experience. This was then followed by a section requiring the applicant to write an essay about how they imagine a Chilean hogar to be, the issues and challenges they think they might face and how they think they might fit in, referring also to their desire to live in the hogar or elsewhere. They are also required to write a second essay describing any type of project that they can see themselves bringing to the hogar while imagining a day in the life of a volunteer. Following the submission of this application, suitable volunteers were contacted for an interview, which took place by phone. The process has evolved since then, but this was the most common procedure the volunteers I interviewed had followed.

By June, a more formal, though still developing plan, had been put in place for the screening, interviewing, and acceptance of volunteers, which has developed even further since then, both in terms of information required from potential volunteers and clarifying the commitment expected from them. The idea now is for volunteers to arrive three times a year, in March, September, and December, as a group, although the length of stay can vary. The intent is to allow volunteers to become better acquainted with each other and with the various hogares before beginning to work. Aside from team-building, however, is the notion that by creating a connection from the beginning, between the volunteer and

the organization, there is more of a likelihood that individuals will remain connected and involved after the experience, potentially helping with volunteer recruiting or fundraising.

As one means of making the connection between the hogares and the volunteers, VE has developed a survey, in Spanish, to be filled out by the directors of each home, outlining their needs and expectations in terms of volunteers. It asks for information about the hogar and the children, their reasons for wanting volunteers, about the time and structure of the work day for the volunteer, the types of projects they have or would like to have in place, how they plan to welcome and integrate a new volunteer, any special skills they are looking for and whether they prefer volunteers to live in the hogar or elsewhere. It also asks questions about the location and safety of the neighbourhood of the home, local accessibility to public transportation, any problems or obstacles they are currently facing and the physical condition of the institutions buildings. This may prove to be an important source of information though at the time that I left only one director had completed it. Whether this is due to it being so new or lack of motivation is unclear.

To Organize or Not to Organize – the Volunteer Relationship

... I can't tell about the experience of being supported by an organization like Voluntarios de la Esperanza. But I talked a lot with Luke when he began thinking about such an organization. I think that it is a very good idea and that it helps the hogares to manage in a better way the volunteering, and the volunteers to be less helpless in a lot of situations. But I have to say that I'm very happy that I made this experience without the organization. I think I was more implicated in the hogar's life and became a real part of this family. Going back to the hogar and seeing the new volunteers, I'm glad to have been... the only volunteer at that moment and could live the experience in a more intensive way. (Isabel)

As discussed earlier, there was disagreement about whether the creation of a volunteer organization actually improved the situation in the hogares for the children. Leaving aside the fact that the creation of the organization was responsible for bringing

the first volunteers to all the sites other than Esperanza, this question really concerns whether the organization generates continuity, and further whether or not this is a positive thing. As I was conducting my research during the early phases of this organization, interviewing volunteers who had come prior to, throughout, and after the creation of VE, I expected there to be more than one perspective on this issue. In fact there were many subtleties and nuances that arose from these discussions.

Some felt that it took, or would have taken, longer to settle in and find a routine without a volunteer organization. For example,

First of all you come to a strange country and they pick you up, that's really nice. You don't have to worry about where am I going to stay, where will I work. You have this place where you can go, where you can work. They introduce you and that's a big help. (Kim)

Others however, expressed that it takes a long time to settle in any event and that the organization puts extra pressure in terms of how quickly volunteers are expected find a rhythm and begin projects.

When I first came here ... Jorge and I got in touch and [he] pretty much just said "you're going to be a volunteer, work with kids". He told me I could sort of take it wherever I want. If I want to start an English class I can, if I don't whatever. Voluntarios de la Esperanza is still in its beginning stages but Luke has a lot more expectations with people. The [positive with] Lucas' way is that you have something to do so people set up programs. Like it took me a good three months before I really decided you know that I think I'm going to start [a particular program]. Now you have to do it right away, you get here, a week later you have to have a program. If you don't know the kids and you don't know what they need then that can sometimes hinder [you]. (Molly)

Still others stated that it was good to come through an organization, to have someone to meet them or to sort out their beginning days, but then the involvement expected with the organization became too much pressure, even if that pressure was somewhat self imposed. Consider the following statements,

In the end it may have complicated things more but as far as I didn't have to find a place to live, I didn't have to find my own organization to work in, it was set up for me when I got here. All I had to do was basically bring my stuff and start working. But I would say the biggest problem of all is the bubble that's created in [the volunteer house]. Once you have friends inside the house you hang out with them all the time, you go out with them, you are generally speaking English even though there are people from all different countries. It just kind of creates this bubble that's hard to escape. A lot of us haven't formed as many personal relationships outside the house as we would have had we lived in say a home stay or been forced to be more independent. (Michelle)

Because I had been traveling before I arrived it was great [having a previously arranged place to go]. I don't know if I'd have been able to do it on my own. It's nice, it's really good getting to know other volunteers but I think the volunteers that come here with the organization sometimes have a different attitude to the volunteers that didn't, although sometimes I think having the network of volunteers is great but at the same time it holds you back from meeting Chilean people. (Leah)

Other volunteers, however, considered that part of the whole experience is possibly finding your way there, finding your own place in the routine of the home, not being picked up at the airport, and just arriving like an alien with a backpack.

Part of the program is for the experience though, and I think it really enhances the experience to have to learn Spanish, cause it's amazing how frustrating [it is]. I mean a lot of people, myself included, [who] come here are very motivated and ready for a challenge. They're ready to face challenges, but this challenge is something that they've never faced before, they've never felt helpless before. (Luke)

On the other hand though, there were those who felt that VE did not have enough of an involvement and could do more to make sure that their integration went more smoothly, that the hogar knew why they were there and what the expected role was. Consider the words of Rodrigo:

When we were thinking about what we want to impact with our program, the first thing is the children. We basically met because of the children right? We don't want to give them a better life like "here you have some money, go and spend it". No, we basically want to give them opportunities to really do what they want and not be limited because of their status in society... Like nobody can say that these kids won't find the cure for something in the future, or build amazing buildings.

So basically that's one part. Then we have the volunteers who of course get the experience of working with the kids.

For some volunteers, the creation of the organization and the streamlining of the process added another dimension to the experience dividing the energies of the volunteers, taking away from time dedicated to the home and to the children. Now, along with being part of the hogar, the volunteer had responsibilities within the organization, such as attending volunteer meetings and participating in team building activities.

I think it's more organized with the volunteers. Lucas knows who is coming when, where they will work. But it's more organized with the volunteers not with the kids. So sometimes I have the feeling it's an organization for the volunteers. We always have meetings. Of course it's important that we come together, that we talk. And at the beginning it was only talking about the volunteers, about how they feel in the organization. And everyone said the same thing, "yeah when I came it was really difficult because I couldn't speak the language", all the things. But the last meeting was really nice because we started to talk about the kids, what we could do for the kids. There are some who really tried to organize something. There's one volunteer who wanted to [arrange] a football league where kids from the different houses will meet one day a week for playing football. Something, I think, starts now. We do more for the kids. (Sophie)

At the same time, the possibility to interact with other volunteers, outside of work, was important to the experience for many volunteers as a way of having a greater understanding of the homes.

Because we spend a lot of time too discussing our individual organizations [hogar] so even if someone doesn't know [another] organization we are all generally familiar with what goes on. It's our own community whereas she [a volunteer who came through direct contact with Jorge and keeps herself quite distant from the "new breed" of volunteer] really only concerns herself with Hogar Esperanza. She hears occasional stories but she doesn't know a lot of details about all of the institutions involved. Whereas anyone who lives in [the volunteer house], because we spend time together, are a lot more familiar, maybe not personally but second hand. (Michelle)

This can also lead to putting personal experience into larger perspective.

I think this house [Hogar Esperanza] is a really good house, the tias give the kids a lot of love, [the kids] have all that they need and they get a really good

education. There are people who are looking out for them in doing homework, all things; it's a really good house. One friend of mine is working [at another hogar] with Voluntarios de la Esperanza... I went one day with her to her work and it's much more difficult because, the girls all beat each other and the tias don't really interfere. (Sophie)

Then again, it can be limiting at times. Many felt that there were too many volunteers around at one time, particularly at Hogar Esperanza. As two volunteers stated,

Particularly of Esperanza, I don't blame them for not taking us seriously and not respecting us because there are so many, there are tons of volunteers there all the time but we come and go so quickly that I don't blame these kids for being like screw you why should I listen to you when you're going to be gone in a month and somebody else will [arrive]. (Michelle)

I think that the openness that he [Jorge] has towards international volunteers is really amazing but I think it would help a lot to have a larger organization. Have maybe more orphanages be incorporated into it, but having fewer volunteers staying for a longer time, so the kids actually can have a chance to really get to know them. (Molly)

This, in fact, was observable but also part of the developmental process of VE. As time goes on, some of the original volunteers return home, the process becomes more streamlined, and more homes are added to the network, this appears to be balancing out.

By contrast, other volunteers felt that the creation of the organization has brought a greater sense of continuity to the hogares and to the children. More people, volunteers or otherwise, means that more work can be done. In relation to revolving volunteers, this means an activity or program started by one volunteer could be carried through by others coming later. Projects that required more hands could rely on borrowing volunteers from other homes. Making reference to following through on a program put in place by a previous volunteer where the children became responsible for cleaning their own room, consider the following,

Living Arrangements of Volunteers

The only thing I really wanted try to help change is that she [Norma] gets more time. Now she has no time for anything, she's always busy with [the autistic boy]. So she's like cleaning one room, and next week cleaning another room and making the first room a mess again. It's like this, she's not really organized because she has too much work and not enough sleep, and if the children would help a little more only then she will have more time to do other things like she has to do. But it's actually homework, I have to do the homework, she thinks that's the only important thing to do for these children. (Kim)

As already remarked, as the numbers of volunteers increased there was a need to look at alternative living arrangements for some of them, as at times there is not enough space in the hogares, so the volunteers that I interviewed had a variety of living arrangements. For VE the point is not that the volunteer choose one type of living arrangement or another, but rather that they be aware of the consequences of both situations and choose based on their own personal needs. This, in fact, is one of the questions on the volunteer application form. Volunteers are asked to reflect on where they would feel most comfortable living, and why. Most people are certain on this point. Those that want to live in the hogar express motivations such as,

I lived in the Hogar, sleeping in one room with the children. It was very difficult at many moments because I'm a person that needs... to have a place to hide. But I wouldn't miss this experience and I always insisted in sleeping in the house when going back. I think it's the only way to really get the feeling of the house, staying at night with the big children in the kitchen and helping them out with their chores, chatting about their day and dancing around if the music was good are some of my greatest memories of my stays in Chile. Waking up at 6 by the shouts of the children playing in the corridors is less pleasant but part of it and when one of the smaller children came in my bed to have some good morning hugs I couldn't help but feel happy being there. It surely helped a lot giving me this feeling of being really part of the big family of the hogar. (Isabel)

Those that don't are also clear about their reasons. They could not imagine a life where they could not retreat completely at the end of each day.

I didn't have an option, however when we were choosing where we were going to live. I had said originally that, even if I was working in an orphanage, I preferred to live outside because I wasn't familiar with the situation, didn't know how hard it would be and I thought to be stuck somewhere permanently might be really stressful emotionally, mentally and physically so I kind of thought it would be better for me to live outside there. (Michelle)

I thought it would be better to live in the volunteer house, I'd say to have a bit of distance and stuff, but now because my Spanish has been, the development of it has been stunted here and my relationship with the kids isn't as strong as the volunteers who live there, I would do it differently. (Leah)

As well as not being sure what they were getting into, some mentioned that their choice might depend on the place they worked at.

Places like Esperanza are a little more luxurious, I mean in comparison. And that new place, [Fundacion Pleyades, that we had visited the day before on the orientation tour] I don't know because, that house was really nice, that last house. But those little kids man, even in a nice place, sometimes to escape from those kids would be difficult. (Michelle)

Some volunteers had lived in more than one place, and so were able to compare the experiences:

At first I lived in the volunteer house for two months, then I rented a room with a Chilean family. Staying in the volunteer house was only beneficial at the on-set to get my orientation, get to know volunteers and have immediate support. After a month, the situation was limiting because it did not reinforce submersion in the culture or language and it was too far from my work sight. I would have requested to stay in the volunteer house for only the first month then moved closer to my work place and the center. (Rachel)

I loved both experiences [volunteer house and hogar]. If I were to go back again now for a short period of time I'd for sure be in the orphanage. If I was going to live there long term I'd probably live in an apartment. The pros of living in the apartment were that it was the escape; it was nice to have a place to get away. It was a huge social gathering. All the volunteers came to our apartment. It was an hour and a half commute a day basically on foot, bus, etc. At the beginning I thought it was amazing. We left at like 6:30 [after work]. Then we got home and we'd eat dinner but it was at least our time. And it was nice to just get to know Santiago. But as we got more involved in the orphanage our time commitments became longer. Sometimes we'd be leaving there at 9, getting home at 10:30, eating dinner at 11:30, going to bed at 1:00 and waking up all over again. It was just, it was exhausting, exhausting. So those were the pros and cons of living in

the apartment. As for living in the orphanage, for me it was okay because I'm not very concerned with personal space. I don't need a lot of it. I'm like "you can touch my stuff I don't care, you can sit on my bed, you can put your feet on my bed you can eat drippy food on my bed". I'm just not, not a germophobe. None of these things bother me so in that respect it was really fine for me to live in the orphanage. (Jen)

One individual, who had lived in the volunteer house and boarded with a Chilean family stated,

Well I've been there only a short time, with this family but the biggest difference is you actually see how people live and you have to speak Spanish. The volunteer house is nice for sharing experiences and just talking about what's frustrating you or something. That's something I cannot do at this family because they're friends of the director of the Hogar, and you cannot say whatever you want. I want to live in, with the children you know, not just going to work. That's a really big difference to see how the morning starts, how the evening ends. (Kim)

Again, except when these decisions were made by external factors¹⁹, volunteers made this decision based on their own concepts of space, but also on how important it was (or not) to have other volunteers to share their experience with on a daily basis.

Another stated goal of the volunteer organization was to help in the development of a network of children's homes in the Santiago area, for the sharing of resources, support, and information. Having volunteers working in various places, but coming together at volunteer meetings and in their living arrangements is working to create this link, as is the orientation process whereby a number of volunteers arrive at the same time, and get to know each other and the various sites prior to commencing their work. In fact, there is no direct connection, in that the directors do not come to the volunteer meetings nor do most of the volunteers actively try to make a connection between the directors per se. However, there is a connection between the homes in that volunteers talk to each other about their experiences. They also organize work parties to repair and paint things

¹⁹ For example, the volunteer house was relatively new, so many volunteers I interviewed had arrived before it had become an option

at different homes, as well as inter-hogar activities (mostly football matches) that bring some of the kids together, and facilitate opportunities for directors to meet.

For sure, the two types of experiences, searching for a volunteer experience on your own, and arranging one through a functioning organization, require individuals to step out of their comfort zones on quite different levels, and therefore likely attract different types of personalities. Perhaps there is room for both types of experiences. However, while it is possible, though not necessary, that volunteers who have no obligations to the volunteer organization may be able to be more dedicated to the hogar, at the same time the notion of arriving out of the blue, with no knowledge of the language, and little idea of the work to be done speaks more to the reflexivity of the volunteer, than to the actual help that they are seeking to provide. It is clear that while individuals who have come to Chile through VE have more involvement with other foreign volunteers outside of the hogar than perhaps those who have found another route there. While there are those that feel the creation of an organization aids the ability to be truly helpful, there are others that feel true help is hindered by this. In the end, it comes down to whether helping the volunteer organization is considered to be “help” (i.e. a necessary evil in order to be involved), or help. At the same time though, each individual weaves their own experience, and once in Chile makes their own decisions of how involved to be with the organization.

The question then, is at what point is the organization developed to the point that the specific individual who created it can be replaced. For VE, the answer to this, I believe, is when the structure of the organization is strong enough to stand on its own, when it no longer relies solely on the vision of the individual who had the initial idea.

Going back to notions of being helpful, as opposed to “helpful”, this is an important point. It is possible to agree or disagree with the implementation of a volunteer organization in these specific circumstances, but once it is there, once it is entrenched in the lives of the children, its sudden disappearance could be disastrous for the children who come to expect the extra help and attention that the volunteers ultimately provide.

Altruism and Helping

Volunteer Motivations

One of the questions that I asked my informants in the interview was “what motivated you to come to Chile to work with children”. Almost every individual began their response with “well... I have to admit that my intentions were not really altruistic....”

Consider the following,

I have this feeling for myself; sometimes it's like a selfish feeling. People are saying “wow, what you're doing is so great”, and I always have the feeling that I do this for myself. Do people have a thing like “I really want to help people”, or is it most of the time for themselves? I think that the need to help other people in other countries was not that big but [I want to] experience the culture and the way of living. (Kim)

Mine are very selfish reasons for finding volunteer work. I had studied a semester abroad, and I loved the culture and knew then that I was going to leave the country again. And I wanted to keep learning Spanish so volunteering was an excellent excuse. Like she [another volunteer] said too, you get to know kids a little bit, get to know a community. But for me one of my primary motivators was to learn Spanish. (Michelle)

Some expressed that they felt something was missing or lacking in their own life, or their own society. For example,

Maybe it's kind of a search for a personal lack of, something that you need to fulfill. I don't know, because if I were only to go travelling around the world, this isn't a life that would fulfill me. (Sophie)

After an initial statement such as these, most would then go on to list the variety of reasons that they wanted to have this experience, and/or particularly why they wanted to work with children in Chile. These reasons included such things as wanting to experience another culture more extensively than “just traveling through”, learning another language, getting experience with children, career planning, and taking a break from education or work. Many made statements such as,

... and then I decided to learn Spanish, I [had] already lived in Spain so I decided on South America and then just sort of, my family knew people down here so I went to Chile. (Molly)

Two volunteers expressed that the death of a family member was at least part of their motivation for getting involved in an international volunteer project – both as a means of grief management and changing their life structure, and as a way of “giving back” for everything that had been done for their family.

In any event, most volunteers expressed that their desire to volunteer overseas was not reflected in the reactions they got from friends and family.

I was called Mother Teresa, I was also, I come from sort of a redneck family, you have to understand that, so I mean half my family thought it was really great. A bunch of my family have done stuff like this before. And then the other part of the family was just like “why are you wasting your time its natural selection”. So I mean my family wasn’t comfortable with me going far away, but I think I got a lot of support. I also did get the “why waste your time, just go to college do it later” you know “send them money”. (Molly)

Everyone in my community thought it was fantastic. I was saving money to come here, a lot of them knew that and even since then a lot of them send either monetary donations or material donations down here. That has been really good. And I try to explain to them that it is more of a selfish thing. But they’re of course like “no you’re going to work with orphan children (laughing).” (Michelle)

Other motivations for doing an international volunteer project included career planning, such as finding out if a career in social services or with children is what they want to do, before returning to school.

For me, because I'm interested in possibly having a career in development I wanted to see; I really wanted to travel but I didn't want to just be a tourist. I wanted a more meaningful experience and I think volunteering gives that. Also I like getting to know, I find it difficult just staying somewhere three days. You don't get to know the community and the country. That's why I like being in one place and getting to know the culture. (Leah)

Well I wanted to see if this is something I wanted to do for the rest of my life, after college, because I really had no idea. (Molly)

This is not to say that the volunteers were there solely for egoist reasons – most that I spoke to cared deeply for what they were doing and became highly implicated in the lives of the children they were involved with. While there are many types of ventures that they could have become involved with for the same motivational reasons, the fact is that they did pick the particular project of working with children. And many were clear that they specifically wanted to work with children:

I knew I didn't want like environmental [projects]. I knew I wanted human contact so I didn't want to work in the forests. That's what a lot of the programs are you know. So I wanted to work with children. Another requirement was that I didn't want, a lot of the organizations I found involved paying upfront like a 2000 dollar sort of admin fee. I was like I'd rather, if I'm going to have to give 2000 dollars, give it to the organization I'm working at, the orphanage or wherever I will be, in the future. That was the nice thing about Hogar Esperanza, there was no fee. Of course, at the same time it was not very organized, so we sort of took a risk. (Jen)

Volunteers were, therefore, very clear about the experiences they wanted and where they thought they could be most helpful. They wanted to help, but most had a feeling that they should be saying they were there for altruistic reasons only. At the same time, some discussion arose around the issue of why they should feel bad about this. Generally this was framed in notions of corporations and government's being able to move around the world for non-altruistic reasons and being praised for it, therefore, why,

because the project is based in good intentions is it then negative to admit getting something out of it for one's self.

As discussed in the literature, it is probably almost impossible to do anything for completely altruistic motivations. At the same time however, this type of volunteer project involves the lives of others, for the most part children, so at the end of the day it is important to have an idea that the results are beneficial to the children.²⁰ In other words, while it may be considered to be a good thing to work to create a network of more globally minded individuals, does that idea end up including the children that are being "helped"? From my research on this particular project, and speaking only of this project, I think the simple answer would have to be yes. Of course though the issues are much more complex than they may seem on the surface, and there are varying shades of response to this question. This will be discussed further in the next section.

Some individuals implied in their interviews that they came to volunteer in Chile expecting to find a "Third World" country, or perhaps that they sensed that other volunteers had come with that expectation. However, many also chose Chile specifically for reasons of safety and security. Most often this was presented as to how safety issues were important to others, most specifically their parents.

I had wanted to go away to volunteer and I was debating between South America and Africa. I found out that my friend would be interested. But she would only want to go to South America. So we kind of limited our search down there. I literally did a very generic search on the internet, put in South America; I was flexible about where to go. But again my friend had family in Chile and so she was saying if you can find something in Chile. And then we came up with two

²⁰ When I worked in projects in Canada, but particularly abroad I always found myself questioning my motivations and whether or not my presence was a good thing for anyone other than me. I separate my Canadian volunteer experiences from the international ones mainly because they involve implicating myself in projects I may not fully comprehend, but also because of the intensity and time commitment. When volunteering at home, for the most part I tend to be involved in the projects over a longer period of months or years, but only for a few hours a week. Volunteering abroad can be for short, intense time periods.

organizations, one in Chile and one in Peru and the one in Chile just seemed more... (Jen)

Others expressed specific motivations to volunteer with VE in particular. Most of these reasons revolved around not having to pay an administration fee, and not being attached to any specific formal religion. Volunteers said,

I was just doing loads of research into volunteering and this stuck out because you didn't have to pay for it. I found it on a website, it seemed really flexible and really exactly what I was looking for. (Leah)

I found it through similar means. I was looking on the internet for about five months, at a whole bunch of different organizations. This was one of the very few that you didn't have to pay for, it was flexible and it was non-religious. (Michelle)

However, while they felt that they had come to Chile for their own personal growth, when I asked volunteers if they felt they had given anything up in exchange, not one felt they had, at least not anything they couldn't regain at a later date.

Personally my people skills have improved, my language skills have improved, and I don't feel that I have I have lost any opportunities. I'm hoping that I've created only future opportunities. (Jen)

Volunteer Experiences

It is possible that some of the volunteers had arrived expecting to find overcrowded orphanages full of malnourished children craving love and attention. In fact though, in most of the homes, and particularly in Hogar Esperanza, one of the only things really missing for the children is the all important family and the connections that family gives children for their future. The directors of these homes work tirelessly commissioning donations of money, food, diapers, school supplies, even volunteers, whatever it is they need to run a home, so for the most part the material needs of the children are fulfilled. Many of the children did not live with their families because of

abuse, alcoholism, or other social problems, which though may have stemmed from a life of poverty, did not necessarily or exclusively do so. For this reason there were at least some volunteers who were expecting more expressed gratitude from the children and the staff of the orphanages, and therefore at times had difficulty dealing with the rejection, lack of appreciation, and manipulatory behaviours that sometimes occurred.

Volunteers are coming ostensibly to help children who are defined as being in need of help, children considered “at risk”. But in reality, when I asked the question, the answers I got related more to what the volunteer would get out of the experience - they wanted or needed an experience such as this, and for whatever reason they chose children in Chile. However, the reasons they were motivated to have a volunteer experience could just as easily have been related by people who go to work with animals, the environment, or to fix up an old castle. They had specific motivations perhaps for choosing to work with children, but the experience of another culture or another language was also important.

The accomplishments of the volunteer then have to be framed in reference to the continuum of help. Despite the fact that their search for this experience began with selfish motivations, most volunteers were also convinced that they were making useful contributions to the hogar, particularly to the children. What many really were saying is that through feeling they were truly helping others, they were also in fact helping themselves, which in turn allowed them to be even more helpful. I don't recall one respondent speaking of personal growth for themselves alone, without having a positive effect on someone else. And this growth, most believed, would be carried elsewhere.

The change that the volunteer experience created within the individual, they felt, would carry into their daily lives after they returned home. As one volunteer said:

That's how positive an experience it was I think, feeling part of something that's growing, was a great feeling, growing successfully. Knowing that you're part of something that's only function, only reason for its success is because of a few people's passion, commitment and motivation. It's the only reason it's functioning, it's not money that's making it work, it's nothing nothing nothing but commitment, motivation, and passion. To me it's just a lovely thing. It's changed completely what I want to do in my career. Some of the kids definitely impacted me strongly. I think the other thing that impacted me was just... I've always had patience but it's just a more global understanding. Just to give you an example, there was this one kid whose mom was a prostitute and for that reason he was living in the orphanage. She had been entertaining men in the house. It's a horrible story. She'd come every two weeks for the visiting day and she'd sometimes show up drunk or... Of course us volunteers, we hated her we were like "oh she's coming again and she's going to screw up the kid" and I hated her. But at one point, I can't remember what happened but for some reason she'd lost her visitation right and she was like visibly just horrified. And I just like, you know I don't even hate her anymore, just like this poor woman. She's screwing up her kids but she's not an evil person. I think that my whole sense of good and bad changed. It's just not so black and white you know. I mean I'm not condoning being a prostitute or anything like that. But she became a prostitute because she'd had a really troubled childhood and she needed money. She had nothing and she was abused. And I don't doubt that she loves those kids. She's not an evil woman [like I thought] initially. And I think that that has probably been the thing I've brought back the most that people here [in North America] don't have. Here it's like people, they have rules, you know "I don't give money to beggars on the street" you know like there's a rule. Everyone has rules. I've always been interested in not for profit but I think I never saw it as a career, just as a volunteer, but I think there might be potential. I've always been a people person and always very empathetic. But that doesn't play out in many professions. So I think [the volunteer experience] will pertain to my career. I'm not sure how but... So if anything I really feel that you learn so many skills, I am better acquainted with how to deal with children. The area I come from is upper middle class. Now I have gotten very familiar with very very poor situations, situations that simply have not affected my life [before]. Different kinds of abuse that these kids deal with. I can deal with all kinds of people now; I would like to think so anyway. (Jen)

It is also interesting to comment on the motivations of the volunteers as they relate to the notions of whom and where they should help. At one point Luke discussed how he would eventually like to expand his organization elsewhere, perhaps to a place more in

“need”. There were volunteers who also strongly expressed frustration that one home, Hogar Esperanza, received the most volunteers and resources, when there were clearly places more in need. One volunteer expressed it most clearly,

The tough thing right now about Voluntarios de la Esperanza is the way its set up is it [resources and money] supposedly goes where the need is first. VE hasn't really had any money but I know that if I ever donate money I will not donate to Voluntarios de la Esperanza. I will only give directly to my [volunteer site] cause those are the people I know. Those are the people I want to affect and I don't really care if the baby house gets three new toys. There are other centers that probably could use things more. (Michelle)

But many others expressed similar feelings. So while they discussed that their personal motivations were self-reflexive to some extent, volunteers also believed that they could be more helpful in more dire situations. While most volunteers recognized that to be living in a hogar, something must have gone drastically wrong in a child's family, some frustration with the attitudes of the children also exists. For example,

[A kid will say] “buy me a coke”. If you say “no, I'm not buying you a coke but we can hang out” or whatever, they'll be like “but you're rich, you're from North America”. My biggest bone with the whole thing was that these kids [in Hogar Esperanza], it's horrible to say but the kids were almost spoiled. As much as they were orphans they were spoiled. When you look at the tias who are making like ten dollars a day, they have children, and their children live bare bones in a small house. They get new clothes once a year if they grew out of their old ones. These kids, a donation comes in and they're getting designer clothing arriving in bags and bags and bags. Anything that fits them they get to keep. They don't actually miss anything you know materialistically. So when a kid said “get me a coke” I just I was infuriated. More than if a really destitute person said it to me. I'd almost be like, “he's probably never had a coke before”. But these kids, like every day there's a party for them. You know to see the kids at Christmas time being like “ach not another party, no more gifts I've already been to so many parties”, it's like maybe they're having too many parties. (Jen)

Many volunteers expressed that they had sentiments such as this at times. The fact is that Hogar Esperanza is basically raising the kids in a middle class lifestyle, but they are still missing a lot of what they need to carry on in life. Many of them come in with a lot of

problems, and don't have families that can support them as they make their way through life, but this somehow gets masked in the lifestyle that is led. While it is important that these kids lead as normal a life as possible in order to carry as few scars with them throughout their entire lives, at the same time this can work so well that it ends up working against them, masking their social problems.

Volunteering with Children – The Revolving Door of Volunteers

As previously stated, I believe it is important, when working on a project involving human beings, and particularly children, to be certain that the effects of the project on those children will be, for the most part, positive. For this reason I asked all of my informants what effect they thought having international volunteers has on the children in the home, both while there and when they left. I had not anticipated the level of consideration most of the volunteers had already given to the subject. Most of the volunteers had already answered that they felt that the motivations for volunteering were at least to some degree involving their own personal growth, though they also hoped, in fact believed, that some benefit was coming of it for the children.

For the younger kids, ages three to eight, seven or eight I think it was also just another hand. I think the largest effect was actually for the young teenagers at the ages of like 12, 13 to 16 because we sort of represented to them what they ideally would want to become. I think that's where the effect was the strongest. I think we were also able to take these kids out of their reality sometimes. Particularly when I [with another volunteer] lived on our own. We invited the kids to our house sometimes, we'd have a pizza party or little things like that. (Jen)

The most positive selfish thing for me was all of my friends in the [hogar] because I would hang out with them... Then with respect to the kids, just getting to know the kids, it taught me more than I taught them I'm sure. They don't know it but they have. Also, getting a chance, letting them see something else other than their own little bubble. (Michelle)

One volunteer who had been asked to give extra attention specifically to one child said,

Yeah, [she's] difficult. The tias, it's not like the tias don't give her attention. But the tias have like twenty kids that they have to look after. So they don't have time to give her the individual attention she needs. It's just been one of the most frustrating things because there'll be days like you'd have a good day, there's always bad moments, there's always bad moments but I think that it's finally getting through. And then the next time it's like, no. (Leah)

And another, a volunteer working in Hogar San Roque, where there are no tias said,

It's positive because it gives [extra] attention, I don't know, if we're not there. Yeah, they get attention in school and she tries to talk to them when they come from school and help them. But it easily can be interrupted and she has no time. Sure these children are having each other but not really somebody [dedicated to] helping them with their homework. A lot of them are a little behind in school because of what has happened with them, so that's helping too. They have experience with adults who live with them, play with them. I don't think they had that before. (Kim)

The scope of my research meant that the people who thought that this type of volunteering could be negative for children had triaged themselves out, or never even considered this volunteer experience to be an option. Perhaps this already defines the pool of volunteers, and how they would respond to this question in that those who find volunteering in this type of environment problematic would not have applied to VE and therefore would not have been there for me to interview. In any event, almost to a fault volunteers responded that they felt that what they were doing was for the most part beneficial for the children. They were extra hands to help with the homework, to read, play and generally help take care of the children.

Another common theme was that “bringing the world” to the children is a positive thing. These children had very little experience with things non-Chilean and many volunteers believed that in this globalized world, bringing other viewpoints, language, and culture to them was a good thing for their future. Volunteers stated,

For my kids, it's opened up a whole new world for them. They, most of them, especially the younger ones, they don't understand and I don't know if it necessarily is going to change their lives, to escape [referring to a future of poverty]. But if nothing else they see something outside. [They had] patience with me, because my Spanish is not perfect. At first I think that they probably thought that I was stupid as well. And now they just think that I am funny, and Argentinean, I don't know (laughing). So if nothing else, especially when I came back from traveling and they got to see pictures of different places, of different countries that are in their own continent it was a big thing for them too. Because the United States for them is this far off land that only exists in movies. At least Argentina, Bolivia, Peru are places, they don't know the capitals of them, but at least they are places they can identify with. (Michelle)

Well I think one pro is the English, to help the kids. I mean I've already give two English lessons today and I think different languages can help them a lot. And just seeing how different cultures are. Sometimes that's great, to bake cookies, you know and have chocolate chip cookies here, and that's sort of interesting to see just the fundamentals of different cultures. (Molly)

I see the volunteers as a role model for the children in the hogares. We always have to remember why the kids arrived to the hogar, they are in social risk, and that's the reality they know. They know parents who beat them, who drink a lot, do drugs. So they really don't know anything else besides that life. If they stay here for 18 years and nobody really shows them that there are a whole bunch of other possibilities, they will go out and the chance is 90 percent that they would go to the same way, when they leave the hogar. So if we bring in a volunteer who can show them that there is a whole world outside, there are a whole lot of experiences possible and there are a lot of people to meet maybe then the kids will say "look, I'll earn money, I will travel, I will do volunteering in Africa, I will do volunteering in Asia". (Rodrigo)

While this perspective can be taken in a negative way, if looked at only through a lens of the assumed need that all people in the north have to take over the rest of the world, I do not believe that this would be a fair representation of the volunteer's intentions. Rather, what they were saying is that, in general, children who are not growing up in poverty have much greater access to the rest of the world through such things as internet and personal interactions, if not through actual travel, and that for the children in the hogares international volunteers, regardless of where they come from and what languages they speak, add this dimension to these children's lives.

For the most part, volunteers felt that they were able to integrate into their work with the children with relative ease, though never entirely problem free.

And that's actually one of the things I love about having other volunteers in other Hogars. There was one week where it was a horrible week, like the kids just they were, whenever Chilean volunteers come in, like for the day, they're obviously cooler cause they're you know, they're one day, and the usually bring candy... And it was like a whole week of Chilean volunteers so I was just nothing. I was like "why am I here I paid to come down here and I'm just this is horrible". Then we had a volunteer meeting where we all sat around and just talked about what goes on and all the other volunteers were just, "you know one day at my Hogar they love me and the next day I'm nothing and I'm just sort of like one of their used toys." And I was like "me too." You want to feel, I'm down here and these kids are starting to trust me. And I want to feel like I'm making a difference. So that's really hard, the days when the kids are sort of not into you and don't want to play with you and that's difficult to deal with. (Molly)

At any rate, volunteers often referred to any difficulties as revolving around knowledge of Spanish, or rather lack of it.

I found it really difficult at first because my Spanish was pretty bad. It's still not great but it's gotten a lot better. I'm a very shy reserved person and that really multiplied with the language, but because I was working with babies that was a lot easier. And even the two older kids I don't think they realize I'm not from Chile. ... I don't think they understand the concept. But the tias, they're quite reserved as well at first. But I've really warmed up to them; they're really nice to me now. They're interested and it was difficult with them at first but now it's like I'm going to be sad to say goodbye to them (Leah)

I would change my knowledge of the language on arriving. I think that all volunteers should have a good knowledge of Spanish because communication is very important in this kind of experience and the help that they can give is still better if they manage the language. (Isabel)

Notions of stability for the children involved

Earlier in this thesis I made reference to the notion of revolving door volunteers, coming and going from the volunteer job on their own timetable, based on their own needs. In fact, people come and go from any job, paid or unpaid, but in the case of international volunteerism this can happen on a more frequent basis. I was curious to ask volunteers about how they felt this impacted in the hogares, especially on the everyday

structure of life for the children. For my part, I expected notions of stability and continuity would be considered important by the volunteers. However, from the responses of the volunteers, as well as from observations of children interacting with them, this does not seem to be entirely true. While many did admit that the point of leaving was a difficult one for them, and perhaps also for the children, most believed that negative moment was outweighed by all the benefit gained to volunteers and children alike.

In the big house, because I know a few of the kids there as well, they're like "oh why are you leaving? Why are you leaving?" That's really hard. It makes me feel really selfish because I'm going travelling and I have the freedom to do that. I mean I could stay if I wanted to but I don't really want to (Leah)

Here I get alot of things... a new country, a new language, I couldn't speak Spanish. So I went traveling too for three weeks and I didn't imagine before how it would be, I thought "yeah it could be difficult" but I didn't think how. So the kids give me alot of things, I'm here for helping them but they are helping me too. They respect you, not at the beginning but they respect you. They give you a kiss or they ask you how are your parents. So they give me attention too. Sometimes I'm thinking that I'm not doing enough for them because I'm here for only a time and they get used to me, to things that I do with them, and they like me and then yeah I will go and they, I think, I think that when I will go it's like a new loss for them... (Sophie)

I'm wondering, the last days they [the children] started asking when I'm going, and that's not so positive. They get like attached to you and then you're going so I'm a little worried about that. (Kim)

I had many problems thinking of the effects of my leaving on the children and talked a lot with the tias and Jorge about this. We were always very clear about me staying only for a while and going back to my world, as the children liked to call it. I always tried to stay in touch with them, by writing or calling regularly. I also thought a lot about going back again; fearing that it would be doing things worse than if I just stayed where I was and just let them forget me... But the big children and the tias told me that they prefer seeing me a little bit and being sad after than not see me at all. So I went back, three times so far. Each time I clearly told everyone that I came to see them but that I had to go back to my home afterwards. Each time it was as if I just had left them for a week and we took up our common life as before. This was one the greatest experiences of my life. I can go back after 2 years, feeling as if I never had left them. I will go back again and

again because they are now my Chilean family and I know that it doesn't hurt them to see me coming back. Some of them, like the tias ..., were more distant when I was in Chile the first time. Only when I went there for the second time could they accept me as one of them because I showed them by coming back that I wasn't only a tourist in their life but that I was sincere about my implication in their lives. (Isabel)

It was also recognized that the volunteer needed to take a certain responsibility regarding the type of connection made with the kids.

In terms of the volunteers I think it depends what relationship the volunteer had with the kids. So for example, there was one volunteer, I'm not going to mention any names. There was one volunteer who came and really hit it off with like three kids. I can think of two specific volunteers who really hit it off individually with like three kids. And what happened actually was while they were there it was amazing because these kids really blossomed. It was amazing, but when they left they [the children] really plummeted, huge consequences. You have to think. Whereas someone else who, like I think I was more, I had a good rapport with lots of the kids. So when I left, it might have been hard for a lot more but for less long. It depends how you look at it. (Jen)

At the same time, some volunteers felt they could empathize through their own experiences with the kids or in their living arrangements:

It's tough in a house like this [the volunteer house] with people coming and going. You form relationships, then they're suddenly ended. But also just a lot of people around the same age range but very different personalities can cause problems. (Michelle)

And one volunteer, in fact, expressed the idea that the coming and going of volunteers was perhaps difficult for the children in the mind of adults, but that it was not really clear that the kids felt that way.

That it's hard for them when we are going is only what I'm thinking, I don't know what is true. (Sophie)

Through observation, I would in fact conclude that while the individual personalities of both the volunteers and the children affected how they interacted, they do not manifest any signs, outwardly at least, of being stressed by the comings and goings of the

volunteers. Perhaps they are sad when a volunteer leaves, perhaps they don't even notice. It depends on the relationship, but does not seem to influence how they interact with the next volunteer who arrives.

At the same time however, there was a sense that knowing that volunteers were only there for a short time gave the children a reason not to have to take the volunteers seriously in terms of seeing them as an authority figure in daily routines, but rather more as temporary friend to play with.

I think another negative thing, is that the kids see you very differently than they see their tias. And so you know they sort of, they tried very hard to, a lot of that age group again, that same positive age group, I'd say about ages 10 to 14, those kids like to manipulate and take advantage and they'd be, they wanted our things, ultimately, I mean as much as we had rules, like I had to enforce that a child sit down and do their homework I didn't have that much control. (Jen)

And a negative that I've noticed is sometimes the kids, especially with volunteers who don't speak Spanish as fluently, aren't taken as seriously, because they're seen as people that will come in and out of their lives. So they don't create as much of an attachment to them, which can be a negative I've noticed with a bunch of them, yeah, I think that language is a huge thing (Molly)

There are so many people who come to visit the house. They come for one day, two days I don't know, they never come again. So if there are people coming who the kids don't recognize they say "hello" and "chao". When there's somebody coming who doesn't speak the language maybe they ask themselves "what will he do here?"... So when I got here I had to help them with their homework. But I couldn't understand, so this is another point. They have to have a lot of patience with you, you are coming from another country, and maybe you have a lot of education but you come here and you are nothing. So they have to help you. (Sophie)

And then there is the danger of the volunteers becoming interchangeable to the children

And they'll see them and then they'll get a letter or two. So I think it's felt with more of a neutral feeling, especially because there's always just another volunteer who comes in. But that's also because these kids have grown up with volunteers coming in and out. (Molly)

However, when a volunteer returned to the orphanage for a second visit or volunteer sojourn, it perhaps said something to the kids about how the volunteers felt, that they cared and thought about them.

I had a brief glimpse of it when I left to go traveling. I was gone for just over two months which isn't that long. But the kids become rather attached and especially there are three groups in particular that I have worked with extensively on projects outside, too. And they were really excited when I came back but they definitely get attached. (Michelle)

There are so many volunteers in and out of this house. Volunteers coming in and out. I think if you, if people come back. Like I noticed when I left for the south, everyone was "oh there's a volunteer leaving." But when I came back it was, for the kids that was really [proof]. (Molly)

Having an organization arranging a schedule of volunteers was seen to be one way of managing this, however. Although each volunteer has their own personality, if the numbers of individuals working in the home remains constant, there can then at least be continuity in the structure of daily routines.

Strangers in Our Home – Where the Tias Fit into the VE Plan

It became quite apparent early in my research that while the directors are often enthusiastic about having volunteers and see it as enrichment to their program, the tias do not necessarily feel the same way. There was tension, at times it was palpable, between the tias and the volunteers as groups, though on a personal level some friendships and mutual understandings developed, variable depending on the hogar and the personality of the volunteer. There are, obviously, negative consequences due to this lack of understanding, in that tias and volunteers often work at odds with each other, or as completely separate entities. Although none of the tias would agree to discuss this with me, I have to assume that they feel unappreciated and threatened, at least to some extent.

Perhaps even, the volunteers represent missed or impossible opportunities to some of the tias in their own lives.

... it seems that most of them have had their own issues, their own problems. They're poor and some of their kids come here, some of them have been left... (Luke)

In the baby house they all basically have their troubles... some have had troubles before with their husband for example and they had to finish their relationship., They ended up getting divorced and now they have a new trouble... (Rodrigo)

I asked the question to the volunteers of how they thought they related to the tias. For their part the volunteers also sensed a separation from the tias. While they were able to jump in and play with the kids, many volunteers found it was an uncomfortable struggle to make contact with the staff. This division was difficult and a few volunteers spent energy trying to decrease the distance. Others saw it as just part of the experience.

... I think the [difficult thing] is fitting in and not only with the kids but with the tias... because they think you're rich and that you're there and it's like who the hell are you to come in and just even like eat their food, like they don't get it you know. So we're eating their food and we're at some point sitting around having a meeting, what are we having a meeting about, it's annoying to them you know, it's offensive and definitely that problem we encountered with the tias a lot. I kind of anticipated that might have been a problem and I think that I really tried to approach it in a non-aggressive way... ultimately I [thought] my experience will be a lot better if these tias were my friends so I tried everything I think. Luckily I was able to warm up to them... I also [spoke] very very very minimum Spanish when I got there, so it was hard at the beginning cause I could barely communicate with them but I was always very polite. My experience became more positive when the tias accepted me because they encouraged the kids to accept us also (Jen)

... and I was warned before I came, [from her contact that found her the volunteer job] to really try to help the tias. So when I first got here I made a point of everyday asking obsessively, can I help you, is there anything you need, are you good, so I sort of did okay with them but I know a lot of volunteers... (Molly)

So you kind of just hope that these people [volunteers] have really good interpersonal skills. Some do, some don't. Some don't care about the tias, some dislike the tias, some are back to like how could you not be so grateful that I'm here helping you (Jen)

The fact that improving relationships with the tias would make their own job easier should be motivation for volunteers to try to bridge the gap. In the long run, however, it is important to the hogar, the children, and the volunteer organization that this connection be made; in fact I believe it is the one factor that could potentially block VE in their efforts. The volunteers come and go at will, but for the tias, who are the permanent force in the children's days, this is their work, sometimes their life, and to feel as though they are living with permanent house guests that they did not ask into their homes, and whose presence devalues their own work and relationships with the children must be a difficult thing.

Having talked a lot with the tias about volunteers on my later visits I know that they are sometimes a little bit overrun by all these young people who arrive and don't really know how to help in an effective way. I think that the tias have, sometimes in [the volunteers'] eyes not a great value; they wash, clean, tidy up, etc. Volunteers should help more in the housework because this is a great part of work in a hogar too. It's easy to play with the children and let the tias do the dirty work. I think it's a problem for the tias to see an evolution in this way and they sometimes have problems to see all these strangers arrive in their house and take the children away from them. (Isabel)

... and I've actually talked to [the tias] a little bit about this and it's not that they don't like us individually, it's the idea of these international kids coming in and staying, making a big impression, and then they leave... (Molly)

... and also like if this is your house when you are here, this is your house you take care of it, you clean it, then you have somebody just coming in without even always introducing themselves, and playing with your kids and helping them with their homework, you know, it's all so kind of shocking, if you think about it. (Rodrigo)

Therefore, aside from the imbalances of power and wealth, it is possible, in fact probable, that the tias have several grievances of a more practical nature. It is true that the volunteers are there to help in the lives of the children, but it is equally true that washing, cleaning, and disciplining are all part of the daily needs of children, but these tasks

inevitably fall more to the tias than to the volunteers. The fall-out of this inequality of labour is, I believe, damaging for the children, the tias and even the experience of the volunteers.

Relationships

The relationships, or relative lack of them, between the tias and the volunteers, as groups, highlight the major negative contact created by VE. It is imperative to include descriptions of the tias at least to some degree in order to situate the volunteers, but to explain “why” is much less evident. It is true that the tias are practically volunteers themselves, in a much underpaid job. Most of them had no formal training beyond whatever public school education they may have had, though many I think have had vast amounts of life training in difficult circumstances.²¹ For some of the tias, the hogar where they work is their home; they live at the hogar, perhaps with their own children, either because they had grown up there, or as an escape from abuse or poverty. At the same time they are also “raising” children who come from troubled backgrounds. Having uninvited people around with the power to judge them or command the respect that should be theirs, adds one more dimension. It became clear through observation that in defense, some of the tias then behave in ways that problematize the daily life of the volunteers. The most severe of these is the “gym painting” incident described earlier in this thesis. But many other volunteers also recognized that even if they wanted to ignore the tias, and just work with the children, ultimately the tias had power over this, even if that power was played out quite subtly. In other words, although the tias had no

²¹ This is my conjecture from observation, things volunteers said, and my own knowledge of what this job is about, as I was never able to talk to any of them about their lives.

recognized say in the role of the volunteers they were capable of problematizing relationships between children and volunteers.

... because we have no authority, I'm not allowed to tell the girls anything, I'm not allowed to play if they are not allowed, if they don't get the permission of the tia, so that sucks cause we can't do anything. (Diana)

In the big house [Casa de Grandes] if there's no kids, if they're at school or there's not a lot to do, I know from hearing from other volunteers, they'll be like can I sweep or can I do this, oh no no no no no, cause they think you're going to do it wrong they're going to have to redo it, and so then you kind of end up just sitting and then they talk about you, like all they do is just sit there. Well there's nothing to do and you won't let us do anything. (Caroline)

... the first month, the tias hardly talked to us and [they] gave us a really hard time because they didn't talk and they were like okay you don't know Spanish and they were not very patient. But I think it's getting better and better the more you try and the more you stay here, the more you come just everyday and the more you try to speak Spanish. But you have to make the effort like we were sitting at the table to have lunch and I asked a question to the tias, then they just answered one sentence. Then she [another volunteer] asked a question, they answered it with one sentence and then silence again. So I kept on asking questions and then it was her turn again. It's just like you have to make the effort I think and you have to be patient and just don't overwhelm them with your ideas. (Diana)

It depended somewhat on the setting, and also on the individual volunteer, but for the most part I did not get a sense that the volunteers saw the tias as very integral to their experience. In part this is because prior to arriving many of them framed the experience in terms of the children, but did not have any prior insight into the local staff. On the other hand, those that had thought about it ahead of time were more likely to make the effort to bridge the gap. For most of the homes, the responses given to questions regarding the tias basically had at least a degree of "Well that's their problem if they don't like our presence". Some volunteers recognized the importance of trying to befriend and understand the tias but at the same time they had come to Chile to work with children.

Gender

There was some discussion that came up in terms of how gender affected how volunteers felt they were accepted, and treated, by the tias. This discussion was particular to the Casa de Grandes. For the most part there is a sense that males were accepted more easily than females. Whether this is because there is little male presence in the home, aside from Jorge, or has more to do with the male volunteers challenging local notions of gender roles where men do not usually participate in childcare and household chores, is unclear.

I mean one of the first things is the perspective of the whole institution at first. A lot of the tias, in all the institutions have that initial "who the hell are these people", especially with the women. Guys they're so much more accepting of but with women they are tough. (Luke)

... sometimes yes, like whenever [a male volunteer] goes to the kitchen, [the tias ask] "do you want something to eat, are you feeling okay", I go in and they're like "can you help me shuck peas" ... but that may also be because guys are sort of a rarity that come and volunteer here. (Molly)

I'd just go by the kitchen and ask, every now and then, well do you need some help... they don't have a lot of males here so maybe that's the difference, that helps something... and if you like to help in the kitchen that's quite a big step for Chileans, normally men don't help in the kitchen so if you're helping... and for women, well you're expected to do this so it's nothing extra. (Simon)

The Casa de Guaguas (Baby House)

An interesting point in contrast is that the volunteers at the Casa de Guaguas (baby house) seem to have a greater degree of closeness to the tias, and my research indicates that this was most likely because it was the place where their roles were the most similar.

I feel like in the baby house you're always in crisis, there's always like twelve kids crying and five diapers and so you're just there, there's no time to be like oh this is [not my job]. (Jen)

Well I think it's easier for a person to figure out what to do at the baby house because there's constantly dishes to wash you know, feeding babies, whereas I

think [in Casa de Grandes] people come and go and they like some and they don't like some, some figure out what to do. In particular they don't like the fact that people come not speaking Spanish, whereas in the baby house it's hard but [they don't care so much] as long as you're here to help. (Caroline)

The baby house is for infants waiting for adoption. Most of them are less than a year old, and are there for relatively short periods of time while the social worker finds them a home and assists in their integration to it. With anywhere from eight to fourteen infants to be fed, changed, washed, and stimulated, as well as taken to all the appointments that go along with adoption, there was not much room for a power struggle regarding what job belonged to whom.

What's going on here, in this house [Casa de Grandes] seems much more relaxed. Well it's little loud but more relaxed but that's also very different for the volunteer because here the tias clean, they wash clothes, they cook, the volunteers work with the kids, do homework, you know fun stuff. Over there the volunteers and the tias work side by side, generally and so it's a much different view of, a lot less of that like jealousy you know. (Luke)

... there's a lot more things to do there, I mean we have to go to the doctor almost every day with somebody. Sometimes you need two or three people at the doctor because you have two or three kids so I think that they're very appreciative of it. Now my time that I've spent at the big house, I have never felt that there. (Caroline)

While not all the volunteers felt that they integrated easily into the home, they did state that once they were comfortable with the routine they also were comfortable with the tias.

I had a hard time integrating into the home. I felt more welcomed and integrated at the babies' home. I did not feel very welcomed, at first, in the big kids' home. The tias at the babies' home were very kind and helpful. I think that had there been the Voluntarios, it would have been easier. Over time, of course, I became very integrated, but it took a while of adjustment. My main problem was that I didn't know what I should be doing and I was bored at first without tasks or focus. (Anna)

There were small points of contention between tias and volunteers, mostly regarding when to pick up a crying child. More than one volunteer expressed the following sentiment.

I actually had a harder time in the baby house at the beginning, not because of the tias. It was more because I had a harder time with their approach in terms of, not that they mistreated the kids, for me it was just hard to see. Their approach is very like you know don't touch the kids all the time. Once you start holding them they want to be held more, so the idea is don't hold the kids cause realistically you can't hold twelve to fifteen kids so don't hold them. (Jen)

It may also be of note that this is the one home where the children come and go quickly, while the same tias stay for years. But for the most part the volunteers in the baby house felt well accepted, even appreciated by the tias and happy with their role. In any event, perhaps because of the similarity in roles or the personalities of the tias, the door seemed to be open here for developing relationships and mutual understanding.

So like I started working there and I realized look these are the kids, but you also have the tias. They need help as well. Sometimes they would turn on me. And I started sometimes coming with presents, or we would have lunch together and I'd go and buy a dessert. We're just talking for a lot of time and if some of the older kids were coming to bother us I was like come on, leave us. Not in a bad way, but come on go and play a little bit, the way I do it at my house with my little sister if I want to have a chat with my parents. And they love when I go there and it kind of established a feeling of home. (Rodrigo)

Well I was just kind of thrown in because there was supposed to be a volunteer house and there wasn't... so for those first two weeks [she lived in the Casa de Guaguas] I was just kind of thrown into the house. I didn't speak Spanish, it was really hard but at the same time it was really fun and I got to know the tias really well from that... you do feel like you're useful, you're doing something and they understand that and they say thank you for doing this everyday. Everyday when I leave they say thank you for being here you know. (Caroline)

The two tias that I did have an informal conversation with at this house related to me that they do in fact welcome the help of volunteers as there is always work to be done. However, they notice that volunteers integrate differently and stated that they have

more appreciation for those volunteers who integrate more completely in the lives of the tias and the children – in other words those who don't treat it just as a job. In fact, they recognize that volunteers are away from their families and take pride in caring for them, becoming their family away from home. Finally, they stated that they would prefer volunteers to stay for longer periods of time as it is like starting over each time one volunteer leaves and a new one arrives – especially if they do not speak Spanish – waiting to see how the new person will fit in

Trust of the directors

I have no way of knowing what the rapport between the directors and the staff of the different hogares was prior to the involvement of international volunteers. There have been volunteers at Hogar Esperanza in particular for long enough that most of the tias likely don't remember the relationship clearly either. However, whatever it was in the past, it seems possible that the volunteers serve as a reflection of distrust to the tias. Many volunteers felt that they were trusted by the director of the hogar to a much greater degree than the tias were, and several were uncomfortable with this.

[Integration with] the tias was actually a bit harder because they really sort of resented the volunteers, I think because Jorge is so open to us and so trusting of our ideas. We'll be, " hey Jorge can we take some money and take these kids to a museum"sure, and it's different for the tias. Jorge seems to trust the volunteers a lot and sometimes more than the tias. We're the ones that take them to dentist appointments and we're the ones that are asked to take them to birthday parties. (Molly)

And it's visible, so visible that I mean we had a lot of problems with how some of the tias were being treated ... not by the director personally but sort of their, what their deal was... you know I just thought there were some issues there and it's like people don't say anything, they're scared and they get treated badly. (Jen)

Whether fear of reprisals for voicing their opinions of volunteers is real or imagined, it seems clear that for the most part the tias are afraid to speak openly about this, and

perhaps many other, topics. Where they find agency is in manipulating the situation of the volunteer subtly, however they have no say as to what volunteers should do, or even if there should be a volunteer program at all.

The directors of the hogares are keen on having volunteers as it means extra help at a very low cost (among other reasons), but they do not seem to be relating this to their paid employees. Volunteers said such things as,

... what happens is the director's like "yeah that's a great idea". But the director's not there in the daytime. It's the tias who deal with the people arriving. The director in theory thinks it's a great idea, but... (Jen)

... but the tias are the way they are and I don't know, it's probably also the fault of the director because, she's a very nice woman and she's right to be nice but she should be more – she loves for us to be here but we don't get any support and that's strange. I don't have any idea how it can be improved. (Diana)

And it is not necessarily the case that the roles need to be changed. When I asked one volunteer if she felt the tias would like to reverse or alter their role, her response was that she felt that it was more that they would like to be consulted, given the opportunity to make a choice.

Help

I would argue that this organization does not fit into a “helping” or “development” paradigm, at least not in the way that they are discussed by authors such as Gronemeyer. For the most part those involved in the development of the organization, as well as the volunteers themselves, are aware of and discuss not wanting to come across as “northern” know-it-alls, and are conscious of the shared learning process that is occurring. However, it is in the volunteer relationship with the tias that this does start to fall apart.

For the most part, the experience was discussed in terms of the volunteers and the tias operating as two separate and distinct groups. The volunteers seemed to see themselves as very separate from the tias, in role and in ideology, and while I cannot speak with certainty for the tias, through observation and discussion, I would have to conclude that they felt very much the same way.

The tias mainly do the cooking and cleaning – though I am not implying by any means that they do not care for the children or interact with them. In fact the concern they have for the children is likely a big part of what problematizes their relationship with volunteers. Especially in both houses of Hogar Esperanza they do spend time with the children and very obviously cared for them, though unfortunately the amount of domestic chores they have means that the more demanding a child was the more attention they got, because the tias did not really have time to look around for the quiet one needing help. For the volunteers, the first job they cited when asked about their role, was to help the children with their homework. Also included in their job description, as the volunteers saw it, was to play with the kids, intervene in disagreements, drive kids to school, doctors' appointments, and birthday parties, and to generally spend time with them. In this way, the volunteers often discussed the tias as if they were a single entity, and the reverse seemed to also be true.

...some of the tias were like "the gringos are annoying me, they're bugging me", or "the volunteers, they're bugging me". And I asked "was it something I did?", "oh no no everything's fine with you". "Is it something this guy did?" "No no he's great too". I went through all the volunteers, and I got to this one and they were like "she's the one that bugs me a lot." So I said "wait wait wait because she's doing that you're blaming all of us. It took awhile to get out of that and then finally one day one of the tias was telling another, "You can't lump them altogether, it's not all of them." (Luke)

However, the fact that some personal relationships developed between tias and volunteers would indicate that the situation does not have to remain as such. Though they did not seem to see their roles as converging, there is in fact evidence that many volunteers believed that more effort needed to be put into creating relationships with the local staff. Even those who saw the tias as being the way they are, set in their ways and inflexible, reflected on the reasons for this, and for the most part were not blaming or judgmental. However it is a difficult relationship to develop and many of the volunteers did not have the language skills or did not stay long enough to improve the rapport. I believe however, that there would not be too far to go to actually begin to correct the imbalances between the volunteers and the tias, particularly as the motivation of most of the volunteers is to truly be helpful, not to come in and change things. One clue is that of the different places that the volunteers worked, those that worked in the Baby House seemed to have the easiest time with the tias. Babies need to be fed, changed, bathed and played with and these things appeared to be done in equal measure by every adult present.

Volunteers had strategies for getting to know and gain the respect of the tias. I have already discussed how many volunteers offered to assist them in their daily routines, and get to know them on a more personal level. Time spent at the hogar was also an issue.

As much as we were sort of given a time frame of 8:30 till 5:30 it was more like [stay] until what needs to get done gets done. I think they really resented like if at 6:30 you're reading one of the kids a story and then it's like oh it's 6:30 – bye. They [resent] that and I understand that. I think just helping doing the things that most people wouldn't want to do, like with the cleaning, things that weren't part of our responsibility. I think that they appreciated it (Jen)

... I was like no I'm doing that [sweeping the floor] and one of the tias was like "don't do that". That's why I'm here you know. If I can do something and they can do less chores then maybe they can focus more of their attention on the children and be nicer to them because they're not as stressed. (Amanda)

Some also suggested that the volunteer organization could do more to bridge the gap between the two groups, to make the tias more accepting of the volunteer program and the volunteers more aware of the role of the tias. For example,

The organization should call the attention of the volunteers to these problems and sensitize them more about the feelings of the people who work every day in the hogares. The organization could also integrate in a better way the volunteers. They often arrive without the tias being advised and nobody knows what to do. (Isabel)

One of the things we want to accomplish on this orientation week is to introduce volunteers, first to all the hogares to see what the other volunteers are also doing in other places. Also to introduce them to the tias, to say "look I'm going to be here working here with you, not like you're not going to be in the kitchen cooking and I'm going to be here and you're going to cook for me", that's not the point. You know we're going to work together to get these kids thinking. We just want to make the tias think, about the world, about their efforts, about many things they don't usually think about... (Rodrigo)

We talked to the director about [their relationship with the tias], and I talked with Luke. I don't know I think Voluntarios de la Esperanza [should] let the orphanage know, the orphanage should know why volunteers are here. I think this orphanage it's a problem for the tias that we're here. They don't even know why and that's maybe the job of Voluntarios de la Esperanza. (Diana)

However, is the point to merge their jobs or give mutual respect? In some ways it is very much like a marriage, in that what roles are taken by who is not as important as how much respect each task is given. There is evidence that the tias are comfortable in their roles, but uncomfortable in how they are represented vis-à-vis the volunteers. The children love the volunteers for the possibilities that they represent, and the energy that they come in with, but at the end of the day it is the tias who are there day in and day out through the major life events – who are in fact their parents. The children, however, are

normal children who do not always show appreciation the way they should, or even the way they feel it. Therefore it is up to the directors and the volunteer organization to make sure that the tias are respected members of the team.

There has been much discussion within the organization about how to create a cohesive team of foreign and Chilean volunteers. This will be discussed in more depth further on. However, I would propose that a priority should be to include the tias in the dialogue. If Voluntarios de la Esperanza is to truly succeed in its goals, it really can only be by working closely with everyone involved, and this includes the tias. Befriending them may create a better experience for the volunteers, and also for the children. However, it does not completely remove the element of having strangers imposed as house guests in their homes. A trusting environment needs to be created in which the women can fully participate in the decision making process without fear of reprisals, real or imagined, from their employer.

Chilean volunteers can help with the integration of international volunteers into the hogar.

It will definitely help, getting a Chilean volunteer, just to help us with the Spanish and then the girls will have more respect for us. (Diana)

They could also be a valuable link between the tias and the international volunteers and volunteer organization as they can be empathetic in both directions. As the gym painting incident shows, a Chilean volunteer was able to sympathize with the frustrated volunteers for being blocked in their attempt to do something that they thought could only be a benefit to both the tias and the children. He was also, however, to show how the tias perhaps feel unworthy and unrespected through the forced intrusion of volunteers.

Volunteer Tourism – The Larger Picture

On the surface the main aim of Voluntarios de la Esperanza is to recruit volunteers to work with children in a variety of children's homes in Santiago. However, the underlying, though clearly stated objective of Luke Winston, is to develop the notion of "global citizenship" through the creation of a network of volunteers around the world who have links to this organization. The more countries that are represented as volunteers the more global the organization becomes. While "global citizenship" is a trendy, if contentious term, bandied around in a wide variety of contexts, I believe that what he means by this is to generate in volunteers sensitivities of oneself and others outside the context of their "normal" life, in a manner that affects, hopefully positively, the choices the individual makes for the future.

To be successful in this objective it is necessary to generate a connection between the individual volunteer and VE. Generating a feeling of belonging to something, developing teamwork as a way of making the experience stronger, allows for a stronger organization, and as the application process evolves volunteers arrive more prepared to make this connection. Luke expressed that to date; the volunteers that he had a personal attachment with were more likely to maintain their involvement once they left.

One thing I've noticed is there's a lot of people that are still like "give me work to do. I want to help". But a lot of those people are the ones that I had a personal relationship with. Because initially I was Voluntarios de la Esperanza so only the ones that I had a direct relationship with were doing anything [after they returned home], whereas there were some that came that I didn't really see that often and they're... I haven't heard a word from them. So what we'd like to do is give them a relationship with the institution itself. (Luke)

So right now my one of my jobs is I do all the recruiting for the new, for VE. I deal with our web, our email correspondence that we've received, our applications process. We have a whole system to evaluate people, but it's one of our things. It's one of our questions, what makes a good volunteer? Is a good

volunteer someone who's going to come in and we say you do a,b,c,d, and they do it? Is that good or is it someone who's going to do more? And I don't know what the answer is. I don't know what we can expect of people. There's some people who go above and beyond, some people who do the bare minimum which in some ways is okay. (Jen)

Having volunteers arrive together in groups, and going through an orientation process is also meant to build this connection, between volunteers and between the volunteers and the organization. Experienced volunteers help newer volunteers integrate, volunteer meetings are held on a regular basis, and larger projects at different hogares or sports activities for the children bring volunteers together to work. Luke and Rodrigo even mentioned the possibility of creating things such as t-shirts as part of making volunteers feel like they belong to something. T-shirts, of course, would act as a form of advertisement for VE once the volunteer has returned home. In general, however, along with giving volunteers an experience that promotes a more open and tolerant viewpoint, promoting teamwork and a sense of belonging are done in hopes of expanding the visibility of volunteerism – particularly VE. One expectation is that the volunteer, once returned home, will do one or more presentations to community or school groups, through which there is the potential of volunteer recruitment or fundraising for VE.

Therefore, for Luke and others involved in the development of the volunteer organization, the continued involvement of volunteers after their time in Chile is as important as while they were there. While he had created an organization that was meant to facilitate the lives of the children that it touched, what the experience did for the volunteer was equally important. The ideal volunteer, in his view, is one that will devote themselves completely to both the hogar and VE while in Chile, and also have continued involvement once they return home, if not generating new volunteers for this

organization in particular, at least promoting notions of networks and volunteerism in general as an effective way to get things done; volunteer network as a means of promoting social awareness and change. However, through observations and interviews, it became clear that volunteers had varying viewpoints on this.

While the volunteer organization is attempting to create a structure that will maximize the involvement of the volunteer by generating a connection both to the organization and the hogar in which they work, ultimately each participant weaves their own place, their own rhythm of life, within the place that they work. This is not to say that they deny any responsibility to the volunteer organization, but rather each volunteer concludes for themselves what that responsibility is, how much they are willing to give. In other words, there was at least some tension between the objectives of the organization, and those of the individual volunteer. It is clear that the organization could be used as a way of arriving at the experience, and then ignored to give the bulk of volunteer energy to the children and the hogar.

Others viewed involvement with other volunteers and with VE as critical to the experience, part of what they were looking for when they came to Chile. Interestingly, some volunteers who had arrived prior to VE also felt this way. Because the organization was so new, several respondents were not aware of, or had not given much thought to how they would formally present this experience to others when they returned home. Others expressed that they would maintain involvement in support of the particular place that they worked.

I already, with my old [school] set up with them, they're actually giving now annually to here [the hogar]. They're doing a big drive that I'm still going to be a part of so I'm still going to have that aspect of it, to help fundraising for them. But I think it's just going to be the hardest, I mean such a different way of living.

I think that's really going to be hard to get used to, you know, not be able to walk down to the fruit stand from here. (Molly)

The format that we [with another volunteer] have is that we're going to show [Luke's] power point presentation first, which is Voluntarios de la Esperanza. And that's going to be like a ten minute show I think it is that he has with information about them. Then primarily [we] are going to focus on our own places because that's what we did while we were here. That's what's affected us. I don't really care all that much about Hogar Esperanza or to be honest the baby house. I don't know them. (Michelle)

Still others were keen to stay involved, to help promote the volunteer organization in their home country. At the same time though, many described how giving a slide show might promote awareness, but it would be almost impossible to explain the profound effect the experience had had on their personal world view.

Yeah, "oh look at my pictures" but my pictures had a lot more meaning to me than they did to others, understandably. I really only had like three weeks [before starting school] and so I think it was hard and emotional. It's the same as, always. Like in the beginning I was calling the orphanage everyday. I think the reason it was easier is that Luke and I were so close and he was immediately giving me work to do, so I felt connected the whole way. (Jen)

And while the application process is changing in an attempt to attract volunteers who see the importance of this continued networking, it is clear that it is impossible to predict what people will do.

I think there are cultural differences, having volunteers from all over the world, which play into different goals. Like for instance, there was this one volunteer she was amazing, amazing she was the ideal volunteer for the three months she was there, showed lots of signs for commitment for when she got home and then just like stepped off the face of this earth. Basically got caught up in other things. So if you would ask me was she a good volunteer I'd say you know what she was when she was there, she was amazing, we couldn't have asked for anything more. But you know I guess what Luke wants is someone who is going to be committed when they get home and you really can't know that till someone gets home. (Jen)

For some, in fact, the experience of returning home was one that they had already given thought to, both in terms of being able to make others aware of how they had been

“changed” by their experiences, and also in maintaining those changes for themselves as they became re-surrounded by their old life:

I think it's going to be very difficult for me. I think I could go back now and settle into my old life quite happily again, in my old habits, in my own concerns, but I don't want to do that. I mean if I go back now I'd have to get a job, like a shitty job. And I think it would be, because of my experience, no one I know has done something like this. So it would be really, I think I'd feel really lonely and unable to share... And that's really difficult, that's why I'm worried. You know your friends will be interested for like a week and then they'll be sick of hearing you talk about Chile. (Leah)

Last time it was nice for the first week and then it gets difficult again because you're coming from living outside to living back between four walls and doing stuff everybody does. And I find it really difficult, lonely. And also that part, not living together any more. And what people are talking about or worrying about, sometimes it sounds so stupid. These are things that I don't find important anymore, for them it's important but it's like I'm on another planet. (Kim)

I'm thinking a lot about how it will be when I'm back [home] because I left for three weeks. And the only thing I wanted, I didn't like travelling because the only thing I wanted was to go back to Santiago and be with the kids because I missed them. I think maybe it's about teaching because people know that the world can be bad, people don't have enough to eat. But they don't have somebody that tells them about an experience. They heard like kids... don't have parents you know, but if a person they know can tell them about the experience it's a lot more interesting. But I don't think it's difficult to tell them how it was. I think it's difficult, they will understand okay she did this, and it was like this but how does it feel to do this or how does it feel to leave [the children]. To really know you wanted to do more for them but you can't because you have to study, you can't be a volunteer all your life. I think they cannot understand this. (Sophie)

Many were clear on the changes that the volunteer experience had created for their future.

I don't want to work full time because I want to enjoy a little bit of life. I don't think money is that important and I don't have like a TV. or anything like that. I realize that I want to live more with people, not in my own house alone. Just spend more time with family and friends. I think I know just that for sure, I need that. Just the thing that you need money and you have to work. You have to work but not that much. Don't forget that you have friends and family. Spend time with them because that's the most important thing (Kim)

I've seen how much people like Daniela [the social worker] helps and how much, I mean people that really back up the organizations [hogares] from a legal point of view. That's sometimes what's most important. You could probably ask the

kids, they have no idea what Daniela does. But it's the behind the scenes people that can really give a lot. (Molly)

It definitely makes me see more I think. Especially living right outside a big urban city, I never really noticed the lives of these homeless children in the streets, you know. Or the women standing at the corner trying to sell a rose. Those are the people I never really took into account or thought about... I definitely think that an experience like this makes you realize that these people have lives. I think giving awareness would be the biggest thing. Just going and talking to people like at church or old schools or stuff like. Or companies. Just really try to make people aware, because I mean I'd never been aware. I knew that orphanages existed; I liked [Orphan] Annie when I was a little kid (laughing). (Molly)

Or as Rodrigo put it, though speaking about his experience in the United States,

It's weird because before I went to the States I was in my school, I was seventeen, sixteen turning seventeen. And of course I was always thinking about volunteering or helping others but still my mind was the issue of getting into university as soon as I finish school. I have to finish school, I have to get the best score and I have to get into university. I have to study then I have to work. And still even if my parents were or are really open minded, it wasn't enough. At least for me maybe I needed more, to really see what was going on. By going to the States for two years, meeting people from all over the world from, countries I didn't even know existed. I had a roommate from Africa, from Burkina Faso. I didn't know Burkina Faso was there in the map before and I basically slept next to him, you know, in the same room for a whole year. It was really shocking to us, amazing. One of the things maybe that motivated me the most was I couldn't really explain here what it was about [his experience in the States] to my family, to my siblings, to my neighbours, to my friends. I wanted to tell them look this place is amazing, these people are amazing. I spent Ramadan with Arab people and Christmas celebrated in 100 different ways. I wanted to tell somebody and I couldn't you know. (Rodrigo)

At the same time, through discussions of the reactions they received from others at home, prior to coming to Chile, it became clear that whether or not their friends and family were supportive of their volunteer travels, most volunteers did not believe that they could change the viewpoints of those around them at home.

I got pretty mixed, I got like, not "why would you volunteer" but actually "why can't you go make a difference while getting paid". My parents were the most supportive, you know "go and have a good time", etc. A bit of "why do you have to go away to volunteer why can't you do it here". I think if I lived here and

volunteered my commitment level would be lower because I created a life for myself in Chile that revolved around volunteering and here it would be harder to create that. It was a job but the commitment is different. (Jen)

My mother, she doesn't understand it, but she's not used to traveling and she doesn't like it either. So it's more like she thinks the problem is I have to find another job or something. She doesn't understand. My father is nice about it; he is supportive and always interested. I have friends who... aren't doing these kinds of things... I think, I talk to my friends, they love to hear about how it's going, they're starting to get interested... (Kim)

However, while most volunteers were happy to share their experiences with others on their return home, they were very uncomfortable with the idea of trying to raise funds, either for the hogar or for VE. The reasons for this were two-fold. On the one hand VE is a small, unknown organization, and therefore difficult to present in a way that potential donors could trust. As well many volunteers had received financial support themselves from friends and family to travel to Chile, and so did not want to go back asking for more.

I will continue to help the hogar and the organization via an open channel for resources, information, and physical, less-likely monetary, for as long as they are interested in my participation. My motivation can be maintained through semi-regular updates about the organization and the hogar where I worked in emails or a newsletter. Being contacted by the volunteers or representatives of VE also keeps me aware of VE. (Rachel)

... everyone that you ask for a donation from, or got donations from, to come here are friends and family. I really hate to ask friends and family for money. It's probably the worst thing is that you feel obligated to ask them in some ways...[I will] be giving a presentation, just a small presentation in a local facility... I'm hoping to draw some people. I hope more than anything else that we'll draw younger people who might come here and do this. Ideally I would like to think that it wasn't about the money [the presentation at home]. But at this stage because as an organization we need money, I'm pretty sure the main, Luke's main hope is the monetary income that will be gained. (Michelle).

Two other discussions came up at times through interviews, also on the topic of money, that are important to mention briefly here. Though the administration costs of this organization are to date very minimal, it does take funds to operate. At the time I

conducted research, Luke himself was working completely voluntarily, in that he was not drawing any sort of salary or stipend from the organization. Of course, this cannot be maintained forever, and there was apparently debate as to when and how much of a salary he should draw. As I only discussed this with Luke and with Jen I cannot in any way represent what individual volunteers felt about the subject. The only comment that I can reasonably make, is that for the organization to continue eventually someone will have to be paid as a full time coordinator. However, since they do not charge, and do not want to charge, applicants a fee for volunteering²², the money for this will have to come from fundraising efforts. The other debate that came up regarding fundraising, that did involve opinions on the part of volunteers, however, is that the presentations that volunteers do on their return home, are potential sources of fundraising. The debate, however, is whether or not those funds should go to the organization, for its operating expenses, or to the hogares to be put to direct use for the children.

Volunteerism in Chile by Chileans

In whatever ways Chile was ever defined as a “third world” country, it certainly does not seem to be classified as such any more. Many of the larger development agencies, including CIDA²³, have pulled their support out of Chile because economically the country is considered to be doing very well. It became apparent to me, however, that many people in Chile are working for far less than a living wage, many piecing together income from several different sources. Then there are others who seem to have a much easier time making ends meet. However, to some degree any poverty seems to be hidden,

²² Other organizations charge fees to volunteers that are used to pay the salaries of permanent employees, run orientations, and to cover other administration costs.

²³ Canadian International Development Agency

in that it is generally not evident watching people in the street what socio-economic class they belong to. There are also increasing numbers of individuals who are returning to Chile now, from somewhere in the north, where they lived during Pinochet's rule. It was in fact difficult to find anyone in Chile who did not have a connection of some sort to the north; even if it was someone they considered a godparent to their child. I sensed a bit of resentment of Chileans towards those who had left during the dictatorship and were now returning with all their "western wealth" to buy up property and "lead the good life". This is one aspect of the social climate that I and many of the volunteers that I interviewed were met with on arriving in Chile.

This then brings me back to the 4% volunteer rate that I was able to convince both myself, and most of the volunteers, exists in Chile. When I brought this issue up in interviews I generally received one of two responses. Volunteers had either not considered this issue, or they had thought about it and come to the same conclusions – Chileans just do not participate in volunteer work. Reasons for this are few, though diverse, and included such things as poverty being hidden so people are not aware of the issues. Volunteers made statements such as,

.... I always tell people that Santiago is a city that lies to you; you get this really comfortable feeling... (Luke)

Like I told you before this is a whole new world that I found out about. You start realizing how things work and sometimes you don't really like it... bureaucracy is...people are used to dealing with papers rather than other people. And you kind of get upset. You want to change the program... So that's our whole problem. But you start realizing there are ways you can help you know. And I believe this whole volunteer thing helps in bringing people together...basically, I have no knowledge about society. When I first arrived here and I found out I could help, I was thinking about going to the Hogar and working with the children. I found out a whole new world I didn't know about in Chile. Because people don't know how it works, how the children live, if they have food or if they don't. (Rodrigo)

The class issue in Chile is a major part of this. The wealthy, who probably have more time, money, resources for volunteer work likely don't do it because they would have to acknowledge deeper injustices in their society---which in some ways they uphold. The poor don't have the luxury of time, money and resources because they are struggling to make their way. Americans generally are wealthier, and have to do less in order to be so which affords them time, money, and resources... Volunteering also is coherent with the Christian-dominant mentality which underlies our more puritan cultural values. (Rachel)

Also cited, was the strong sense of family ties within Chilean society meaning that individuals spent their free time with their families, not working to improve the lives of strangers.

It might be different for me being an American because the second people hear just like "America's helping people" (laughing)... but I think it definitely does, cause I mean a lot of students here don't even know about the possibility to go [volunteer] (Molly)

As well, with university education being both important and highly competitive, young people needed to sacrifice many other activities for education.

There is another thing in Chile, which I experienced last year, is that the system... for going to university doesn't really allow you to do other things. Whereas in the States, for example, you graduate from school and then you may take one or two gap years and then go to college. Because you get accepted and then you can, you know delay it. But here, for example... I'm going to study medicine now, and medicine is a career that demands a lot of preparation for the SAT test here, which is called BSU. So basically last year the second half of the year I had to study a lot, for that. If I didn't have to, if I knew I could do it maybe one year later I could have come and lived here for example or lived at the volunteer house and I could have been a full time volunteer, but because I had to prepare for my test I had to be at the university. (Rodrigo)

I mean like if you just look at the college application process, he (Rodrigo) got a high enough score so he's a med student. But you think a doctor should be a compassionate person...and he is, I've seen that but they didn't care about [him] as a student. (Luke)

Moreover, Chile exiting a long dark dictatorship has lead, in democracy, to individuals wanting to work more for themselves, their material and social life, and there was a perception that with time, concern for others would again build.

Like young people now of nineteen years old were born in the dictatorship, like in my case I was lucky enough to have parents who didn't stay calm and didn't shut their mouth you know, but a lot of people did. (Rodrigo)

There was a Chilean woman and she was looking for a volunteer position in our place and it was all set. She was going to come and be a volunteer and everyone was kind of excited. We're pretty sure the reason she never showed up, is that a lot of people here use volunteering as a means to get hired eventually. If they're already there and a position opens up then they will get hired because they know the place. So we're pretty sure that she went around to a couple of other places and then when she found one that was more likely to hire her sooner she went there. It was more a selfish thing which is, I mean you got to do what you got to do to survive, but it was just kind of interesting. (Michelle)

In fact, one of the main objectives of VE is to work to increase the visibility of the notion of volunteering in Chile by Chileans, alongside and perhaps leading the groups of international volunteers. They would like to reach a point where one-third of the volunteers are coming from Chile. This idea was presented to me in my first meeting with Luke, and pervaded my thoughts throughout the research until it became part of the research itself. For this reason, not everyone I interviewed was asked questions about Chilean volunteering, but later in the process it became a common theme, and one in which I have to admit that I may have helped to mis-lead my informants. "Why don't Chileans volunteer" I would ask, and inevitably, for those who had an answer, they would answer with some or many of the points on the above listed reasons. My thoughts and the responses of my informants quickly became very predictable, but not very satisfying. Every single reason given was a valid one, but could also be applied to many other countries (such as Argentina), which I had come to believe had higher rates of volunteerism.

Spending a year in Chile; it was in fact easy to believe that Chileans don't participate in volunteer work. And it was apparently easy for many of my informants to

believe this as well. Most Chileans I knew work long hours to pay the bills, leaving little time for non-paid work. And it is true that education is taken very seriously by most, seen as the key to a bright economic future. According to Rodrigo, there is no possibility for a Chilean student to take a gap year to travel and /or volunteer. With the current economic and political stability that the country is experiencing, there also appeared to be little understanding of the poverty that still exists within the country. As already stated, it was often difficult to accurately distinguish an individual's economic status just through observation of people in the street. If poverty and other social suffering are masked, I would have to assume that there is little motivation to become involved. International aid organizations are pulling out of Chile, adding to the illusion of equalized affluence. At the same, I also noticed a seeming lack of direct compassion by many for the less well off members of society.

This is not to say people do not do anything for those in need. In fact the impulse to give money to people begging in the streets appeared far more common than I have ever witnessed in most places I have traveled. Also, many of the larger social work agencies have agreements with grocery store chains in that consumers can opt to give their residual change to the organization.²⁴ And in fact, every December, a national telethon raising money for organizations working with the physically disabled, seems to involve every citizen in the country on some level and raises enormous amounts of money each year. However, I don't recall ever speaking to any Chileans who spoke of participating in volunteer work. And in fact, when speaking of tragedies that occurred, if the victims were poor many would refer to the tragedy being a result of their choice of

²⁴ This works very well in the monetary system of the country as "change" often consists of many small, almost worthless coins—virtually useless and therefore not missed by an individual but when added up and donated will provide a substantial chunk of money to the social organization.

way of life. I had more than one house fire explained to me in these terms. However, I took this to be part of a mechanism of fear that seems to exist almost everywhere in modern society, the defensive belief that if one lives well and follows “the rules” one will be safe, or in other words – not poor.

As part of an attempt to attract Chilean volunteers, Rodrigo, on behalf of VE, approached a social work program at a local university, presenting the possibility of volunteering as a means of gaining experience. In February, thirty-two students had signed up, but a few weeks later more than half had dropped out, and of those that remained only a few were considered to be putting in a regular effort. There was some perception of Chileans choosing to volunteer as a foot in the door for a specific job. This is completely possible, and not all that unusual approach, people seeking volunteer work as a means of helping themselves in some way. In any event, all of this discussion and reflection combined into an assumption that volunteering is not a culturally valued practice in Chile, and a question of whether this is because the issues are hidden and unknown, or hidden and therefore easy to ignore.

Therefore in follow-up internet and library research, imagine my surprise when I came across the master’s thesis done by Sebastian Zulueta Azócoa in 2003 promoting just the opposite idea. Based in both quantitative and qualitative research his writing shows that there is a strong history of volunteering among Chileans. According to his study about 30 percent of Chileans participate in volunteer work of some type, in fact the largest percentage in Latin America, and also the largest percentage in the so-called developing world.

So why are there discrepancies between perceived levels of volunteerism and the actual rates at which it occurs? There are many factors that could account for this. In fact, it is important to consider how many times Chilean volunteers have been mentioned just in the scope of this thesis. As the founder of Hogar Esperanza and its main fundraiser, Jorge definitely worked as a volunteer in the beginning, if not now. Whatever personal reasons motivated him to do so, the process that it took him to create the home, find the funding, and help the children that he helps, would I think have him counted as a volunteer. And as I have no information to prove otherwise, I have to imagine that Norma also works on a voluntary basis at Hogar San Roque. Her sister and brother also help her out, unpaid, with the home and the children as needed. Many Chilean volunteers not related to VE showed up or were referred to in several of the homes. In fact, there was a woman in my neighborhood in Valparaiso who was operating a Saturday afternoon program to prepare children for kindergarten. It was not until she stopped the program due to lack of interest on the part of the community that I realized she was doing this of her own volition with no paycheck attached. It is clear, therefore, that volunteerism is not unknown in Chile, and rather there must be issues of recognition or definition. Zulueta-Azócar brings up many of these issues in his research. Therefore, though it is very difficult to develop precise statistics on volunteering, it seems that my “facts”, wherever I obtained them, were drastically wrong.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

This thesis has been based in a discussion of volunteerism through reflection on one particular organization that arranges for volunteers from around the world to work in several children's homes in Santiago. Analysis of this process has been done in terms of the motivations of the volunteer organization, and the volunteers themselves, along with the relationships they have with the children, the tias, and the hogares that they work with. It is clear that individuals participate in volunteer tourism as a means to travel, but more importantly to fulfill a personal need or goal for their own lives. The important question then becomes, particularly because it is children who are the recipients of the volunteer effort, is the experience also truly helpful.

While there was some discussion regarding positive and negative changes that occur in the hogares, with the tias and the children, as a result of the presence of volunteers, whether they be Chilean or from somewhere else, creating fundamental changes in Chilean children's homes is not the focus of this organization. In fact, many volunteers talked about searching out this experience, not to in any way change things in another place, but rather as a means of exploring something for themselves, while at the same time doing something to benefit someone else. The goal of the volunteer project is to develop the volunteer, to expand their view of the world in a manner that positively influences their choices in the future. In answering questions regarding the motivations to volunteer many responded along the lines of wanting to experience another way of life or learn another language, that volunteering at "home" is okay to help someone, but perhaps does not have the same enriching effect, does not encourage personal growth in the same way. Perhaps in this way many volunteers who go away for a short or long

term intensive volunteer experience (and maybe this is true for people who travel at all) are looking for a reflection of themselves or to understand their own society better, by looking in from the outside. At the same time though, motivations were not completely egoist. Out of the infinite number of opportunities available for international travel and volunteer tourism these individuals made a conscious choice of this project as fitting to their own skills and abilities, as a place where they could be helpful. In other words, while something pushed them to explore the world, there were particular aspects of this particular work environment or volunteer organization that pulled them to it.

The world is very much in motion, and living very close to the airport in Montreal I am reminded daily to what extent. Business, people, ideas and things are increasingly moving across borders. This includes volunteers. From an academic standpoint, there is an increased understanding that knowledge of languages and cultures are ever more important, in fact this is one reason that many of the volunteers chose to travel. And though I had not previously considered it, there is certain validity in bringing the world to those who do not have the opportunity to go out and see it, as long as a process of reciprocity, of what McIntyre calls “paradigm sharing” is maintained – that the volunteers recognize that the children and the tias, among others, are bringing the world to them as well.

Of course, this does not mean that the question of power imbalances in any way disappears. The volunteer organization has the power to choose where to work, to implicate themselves in their choice of projects, to retreat if they don’t like what is happening, and even to choose who can volunteer, based on their own criteria, which may be different from the criteria a hogar might choose. For their part the volunteers

also, if only through being able to make the choice to travel, are situated at an unfair advantage. And using volunteer work as a language school serves to reinforce this. Volunteers are there because they want to be, and though the tias, and even the children, can make their lives difficult when they wish to, they cannot make the volunteers go away. In other words, the volunteers have more freedom to speak openly, while the tias need to find more subtle means of expressing their opinions or frustrations. In order to be truly helpful then, volunteers need to be highly conscious of this as they go about their daily routines and attempt to develop relationships.

Voluntarios de la Esperanza is still a relatively new organization that is continually evolving and it is very important, in fact critical if it is going to be completely successful in its goals, not to integrate the tias into the objectives of the organization, but rather integrate the organization into the routines of the tias. For many reasons, not the least of which is that the tias had no part in inviting the volunteers into their lives, the responsibility to do this lies squarely on the shoulders of the organization and its volunteers. To date most of the hogares have operated with a hierarchical structure within which the tias have generally been on the bottom rung, and it became apparent that the directors put more trust in the transient volunteer than they do in the permanent staff. And while a case could be made that in this respect these women have rarely been listened to in terms of their work, through the volunteers this becomes more obvious.

In saying this I don't mean to be critical of Chile or these hogares in isolation, as I could have very justifiably written this thesis on the place of children and foster families in the child welfare system as it operates in Canada. The point is that in general, at least in my own past experience and research, those who work on the front-lines with children,

who probably have the greatest insight in terms of their needs and their care, are allowed the least amount of input. I believe my research shows this to be true in this case as well. While the volunteers and I were able to discuss their relationships with the tias in terms of how they interpreted them, it obviously would be more profitable to have it come from the tias themselves. In this way, instead of assuming what the tias want, or not, to be included in, it could be known. It is true that what it might take to be heard is just to speak up, however power relations, real or imagined, make this a difficult thing to do. It is also true that for the tias to become involved in this way will add another responsibility to their already heavy workload, and this would have to be in some way acknowledged and responded to. While the volunteer organization is doing a great deal to facilitate the connection between children and between hogares, it could do even more by developing a true trusting relationship between itself and the tias. Some of the volunteers do develop relationships with the tias; however more steps need to be taken to actually create a network.

By opening up a trusting environment, such as Janet McIntyre discusses, that allows the viewpoint of everyone to be heard, the tias would have the freedom to speak, which can do no harm in the lives of the children, and can only help to improve the relationship with the volunteers, not to mention enhancing the care given to the children by all involved. At the same time, this type of dialogue could generate a situation in which individual volunteers have a much clearer idea how to really be helpful. One means of developing these relationships is potentially through the increased involvement of Chilean volunteers. It has become apparent that contrary to what I chose to believe, there is in fact an ethic of volunteering in Chile. Therefore, rather than try to promote the

notions of volunteerism, VE needs instead to promote their own project. Luke and Rodrigo stated that in fact they would eventually like to have about one-third of the volunteers be from Chile, with the rest being from very diverse parts of the world. As already stated, Chilean volunteers could become the link to stronger relationships within the hogares, as they can understand the perspective of tias and volunteers.

However, while it is important that the volunteers recognize this power imbalance that exists between themselves and the tias, there is another group that is particularly vulnerable, and that is the children. They were brought into the world, presumably without their consent, and through no fault of their own the structure and events of their young lives have required they live away from their family, in a hogar. Prior to conducting this research, I was convinced that while having volunteers, whether local or from afar, was perhaps helpful in day to day routines with the children, the long term effects of revolving door volunteers could be potentially more damaging than it would be worth. In other word, while an international experience might be helpful to the volunteer in their own lives, the effects on the children could be “helpful” at best. However, through conversation and observation, I would have to say that in this particular setting this is not the case. For the most part the tias provide a stable source of care for the children, especially in homes like Hogar Esperanza where the staff has remained fairly constant for years.

The fact remains that with the limitation of funds experienced by the hogares, together with the number of children in the home, the tias have neither enough hands nor hours to do all that needs to be done. For any child, there are adults who come and go from their life, they get a new teacher, relatives and family members move away. Or

perhaps the child themselves has to move. The children in the hogar are no different. They have already dealt with the loss of their family, on one level or another. With the constant of the local staff in their lives, the children can cope with volunteers moving on, especially as it means extra help and attention for them in both the short and the long term. Again, the responsibility is plainly in the hands of the volunteers, who know that they will be leaving, to ensure that the relationship is appropriate in this light. However, it is evident that the children benefit from having more helping hands around.

This is a thesis about volunteering with children in Chile. Because of the central focus of the thesis it can seem as if volunteers are the central focus of life in Chilean hogares. However, this is simply not the case – the lives of the children and the local staff are so much more than the sum of the volunteers who pass through. I have been analyzing my interviews and observations through a framework of helping and altruism in terms of how these volunteers situate their own experiences, how they weave their personal objectives with helping others, the goals of the volunteer organization with their own needs. At the same time, I am aware that because most of the volunteers, at the time of my research at least, are crossing borders from north to south in order to volunteer, their discourse becomes a center of critique – analyzed for any echo of colonialism or condescension.

Through the research and writing process I was asked, more than once, if I was critiquing the words of the volunteers enough in terms of the above implications. Are there ethnocentric statements in the words of the volunteers? Of course there are, how could there not be if we accept that each individual is a reflection of their own life experiences. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to reflect on these ideas. Two factors

come to mind. The first is that, as stated, the volunteers are only one part of the entire routine of the hogares. At the same time, I realize that through my experience in orphanages and children's homes in various countries and with group homes and foster care in Canada, I have gained a very broad perspective of what happens to abandoned children, in many contexts. Certainly governments, institutions, and individuals deal with these issues in varying ways, but there are some commonalities between systems. The point that takes on relevance here is what happens, generally, to children when they are not able to live with their families.

My experience tells me that often the needs of the children are the last to be considered in the decisions that are made about their lives. No matter how well it is run, a children's home is rarely the same as a family home. This is especially evident in the numbers of people who come in and out, and the reasons they have for doing so. Psychologists, social workers, government officials, health inspectors, funders, prospective adoptive families, the guy from down the road who feels like giving his visiting relatives a tour. In Romania, a child's move to another orphanage was often determined through a ten minute evaluation done by a total stranger. And even a rumor of a pending inspection caused a flurry of cleaning, washing, and laying out decorative doilies. Meals were delayed so there would be no mess. Once, when the inspectors actually showed up, more than an hour late, they complimented the staff on the physical state of the rooms and made no comment at all about the obviously hungry children waiting for their non-existent lunch.

In Morocco I once witnessed government officials from the United Arab Emirates march into an orphanage and, as if they were apples, pick children based on appearance

alone, to take back to their country to be adopted by waiting families. The uneducated, underpaid women working in the home had to fight, and fight hard, as some of these children had parents they were meant to return to. I remember being shocked once in a home in the Dominican Republic when I realized that I was in a room with twenty-five toddlers, who were awake but so lacking in energy due to malnourishment that you could hear a pin drop. It wasn't until much later that I realized it was potentially more shocking that I'd gained entry solely because I was a friend of the local Peace Corps volunteer. In Canada, though we do not have orphanages, similar types of events occur. Once a child enters foster care, they can be bounced around based on the decisions of strangers. Social workers show up unannounced, or make appointments with children and families and then show up hours late or with several of their colleagues.

While some of the above incidents represent the extremes of what can happen, they do signify the kinds of attitudes that arise when dealing with abandoned children. Framing the experiences and the words of the volunteers in the larger context of children's lives, I believe, shows that though the volunteers are there for a relatively short time, their intent and their effect on the children are positive, especially when evaluated against the motivations of the many other people who come and go. Put another way, although volunteers, wherever they are from, may have personal goals that in part explain their presence; they are also truly intending to look out for the needs of the children, trying to help. I'm not sure that the same could be said about many of the other random visitors, who may be showing up as just another part of their job.

In the end, it is clear that the motivations and involvement of the volunteers that I interviewed lie somewhere on the continuums of helping and altruism talked about in

Chapter 2. Something pushes the individual to leave home, and for whatever reason they choose a particular volunteer experience. Learning another language or something about the world is a large part of that motivation and can certainly go a long way to help the future of the volunteer. When done in an open and sensitive manner in which every individual's ideas are given equal value, it can generate true help for others at the same time. Volunteers go home changed in some manner, though in what ways and for how long is dependant on the individual. Relationships are developed with children in a manner that constitutes true help. Networks are created between volunteers certainly, between hogares to some extent, and, optimistically, they will develop between the volunteers and the staff.

The research for this thesis took place in Chile, specifically in Santiago, and therefore is framed within the context of the social, economic, and political structures of Chilean society. However, in the end it is really a thesis about volunteerism – particularly international volunteerism. Because it involves middle class and wealthy individuals crossing borders to help those who are considered less fortunate in some way, I am well aware that from an academic moralistic perspective that it takes on an air of colonialist attitude: “we” will go to civilize “them”. At the particular moment that I did my research however, this is not what was happening. As already stated, Luke Winston and VE are building on the ideas of the director of a hogar, not imposing ideas from outside, and to automatically assume that such an organization can only be analyzed through a negative lens of “development”, speaks, I think, as much to the attempt of anthropology to refute its own history than a critical reflection of what is actually happening.

As anthropologists we critique such institutions as religions, governments, and development organizations, for stereotyping and controlling the “other”. All along though, we are attempting to label people - fit them into theories – theories searching for scientific “facts”. Is fortifying an academic “truth” that involves categorizing and labeling people who likely will never read what is written and have little ability to change what is written about them more reasonable or valid than any of the above named groups? Does it present any more of a truth?

Volunteerism and helping are increasingly attracting academic concern. People are traveling, participating in volunteer tourism. In some contexts it is becoming almost a rite of passage for youth. In fact it seems that, whatever you read, whoever you discuss these issues with, those who travel are caught between the proverbial rock and the hard place. Those who travel to experience the world first hand outside the boundaries of their own country, especially if they intend to be helpful, are automatically perpetuating the imperialistic behaviors of the colonial past. To travel for vacation is abusive to the “natives” and the environment. To stay at home though is to be narrow minded, blinded to the injustices of the world, numbed by the status quo into accepting everyday experience as “normal”, perpetuating global injustices through ignorance. So how are we to understand the world? Clearly watching CNN and randomly surfing the internet are not a reliable means of gaining a balanced world view.

The fact is that the volunteers working for Voluntarios de la Esperanza can cross borders to work with people who cannot do the same thing reciprocally, whether or not they want to. Because of this there is an inherent imbalance in power relations between volunteers and local staff and children. As the volunteer organization becomes larger and

stronger, it is imperative that the organizers and the volunteers maintain their awareness of these issues. It is a very real danger that the project could become so much about the organization that the original goals and ideals, generated by a Chilean, will be lost. Scheper-Hughes tells us that anthropologists need to be actively involved in what they are researching, particularly when lived experience of the people being studied is the result of political, social, and economic injustice. It is important to take a stand, try to effect change. I question, however, how this is possible if the automatic assumption is that people crossing borders – perhaps including anthropologists – are up to no good.

At the same time though, as Chile moves along the same path as many other nations in the world, away from family and community based solutions to caring for children whose parents cannot, volunteers – whether from the same country or not - become a very necessary component in the system. If it is true that modernizing means changing the way that abandoned children are thought of and contended with, it is also true that this is the result of global inequalities generated at the level of the state, not because of a handful of volunteer tourists trying to have a positive effect on someone else at the same time as doing something for themselves. In my own experience with children and the systems that frame their lives in a variety of countries – including Canada – I have witnessed many ideologies, some seemingly strange events. There seems to me to be two overriding commonalities however. One is that the day to day care of children when not with their parents, whether in daycare or permanent care tends to be underpaid and under-respected work, therefore left to those who have few other options for employment. The second is that seldom do governments increase resources to those providing care for children, as either the numbers of children in care increase, or the cost

of caring for them rises. Therefore, it can only be a benefit to the children involved, and the society within which they will live when they grow up, to encourage volunteer involvement. Salamon and Sokolowski, Dreessen Zulueta-Azócar, and the World Values Survey all show that there is a global trend in terms of volunteerism: people with higher income and education are more likely to participate in volunteer work. Therefore it would seem that whether or not the volunteers in these children's homes come from within or outside of Chile, they will to a certain extent be from another culture. If wealth and education leads to the risk of "civilizing" and "educating", then this can also be the case when volunteers are from the same country.

Again from my own experience, and also from looking at the list of countries that have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a "western" model of children's rights and needs is manifesting itself around the globe. This is at best problematic, at worst disastrous, but this debate is a topic for another thesis. The question, therefore, as this research points to is not where the volunteers come from, but rather the intent they come with. If the intention and the reality is to truly work to help the children involved, and it is recognized that to do that everyone, especially the paid staff in the hogares who ultimately know the children best, needs to be involved in determining a viable plan for raising the children, then it is help. The best solution would be to correct inequalities so that there is no need for children's homes. But until that happens, volunteers, in borrowing from Scheper-Hughes, provide a 'good enough' solution.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

When did you arrive in the Chile/ the children's home

How long have you/ will you be spending here

Is this your first experience in international volunteering

Is this your first experience in volunteering

How did you find and arrange to do this volunteer experience

What in your background do you believe would have given you the impulse to search for such an experience

How does being connected through an organization such as Esperanza help you in this experience

Why do you think that people look for this kind of experience (for example, few people take time out from work/education to volunteer in their own country)

What effect do you think that having international volunteers has on the operation of the home/on the staff that work in the home

What effect do you think that having international volunteers has on the children in the home (positive/negative)

What is the most positive aspect of volunteering in this kind of an environment

What is the biggest challenge

What would you change about the experience if you could

What benefit do you see this experience having for your future

What will you do with the knowledge/experience/perspective that you gain while volunteering in Chile

Appendix 2

E-mail interview survey

Background Information

Name:

Age:

City and country that you are from:

Educational Background: (ie finished high school; university major in, etc.)

When did you arrive in Chile?

When did you begin working at the Hogar (ie. did you travel first or jump right in)?

Which Hogar did you volunteer in?

How long did you spend volunteering at the Hogar?

Was this your first experience volunteering?

Was this your first time volunteering outside your home country?

How did you find and arrange to take part in this volunteer work?

What do you believe gave you the impulse to search for such an experience? What were your specific reasons for volunteering in Chile?

Why, in general, do you think people look for this kind of experience (ie. few people take time out from work/education to volunteer full time in their own country)?

What was the reaction that you received from friends, family, and others when you made the decision to spend time volunteering in Chile?

The Volunteer Experience

What do you see as the pros and cons of being involved with an organization like Voluntarios de la Esperanza? (If you are one of the volunteers who found your way to this volunteer experience through another route, what do you think has changed through the creation of a volunteer organization?)

How did you find the integration process within the home with the children? With the Tia's? What do you think that Voluntarios de la Esperanza does or could do to help with the integration of new volunteers?

What effect do you think that having volunteers (international and Chilean) has on the children both while you are there and when you leave? If you think that there is any negative effect how could it be improved or eliminated)?

What do you see your role as a volunteer in a Chilean Hogar to be.

Did you live in the Hogar or elsewhere? How do you think that this affected your experience as a volunteer?

What is the most positive thing about volunteering in this kind of environment? What is the biggest challenge? What would you change about the experience if you could?

In Chile 4% of people participate in some sort of volunteer work, very low when compared to North America or other countries in the region. Do you have any ideas or insights as to why this would be?

Back Home (or somewhere else anyway!)

What have you gained through this experience? What do you feel you may have given up to spend time at this volunteer work?

What has your reintegration into your home society been like (if that is where you have gone)?

What will you do with the knowledge/experience/perspective that you gained while volunteering in Chile? What effect do you see it having on your future?

Will you continue to help either the Hogar or Voluntarios de la Esperanza? If so in what capacity? Now that you have returned home and to the rest of your life how can your motivation for this be maintained? What can the organization do to help keep the motivation of former volunteers?