Chapter 7
Post–War Tourism in the Reconciliation Process of New Zealand Vietnam War Veterans

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has the potential to act as a positive force in reconciliation efforts between countries. The basis of tourism in facilitating reconciliation is premised on people coming into contact with one another in non-adversarial settings, which support a higher probability that positive effects can result from this contact. The investigation on post-war tourism and its role in moving the reconciliation process forward has been limited. Since the Vietnam War ended, there has been a growing phenomenon of Vietnam War veterans returning to visit Vietnam. This chapter examines the impact of New Zealand Vietnam veterans' visits to post-war Vietnam on the reconciliation process with the Vietnamese and with self.

INTRODUCTION

The emotional and physical trauma caused by acts of perceived wrong-doing and traumatic events such as war serves as an impetus for people to seek reconciliation with self and others. The complexity of reconciling relationships within a post-war context centres on the psychological as well as sociological elements that can either support or block the reconciliation process. Tourism as a facilitator of reconciliation is premised on the idea that people coming into contact with one another in non-adversarial settings supports a higher probability that positive effects can result from this contact (Moufakkir & Kelly, 2010). The positive effect of contact in a tourism setting can serve as a catalyst for the development of strategies that addresses past conflicts (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006). In addition, the growth of trust, as well as improved intergroup relations and attitudes from these tourism contacts, may facilitate the reconciliation process among the affected intergroups at the individual level (Hayes & McAllister, 2001).

Intergroup contact is an essential element for reconciliation initiatives, but there are challenges for this contact to occur in a post-war context (Freeman, 2012). There has been a lack of research which investigates tourism and its role in moving the post-war reconciliation process forward. Building upon the conceptualization of reconciliation and previous research on contact theory as well as the collected data on the New Zealand Vietnam War veterans, this chapter provides a clearer understanding of tourism's impact on the post-war reconciliation process.

BACKGROUND

Reconciliation

People and institutions are motivated to reconcile for a variety of reasons, including the desire to continue a relationship, the need to reach psychological peace and/or moral reasons (Dwyer, 2003). Bar-Siman-Tov (2004) also raises the need for reconciliation when societies are involved in a conflict, in which widely shared attitudes and beliefs support adherence to the conflictive goals, maintain the conflict, and delegitimize the opponent. He believes that without reconciliation, there is less possibility for peaceful resolution and development of peaceful relations.

The advancement of reconciliation involves a "long-term process that consists of a multitude of initiatives and stages, where progress is an accumulation of small steps addressed at the individual–interpersonal, local, societal, and state levels" (Kosic & Tauber, 2010, pp. 83-84). A multitude of barriers may impede the post-conflict reconciliation process between groups and individuals. Elder (1998) deemed that for reconciliation to progress between those engaged in war, they must first begin by acknowledging the harm they inflicted upon their enemy. Taking responsibility for causing harm towards their enemy is in itself problematic. If both sides believe their cause is righteous, this will likely serve as justification to the harmful acts they carried out to further their agenda thus stalling the process of forgiveness and reconciliation (Branscombe & Miron, 2004). Even in cases when group members accept responsibility for harm-doing, they may still reason that committing this harmful action was necessary (Branscombe & Miron, 2004).

When feelings of collective anxiety arise from group threat, these feelings can motivate in-group members to become more protective of their own actions that in turn further validates their own negative behaviour towards the out-group (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). Therefore, the in-group's negative perceptions of the out-group might lead to a greater willingness for them to forgive their own in-group for its aggressive actions against the out-group (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). Large-group enmity can raise feelings of group belongingness that causes group identity to become more important than the identity of the individual. In addition, large-group enmity may increase the need to provide a clearer distinction between one's own group and the enemy group (Volkan, 1999a). Specific to war, practices may be enacted to help maintain a separate identity from the enemy and to insure that a psychological border is kept between the groups regardless of cost. When these practices fail to separate the identity of groups in conflict, mass anxiety may occur that increases intergroup hostility (Volkan, 1999b). Furthermore, the presence of emotions such as hate, contempt and disgust can lead to intergroup avoidance making it more challenging for positive intergroup contact to occur (Feddes, Mann, & Doosje, 2012).

Post-war reconciliation is hindered by the dehumanization that occurs between war adversaries. The enemy becomes dehumanized as it makes it easier to engage in violence against those who are not like

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