International Scholarship Programs and

Home Country Economic and Social Development:

Comparing Georgian and Moldovan Alumni Experiences of "Giving Back"

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to scholarship grantees – those who participated in this research, those with whom I have worked, and those I teach. I salute your efforts to improve yourselves, help others, and contribute to both your countries and the world. I continue to be inspired by you.

Abstract

International higher education scholarships have been viewed as effective tools for the development of low- and middle-income countries. The implied logic is that a country's top students gain knowledge overseas and return to "give back" to their home countries, thereby spurring economic and social change. Despite the growth of these programs, there is little research on whether and why the results differ by the students' home countries, and how attributes of the home country may influence the extent to which scholarship program alumni can spur social and economic change at home.

This comparative study examined the ways that alumni of international scholarship programs perceive their experiences of "giving back" to their home countries following their Master's studies in the United States, with a focus on comparing the experiences of program participants from the Republics of Georgia and Moldova. Based on interviews with 20 alumni from each country – across a range of programs, years of participation, and host universities – this qualitative study found that Georgian and Moldovan alumni had different experiences in their attempts to "give back" and that these experiences were influenced by the specific contextual factors of the home country.

The first main finding is that scholarship program alumni felt that their primary contributions to their home country were through their employment, yet the types of employment differed considerably by country. In Georgia, 17 of 20 alumni lived in the country and the majority who live in the country work for international NGOs, in higher education, as lawyers, or as independent contractors. As significantly, 11 have worked or currently work for the Government of Georgia. In Moldova, 11 of the 20 alumni live in

the country and of these, four work the UN system and four for the Government of Moldova, with three in positions as requirements of their scholarship. In both Georgian and Moldova, alumni noted that government and higher education were professional fields where they were able to influence the greatest social and economic change in their countries. However, there was great difference in interest in working in these fields: In Georgia, many alumni were – or had served – in these positions. In Moldova, few had taken key government or high education positions – or had stayed long – citing low salaries and high perception of corruption as influencing their decisions.

The second key finding is that alumni from both countries feel that the most effective way to "give back" to their home country's development is by living in the country as opposed to influencing change from abroad. Georgians expressed that they had many opportunities in the country to influence change and felt it was their "duty" to return to the country and support its development in leadership roles. Those alumni who lived abroad remained very active with the country through volunteer contributions. While Moldovan alumni agreed that the greatest contributions to their home country were made by living in the country, they were more likely to equate "giving back" with "going back," thereby coping with various challenges – both in the professional and community realm – as their contributions to the society. Nine of the twenty Moldovan interviewees had left for positions abroad, citing better living conditions, higher salaries, and lack of tolerance for corruption as their key motivational factors. Of these, eight alumni said they maintained some relationship with their home country, mostly through volunteer projects.

The third and fourth key findings focus on the context of the home country, as alumni noted two significant elements that have shaped their experiences in attempting to "give back" following their scholarship programs. The first home country contextual factor mentioned by alumni is the government's pathway from independence from the Soviet Union to achieving democracy today. Prominently, alumni of both countries highlighted their national revolution as the flashpoint where their country made an obvious break with the old ways and indicated their intention to welcome democracy and a market economy and to align more closely with Europe. When comparing the cases of Georgia and Moldova, the country's democratic revolution left a serious impression on alumni. For some, this moment of significant transition caused them to look more closely for opportunities to "give back" to their country – this pairing of a political shift and a shift in their mindset is coined a "revolution of the mind." Likewise, the political transition influenced their career opportunities and choices, helped to create a vision of a prosperous future for the country, and censured the level of perceived corruption. With the Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgian alumni noted believing in and contributing to this change, suggesting it as a major influence in their experience of "giving back." For Moldovans, the Twitter Revolution in 2009 was less decisive and the democratic transition has been much slower and fraught with difficulties. Alumni cited this process as a major deterrent for their interest in working for the government and in higher education, as well as influencing their choices to remain in, or return to, the country altogether.

The fourth key point is that alumni reported that the size, strength, and vitality of the scholarship program alumni networks was a determining factor in their experiences of how they "gave back" to their home country's social and economic development. In Georgia, alumni reported being actively engaged with other alumni, including participating in alumni events, seeking alumni's input and partnership on various projects, selecting other alumni for job opportunities, and relying on the network for support and encouragement. In Moldova, alumni noted that with such a large percentage of scholarship program graduates living abroad, the alumni network was weak. Moldovan alumni also reported that they would like to see a more active group that could work together to spur change, noting that alumni networks could help cement change in the home country.

In conclusion, this research showed that the ways by which and the extent to which international scholarship program alumni contribute to change at home varies both by country and by certain contextual factors in that home country. These findings are intended to provide greater insight into the experiences of scholarship program alumni and to aid program funders, administrators, and alumni themselves in better understanding the relationship between international scholarship programs and economic and social change in the students' home countries, with an ultimate goal of building better programs and setting realistic expectations for program success.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Situated at the crossroads of higher education and international development, many international scholarship programs provide high-achieving students from low- and middle-income countries[2] with an opportunity to pursue quality higher education likely unavailable in the home country. As defined in this research, international scholarships are financial grants that cover the majority of costs associated higher education study outside of the recipient's home country; finalists must be competitively selected and must be working towards a degree at an accredited institution. The theory of change that undergirds many programs is that by exposing students to the expertise found in leading universities in high-income countries, these students will bring newfound knowledge and experiences back home to have a propitious impact and positively shape the future of the nation. This logic is shared by multiple funders – national governments, private foundations, universities, and individual donors – and was immediately applied to newly independent states following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This study investigates and compares the extent to which scholarship program alumni from two republics that declared independence from the Soviet Union, Georgia and Moldova, conceive of meaningful contributions to their home country's national development following the completion of their Master's degree abroad.

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[2] Definitions of low- and middle-income countries used in this paper are the same as the World Bank's definition of lower- and middle-income economies (World Bank, 2016). The Bank's low-income economy is defined as or less than $1,045 gross national income (GNI). Middle-income countries are those with a GNI per capita of more than $1,045 but less than $12,739.

In Georgia and Moldova, like many other countries, students who receive an international scholarship are selected both for their previous successes and for their future potential, based on a recognized allegiance or their aspirations to "give back" to the home country (Cosentino, Dumitrescu, Moorthy, Rangarajan, Shaw, Sloan, Sridharan, Thomas, & Burciul, 2013; Dassin, 2009b; Embassy of the United States in Uzbekistan, 2014). For many program sponsors and scholarship students alike, notions of "giving back" are vague. Nonetheless, most conceptualizations are tied to the idea of "going back" home to make notable contributions to national social, political, or economic development programs in order to assist with the development and modernization of the home nation. Oftentimes, a single scholarship program is offered to students from multiple countries with little consideration given to national contextual factors that may influence students' ability to transfer home the knowledge and experiences gained abroad.

Moreover, talented scholarship alumni often have multiple opportunities and choices to make following the completion of their overseas degree. Some return home; others do not. With time, some will assume leadership positions in their country, while others will find careers abroad. For those who live abroad, ties to their country of origin – through providing financial support or participating in volunteer work – may be ongoing and strong, or ties to the homeland may weaken or disappear with time. Some alumni may deepen their dedication to a specific social cause, choosing to advocate for changes either in their home country or in a global context. Moreover, with today's pervasive and rapid electronic communication and easily accessible international travel, international

scholarship alumni may divide their time between two or more countries, enabling complex relationships with their home country and a globalized identity (Rizvi, 2005).

Given these realties, a conundrum exists: International scholarship programs aim to build the human capital of citizens from certain countries, with the expectation that successful graduates will return home to bolster their home country's development. Programs are designed with this logic model in mind. However, program funders and administrators often ignore the circumstances at home – the national contextual factors – that may aid or restrict graduate's ability to return, apply their skills, or be able to foster social or economic change. Program graduates face many competing factors – some connected to the situation in their home countries – that influence their personal, career, and financial decisions, both in the short and long term, and some choose not return home. If alumni do not live in their home country, they may still be able to take a role in national development, thereby meeting the aims of the scholarship program from abroad. The questions situated in this quandary are salient: How are scholarship program alumni contributing to national social and economic development? How do their activities and choices differ based on the national context? Are there meaningful differences between the two countries of Georgia and Moldova that can provide better understanding of how scholarship programs alumni "give back" to their home countries?

Unfortunately, few extant scholarly studies suggest answers to these questions. Despite the burgeoning number of scholarships over the past 25 years – in both the former Soviet Union and other low- and middle-income countries, and recently profiled

in the 2015 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals[3] – only recently has

scholarly work on international scholarship programs surfaced. In a 2014 article, Perna,

Orosz, Jumakulov, Kishkentayeva, and Ashirbekov highlighted the characteristics of

students who participate in government-sponsored international scholarship programs,

suggesting a list of programmatic characteristics and contextual factors that promote and

limit their participation. Baxter (2014) recently highlighted how participants in the

Rwandan Presidential Scholarship Program balanced personal desires and program

expectations as they planned for the next step in their careers. In a 2007 article, Dong and

Chapman investigated the student experience of the Chinese Government Scholarship

Program, suggesting that international scholarships were a useful tool for building

positive relationships between China and the students' home countries. However, despite

this recent uptick in scholarly interest, several scholars agree that scholarship programs

and their graduates remain vastly understudied topics (Dassin, 2009a; Lamont, 2004;

Perna, Orosz, Jumakulov, Kishkentayeva, & Ashirbekov, 2014).

Program-sponsored evaluations are slightly more common. The U.S. Department

of State has offered access to the public of several program evaluations conducted on

their scholarship programs (see Aguirre International, 2003; Bureau of Educational and

Cultural Affairs, 2001, 2003a, 2003b). Among these and other evaluations of scholarship

programs, few – at least those that focus on scholars hosted in the United States – look

specifically at the long-term contributions of alumni in their home countries. Those that

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[3] As part of achieving Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong
learning," the United Nations (2016) suggested increasing the number of international scholarships for
students from developing countries, and especially the least developed countries, small island developing
States, and African countries, by 2020.

do tend to focus on alumni vignettes and highlight success stories.[4] It is perhaps no

surprise that the results of such evaluations reflect the funders' interests. In one example,

the Director of the Ford Foundation's International Fellowship Program (IFP) suggests

that alumni are able to contribute to their home countries due to a successful selection

strategy which identifies candidates whose "dedication to social justice in their home

countries is fundamental to their identities," and therefore, after their scholarship,

participants will continue their "personal trajectories as part of a broader struggle for

social justice at home" (Dassin, 2009b, p. 233).

Although the separation between academic literature and program-sponsored

evaluations may be artificial, it is worth emphasizing that studies about international

scholarship programs, in general, tend to focus on the factors that attract students to these

types of opportunities, their experiences while participating in the programs, their

satisfaction with the international education experience, and their choices and behaviors

immediately following their studies. In other words, there is little scholarly attention

given to the relationship of sponsored overseas higher education and national

development for students from low- and middle-income countries. Gürüz (2011)

reinforces this point by asserting, "there is still no study on the relationship between

international student mobility and the number of returnees and their contributions to the

countries of origin" (p. 313). In sum, there has been little comprehensive academic

investigation on scholarship recipients from low- or middle-income countries, their long-

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[4] One example is *Origins, Journeys and Returns: Social Justice in International Higher Education*, an overview of the Ford Foundation's IFP. The book is compendium of seven alumni "case studies" and photographs of approximate 30 alumni, out of a total of 4,320 IFP fellows worldwide (Volkman, Dassin, & Zurbuchen, 2009).

term return or "stay" rates, or their contributions to the social or economic development in their home countries.

Therefore, how do participants of scholarship programs actually assist in home country development? Given the considerable resources invested in building the human capital of the scholars, to what extent do past scholarship recipients – both residing in their home countries and abroad – believe that they have contributed to the development of their country? If they believe they have contributed, what are the various ways they do so? To what extent does the home country context influence their perceived contributions towards national development? Finally, what are the significant differences when the findings of the two countries are compared? These questions begin to frame the outline of this study, with the final research questions included at the end of Chapter Two, following a review of the literature.

Section 1.1: Research objective

In an attempt to address these questions, this dissertation examines how individuals who studied in the United States on scholarship between the years of 1996 and 2014 conceive of and understand their role in national economic and social development, through a comparative study of the Republics of Georgia and Moldova, to provide a deeper understanding of how scholarship programs aid countries over time. Research participants were scholarship program alumni who studied for a Master's degree in the United States, across myriad social science and humanities academic fields, and sponsored through various agencies. Although their goal was not always explicitly

stated in program materials, many scholarships were established to reinvigorate the social sciences and humanities fields in the former Soviet Union, to build citizen diplomacy between the west and the newly independent countries, and to expose students to the ways of democracy and market economy in the United States. In one example, the Edmund S. Muskie Scholarship program was designated as part of funding provided for a U.S. Congress-supported Freedom for Russia and the Emerging Eurasia Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act in 1992.

Findings from this work aim to contribute to the literature by 1) identifying various ways scholarship program alumni conceive of their contributions to national development, 2) analyzing the differences of these experiences between the two countries and for these nationals who now live abroad, and 3) providing findings from these two cases intended to inform the conversation among scholars and practitioners – especially those who fund, design, and administer international scholarship and international training programs – on the relationship between scholarship programs and the economic and social development in low- and middle-income countries.

The theoretical framework for many scholarship programs is human capital theory, whose proponents (Becker, 1975; McMahon, 1999, 2009; Schultz, 1963) posit that financial investment in an individual's education has a positive influence on the economic and social development outcomes for primarily the student and secondarily for the community in which the student resides. While human capital theory is often narrowly described as measuring the impact of education on economic gain (building directly on Adam Smith's (1952) early definition of human capital), this study

emphasized Walter McMahon's (1999, 2009) argument that the product of educational investment should be measured by a wider set of factors, which he terms *endogenous development* and includes economic growth, population and health, democratization and human rights, reduction of poverty and inequality, the environment, reduction of crime and drug use, labor force participation, and education enrollment (2009).

Human capital theory is an appropriate starting point for understanding this study because it is operationalized in the notion of an international scholarship program – that is, that a financial investment is made in the education of an individual to build that individual's capabilities, with the aim of enhancing that individual's opportunities and improving the economic and social qualities in the community in which that individual resides. In the words of Adam Smith, "education, study, or apprenticeship, always costs a real expense, which is a capital fixed and realized, as it were, in…[a] *person*" (1952, p. 119, my emphasis). It is commonly reported that the majority of scholarship programs funded by national governments state their primary goal of scholarship programs to be an individual's attainment of skills for national development (British Council and German Academic Exchange Service, 2014). Moreover, private funders, like the Open Society Foundations (OSF), have also indicated that human capital is their intended framework for the design of international scholarship programs, noting that alumni are asked to "apply skills and knowledge in [their] home country" towards "giving back" to their communities and to "build professional connections locally" towards greater potential of future employment (Watkins, 2013).

While human capital theory undergirds the logic of these international scholarship programs, specific detail is given to an international scholarship program model for students from low- and middle-income countries, which is introduced in Chapter Two. Building from this model, this study relies on qualitative research methods to better understand the phenomenon of how alumni of these programs "give back" to their home countries and to compare the differences between the countries. Through interviews with 20 Georgian and 20 Moldovan alumni, their perceptions of how they contribute to national social and economic development will be illuminated and through a comparative analysis, and contextual characteristics of the home country will be scrutinized to assess the extent to which certain environmental factors support or hinder the alumni's interest and abilities to influence their societies.

Section 1.2: Interest in the subject

From 2003 to 2009, I managed international scholarship programs and higher education support grants at the Open Society Foundations, where I worked closely with students and educational organizations in the former Soviet Union. In this position, I observed scholarship students struggle with difficult decisions related to returning home, career choice, and how they could apply the knowledge and experiences from their American education in their home countries. Through ongoing communication with these students – some for over a decade – I have observed their choices to remain in or to leave their countries, to choose a profession in advocacy or separate their professional activities from their community involvement, or to champion a social cause or surrender their

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dream of change in their home communities. These observations have led me to ponder if

and how alumni conceptions of – and actions in relation with – returning to their home

country and "giving back" differ across national contexts, are affected after scholarship

alumni spend several years at home, or depend on country of residence. My professional

experiences inform this research and permit me to rely on a broad network of former

colleagues and students from Georgia and Moldova to engage in this work.

Section 1.3: Research locations

Georgia and Moldova provide particularly relevant backdrops for comparing the

experiences of scholarship program alumni for two key reasons: Firstly, the two countries

have similar geopolitical profiles. Both declared independence from the Soviet Union in

1991; both have struggled with the transition from communism to democracy, with

national revolutions highlight conflicts between the government and its citizens; both

have so-called "frozen" conflict enclaves within their national borders; and both have

made decidedly bold moves towards European integration and away from further

political and economic alliances with Russia, indicating a desire for closer integration –

and one day, membership – with the European Union.

Secondly, in both Georgia and Moldova, international higher education mobility

has been utilized as a strategy for national human capital development as these countries

transition from a communist to market-based economy. Perna, Orosz, Jumakulov,

Kishkentayeva, and Ashirbekov (2014) provide support to this point, stating

"Participating in tertiary education abroad may be particularly beneficial for nations that

are undergoing economic and political reforms, including the former states of the Soviet Union" (p. 2). Examples of scholarship programs offered in both countries include the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program and the Fulbright Program (sponsored in part by the U.S. Government) and the Soros Supplementary Grant Program and Civil Servant Scholarships (sponsored in part by OSF).

These two country's similar profiles provide a backdrop on which to be able to more deeply consider contextual differences identified by alumni in terms of the ways national contextual factors support or obfuscate alumni's perceived contributions to social and economic development. More information about the two countries' histories, profiles, similarities, and differences – and their specific international scholarship programs – is the focus of Chapter Three.

Section 1.4: Significance of the study

This study aimed to contribute to the understanding of international higher education mobility programs that intend to aid the development of low- and middle-income countries. First, the study intends to explore how individuals operationalize the expectation to "give back" after their scholarship programs. As noted earlier, there is very little holistic evidence – scholarly or otherwise – about the methods that program alumni use or attempt to improve their countries upon program completion. Moreover, there is almost no attention paid to those individuals who leave the country, while valuable insight can be gained from those who left for opportunities abroad. These insights may help program administrators, researchers, and government officials, and alumni

themselves to consider how to better prepare alumni to return home and capitalize on their newfound skills following their education abroad.

Second, through a comparative lens, this study aims to identify any contextual elements that may help or hinder scholarship grantees to return to and stay in the home country, to assume influential positions, and to spur economic and social change. By comparing the contextual features in Georgia and Moldova, there may be fresh insight into specific characteristics or systems that aid the motivation and determination of international scholarships grantees – and where possible, these elements can be further cultivated and offered to future graduates. Likewise, contextual factors that limit opportunities for scholarship alumni may be mitigated, where possible, or perhaps new strategies to address such challenges could be devised for better experiences for returning scholars and great potential of their impact to effect change.

Third, this study will help inform the design future program evaluation and research on scholarship programs' "go back" and "give back" components. For example, in October 2013, the Ford Foundation announced a "groundbreaking" 10-year tracking study of its International Fellows Program (Institute of International Education, 2013). Other sponsoring organizations, such as the MasterCard Foundation and the Acumen Fund, have indicated an interest of understanding more than simple surface-level alumni data; these organizations have a sincere and vested stake in learning how these expensive individual investments translate to home country impact (Cosentino, et al., 2013; R. Ibrahim, personal communication, May 21, 2014). Likewise, sponsoring governments have recently expressed concern in measuring the impact of scholarship programs. In one

example, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom has issued

a report summarizing the various methodologies used in evaluating scholarship schemes

(2014). Although this dissertation will examine only Master-level scholarships to study in

the United States, the research methodology and methods may be informative to

audiences with similar evaluation interests. In addition, the research may also be useful to

other private foundations, individual sponsors, host universities, and governments[5] who

continue to fund, design, and reimagine scholarship programs, offering greater insight of

how participants conceive of their home country contributions in the 20 years after the

completion of their scholarship.

Finally, the research findings may call into question an entrenched notion among

scholars, practitioners, and evaluators that returning to one's country of origin is the

major component of scholarship program success (Aguirre International, 2003;

Cosentino, et al., 2013; Dassin, 2009a). Likewise, it is a common conception by scholars

and evaluators that scholarship alumni who elect to live in other, often high-income,

countries are unable to sufficiently "give back" to their home country, thereby

contributing to their home country' brain drain – and issue that will be further explored in

the next chapter. Therefore, this study's findings may bring forward alternative

conceptions of how scholarship alumni engage with home country social and economic

change from abroad.

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[5] This includes the U.S. government's ongoing and robust funding of scholarship initiatives. In 2014-2015, the U.S. government supported 4,915 international students to study in the United States. This is a 17% increase from 2013-2014, when 4,186 students were supported, and a 46% increase from a decade before, when the U.S. Government supported 3,361 students in 2004-2005 (Institute for International Education, 2016).

As international higher education scholarship programs are a notable strategy for national social and economic development in many low- and middle-income countries, it is crucial to review the previous studies related to this topic before advancing with the research. In the following chapter, the case for this study will be supported by literature germane to international scholarship programs and international higher education as it relates to social and economic change in low- and middle-income countries.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This chapter presents research that supports this study, focusing on the relationship between international higher education and home country social and economic development. When possible, research specific to international scholarship programs is prioritized. The chapter is divided into four sections.

The first section provides background on human capital theory, which underlies the theory of change for the scholarship programs in which many of the participants in this study were enrolled. Human capital theory posits that investing in an individual's education is linked to enhanced individual and community outcomes – both economic and social (McMahon, 1999, 2009).

The second section focuses on literature related to the positive relationship between international higher education and home country economic and social development. Findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies suggest that international higher education has a positive impact on national *economies* through returning skilled labor and the development of a global knowledge economy. This section also includes studies related to international higher education and national *social* development, citing authors who argue that individuals with overseas tertiary education promote social justice, human rights, and progressive advocacy efforts at home. Studies focused on the premise that individuals living abroad can also contribute to home country economic and social development – namely through remittances, academic networks, or expatriate volunteer activities – are also included.

The third section is devoted to scholars who believe that international higher education does not have a positive influence on the home country, and in fact, may have a negative influence on social and economic development. On the side of economic development, these scholars argue that international higher education is a gateway to overseas employment and residency abroad, thereby drawing the best talent away from the home country. Assuming one's sphere of influence is tantamount to one's community, studies included in this section support the idea that overseas residence does not benefit the home country in terms of economic development in the global knowledge economy or social development due to the loss of researchers, educators, and activists.

This chapter will conclude with the description of a logic model for international scholarship programs for students from low- and middle-income countries with an intended goal of creating social and economic change in the students' home countries. Drawing on literature and a review of relevant scholarship program models available, this logic model maps how a student would experience the scholarship program based on the values and expectations of the funding organization. The chapter will close with the study's research questions.

Section 2.1: Human capital theory in international higher education

Advocates of human capital theory posit that a financial investment in an individual's education leads to an increased economic capability for the educated individual (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1963 & 1971). Heavily influenced by the field of economics, human capital theory often examines individual wages as the unit of analysis

(Sweetland, 1996), with several wide-ranging studies looking at dollar-for-dollar return on investment for funding education (Psacharopoulous & Patrinos, 2004; Psacharopoulous, 1994). Despite this focus on individual economic return, several scholars have expanded the focus of human capital theory to consider how investment in education can lead to external benefits, such as an improvement in an educated person's health and nutrition behavior (Schultz, 1981), improved quality of life (Becker, 1993), and enhanced social development of the individual's home community (McMahon, 1999). As Sweetland (1996) notes, while these societal benefits "may represent the most important contributions made by education, each is difficult to measure quantitatively" (p. 342) and may be why human capital theorists have shied away from the difficult analysis of quantifying societal benefits. On the whole, human capital theory is conceived as a functionalist theory: investment in education is imparted to an individual and something – increased earning potential, contributions to the social development off the home community, or improved quality of life – will transpire. As Tan (2014) reminds us, human capital theory is based on many neoclassical economic assumptions, including that individuals will act in rational ways and seek to maximize their financial interests.

Of the various examinations of human capital theory, McMahon's case for investing in education as a means to achieve endogenous development (1999) is particularly relevant for this study. McMahon argues that education contributes to the welfare of individuals and their families, as well as to the economy and "community structural effects," defined as the firm or household in which the individual works or lives (1999). His *Framework for Endogenous Development* lists eight sectors in which

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there is a public social benefit in either monetary or non-monetary ways: 1) economic growth, 2) population and health, 3) democratization and human rights, 4) reduction of poverty and inequality, 5) the environment, 6) crime and drug use, 7) labor force participation, and 8) education rates (McMahon, 1999, p. 10). As related to this dissertation, all sectors are situated within social and economic development.

Human capital theory has been used as a conceptual model for all education levels, and research on higher education is also vast. In one particularly relevant study, Leslie and Brinkman suggest that by educating an individual at the tertiary level, there are "collective and social benefits" that "'spill over' to society at large" (1998, p. 38). In terms of international scholarships, the financial investment "fixed" in an individual scholarship grantee takes the form of a grant for overseas higher education and the intended outcome is generally the "collective and societal benefits" in the home country.

Human capital theory themes can be identified throughout scholarship program design in the terms used to describe the programs. One of the largest programs to support students from the former Soviet Union, the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program – know as the "Muskie Program" – is funded by the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and touts approximately 5,000 alumni (IREX, 2013). The Muskie Program has offered Master's level study for students from the former Soviet Union in "applied" fields – such as business administration, journalism, law, and public administration – emphasizing the human capital investment in skills development. Moreover, the selection criteria for scholars is packed with human capital lexicon, such as "demonstrated leadership potential," "commitment to returning to their

home country…after program completion and sharing the benefit of the program with

their community," and "commitment to becoming engaged in work and/or volunteer

endeavors designed to benefit the development of the home country, following the

program" (Embassy of the United States in Uzbekistan, 2014). In another example, OSF

– one of the major private funders in the post-Soviet states[6] – note that the mission of

their scholarships is to invest in promising individuals. OSF scholarships program

manager Lesha Greene notes, "Here in the Open Society Scholarship Programs, we

champion the power of the individual" (2013). By offering an open competition to recruit

talented candidates based on their personal characteristics – including "motivation" and

dedication to home country (Watkins, 2013) – OSF is choosing to invest in the human

capital of individuals instead of directing attention and financial support to groups,

infrastructure, materials, or other types of initiatives.

   As conceptualized by human capital theory and as seen in the examples above,

many programs emphasize the individual as the delivery mechanism to propel economic

and social change – in other words, to be an agent who ignites endogenous development.

Perna, Orosz, Gopaul, Jumakulov, Ashirbekov, & Kishkentayeva (2014) state this

succinctly, "endogenous theories of economic growth conceptualize earning a degree

from a foreign country as a form of human capital import" (p. 64). Furthermore, Kim

(1998) supports this notion by suggesting that students returning from abroad are

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[6] OSF has funded over 15,000 higher education scholarships over the past 25 years, with majority of the awards going to students from the former Soviet Union countries (Z. Usmanova, personal communication, November 14, 2011).

assumed to assist in helping others develop skills and create knowledge without any additional financial support.

The second part of the human capital model is its functionalist outcome – the expectation that these scholarship students will spur home country development – can also be identified in existing scholarship programs. Of the Ford Foundation's IFP, Dassin, Volkman, and Zurbuchen (2009) write, "From the outset, the stated goal of the program has been to have a long-term impact on those communities as Fellows return home with new knowledge and skills and a renewed commitment to social justice" (p. 249). When discussing the government-sponsored Bolashak scholarship program in Kazakhstan, former First Vice-Minister of Education and Science Bakytzhan Zhumagulov announced, "The program always aimed to prepare the specialists which are needed in the country. Most of them [now] are at top positions in the government and in national companies" (as quoted in Dairova, Jumakulov, & Ashirbekov, 2013). Research supports this claim, stating that most Bolashak participants see the obligation to return and work in Kazakhstan for five years after program completion is appropriate given the government's investment in their education (Perna, Orosz, Jumakulov, Kishkentayea, & Ashirbekov, 2014). To support this goal, many scholarship programs will offer add-on components to facilitate engagement in social and economic activities; OSF's alumni grants program is just one example (Watkins, 2013).

In human capital theory, this potential propitious impact on the home country is tightly bound to the specific locations where individuals reside and the family, firm, and

community environments in which they engage. McMahon (1999) defends this claim by setting the stage of a graduate's scope of interaction:

> Some work environments, for example, contain many well-educated people, collegiality, and stimuli to new learning, facilitating an interchange whereby each individual's productivity benefits from knowledge gained from colleagues; the same is true within some households. A second level of shared externality benefit is from the environment in the community within which the firm or the household lives, which can also contribute to the firm or household productivity. (p. 6)

In other words, the possible "spill over" effect of an educational investment is predominantly place-based. The communities and firms that individuals choose to attach themselves – and the family they support – are those most likely recipients of the investment in human capital. For many scholars and evaluators, the unit of analysis for human capital investments on national development is not as small as a firm or community but extends to consider national or even multi-country economic data and social indicators (Fry, 1984; Psacharopoulos, 1994). Regardless of unit of measurement, human capital theory logic follows that the location where the scholarship alumnus decides to live influences which community members and coworkers benefit, and if the alumnus decides to live outside of his or her home country, the "spill over" effect to the home country is greatly reduced or non-existent.

Before turning to the next category of the literature, one additional point about human capital theory in international scholarship programs is worth heeding: The majority of scholarship programs – especially those offered in the former Soviet Union countries during the period of this study – are a one-size-fits-all model and offered across a group of countries, where the same style, length, and amount of investment was bestowed among selected applicants. This conceptualization of a singular experience of education is commonplace in human capital theory, where education is considered to be

the same "treatment" among the variety of students enrolled. Given this fact, and that there were 15 newly independent countries during the time of this study, there is little evidence that unique national or local contextual factors were considered in designing scholarship schemes for post-Soviet countries. Silova (2008) describes international aid to support educational programs in the post-Soviet republics "spontaneous" and "chaotic" (p. 46), further justifying this notion that many educational programs were designed quickly and took in little surveillance of national differences following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

With an understanding that human capital theory links higher education and economic and social benefits to individuals and their communities, the next section will review literature that argues that international higher education – in the form of international scholarship programs – brings positive change for the students' home countries.

Section 2.2: International higher education and increases in social and economic development in the home country

Proponents for international higher education as a mechanism for home country endogenous economic and social change are many, both among scholars and scholarship program evaluators. Tom Shachtman, who studies the case of the newly-independent countries of Africa starting in the 1950s, described a utopian scenario of the role of international higher education scholarships supporting transitional development in a post-colonial East Africa:

Between 1959 and 1963, the AASF [African American Students Foundation] "airlifts" would bring to the United States nearly eight hundred East African students, mostly Kenyans but also some from Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Uganda, and Northern and Southern Rhodesia, to take up scholarships at dozens of colleges and some high schools. The "airlift generation" would achieve a remarkable record of accomplishment. Upon returning home, they would become the founding brothers and sisters of their countries. For the next quarter century they would make up half of Kenya's parliaments and account for many of its cabinet ministers and even more of its high-level civil servants, in addition to staffing the professorships and deanships of its nascent universities, starting medical clinics and schools, growing multimillion-dollar businesses, and leading international environmental programs. Among the airlift graduates would be Wangari Maathai, winner of the 2004 Noble Peace Prize. (2009, p. 7)

Shachtman's work goes on to discuss how these individuals developed a strong network of leaders who shaped economic and social policies and brought forth a liberal development agenda to the young countries of East Africa.

Other scholars share in this logic that international scholarship recipients will go on to become leaders who will enact change. Berman (1983) highlights how Ford and Rockefeller Foundations' staff believed that scholarship grantees would return to fill key posts in universities, government, and the private sector, ultimately designing policies and leading social reforms, such as redesigning education curriculum. Spilimbergo (2009) found that in the period up to 1990, two in three national leaders of developing countries participated in American higher education, touting a correlation between students who studied in democratically-led host countries and the increase in democratic practices they promoted as presidents. While the spread of democracy is slightly outside the scope of this study, ties between democracy and changes in economic and social systems cannot be denied. In one example, Jones and Olken (2005) found that individual leaders play a crucial role in the income growth of their nations. Similarly, Atkinson (2010) supports the perceived association between study abroad and the spread of soft power, providing evidence of an association between countries with higher rates of

students pursuing U.S. university studies and those countries improving human rights records.

Other scholars also highlight changes in low- and middle-income nations' economic systems as a result of its citizens participating in foreign study. In a 1984 article, Fry asserted that the act of students pursuing international higher education positively – and significantly – related to improved economic performance in Thailand in the 1970s, arguing that "heavy financial investment in supporting study abroad for individuals from developing nations" positively correlates with economic success, to the extent that "such investments have been well justified" (p. 220). Following in Fry's footsteps, Vanichakorn (2005) found that Thai teachers who participated in an overseas teacher's education program reported that they gained significant knowledge while on exchange, that they developed alternative perspectives while abroad, and that they returned with a strong desire to improve their professional environments. However, the teachers also described a "general lack of support from colleagues and the government" in trying to implement changes in their teaching curriculum and practices (Vanichakorn, 2005, p. 52).

In low- and middle-income countries where large numbers of students go abroad for international higher education, like India and China, some scholars (Pan, 2011; Thirwani, 1989) note that this sizable number of returning students can have a significant impact on the country's social and economic trajectory when the scholars return home. According to Pan (2011), foreign education is the main strategy of China's overall development plan, as it attempts to gain access to top-tier international higher education

technology and expertise and to enhance the quality of human capital and innovation among the Chinese population. To meet the government's goals, Zweig (2006) notes how China's shifting policies and programs across multiple ministries and levels have prompted almost a five-fold increase in the number of returning Chinese students after foreign study during the period of 1994 to 2004 (p. 188).

Pursuit of international higher education to develop national economic and social aims was also prevalent immediately prior to and in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Western governments and international development agencies showered these countries in transition "with considerable fanfare and significant resources" to stabilize their governments and to promote a free market economy, liberal democracy, and civil society (Quigley, 1997, p. 2) and to promote American culture, values, and technology (Bu, 1999). Among the numerous aid initiatives in the newly independent countries, educational development programs were of paramount importance (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008).

Kassoff (1995) and Richmond (2003) suggest that participants of international higher education exchanges between the Soviet Union and United States took a leading role in introducing social and economic changes that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as subsequent leadership roles in the new republics. Richmond (2003) highlights several case studies of American-educated Soviet leaders who introduced social and economic reforms, such as a critical and independent press, and introduced new academic fields of American studies and liberal economics to Soviet students. Oleg

Kalugin, one of the individuals Richmond interviewed, noted that he believed scholarly

exchanges with the United States:

> played a tremendous role in the erosion of the Soviet system. They opened up a closed society. They greatly influenced younger people who saw the world with more open eyes, and they kept infecting more and more people over the years. (Richmond, 2003, p. 32)

As the newly independent republics attempted to chart their own courses, a post-

socialist education "reform package" swept the 15 new countries, fueled by international

funders (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). These donors – both foreign governments and

private foundations – realized the "centrality of education" in establishing stability in

these new countries and laying the groundwork for further economic and social

development (Quigley, 1997, p. 100). Activities to promote change and reform were

issued at almost all levels of education, including an extension of schooling at the

secondary level, student-centered learning, introduction of new subjects, and the

privatization of higher education (Silova, 2008). International higher education mobility

was a key element of this strategy, with thousands of students attending universities on

the other side of the "Iron Curtain." Thousands of scholarships were extended to students

from the former Soviet countries following the collapse of the Soviet Union, sponsored

by foreign governments, international private foundations, universities, and individual

members of the diaspora.

In commissioned evaluation reports about these particular scholarship programs –

notably, those sponsored by the U.S. government – evaluators addressed two key and

complementary goals: 1) human capital development and 2) gains in international and

intercultural understanding. On the first point, evaluators select quantitative data – placed

prominently in the reports – to highlight the alumni's gain of knowledge and skills during

their scholarship program, the graduates' intentions to assume roles as community

leaders, and the alumni's plans to serve as advocates for human rights and as "social

change agents" when they return home (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs,

2001, 2003a, 2003b). As these evaluations were conducted almost immediately after

students completed the program, attention is directed at what the alumnus learned – the

investment in education – and on what the alumnus hopes to achieve as a community

leader or "social change agent" – the expected output of the investment. There is scant

attention paid to the actual activities in which they were currently involved.

Likewise, in another evaluation, that of U.S. government-sponsored Future

Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program for undergraduates from the former Soviet Union,

evaluators find that alumni[7] reported significant gains in computer skills and both written

and oral English comprehension following their scholarship when compared to a group of

FLEX semi-finalists (Aguirre International, 2003). However, unlike the other

evaluations, this report included information about participants' economic earning

behavior – or, in human capital lexicon, a personal financial return on the educational

investment – with findings indicating that scholarship program alumni were earning an

average of $425 per month as compared to semi-finalists who earned only $119 per

month among those who were paid in U.S. Dollars,[8] with many alumni working in

western firms in their home countries (Aguirre International, 2003, p. 17). Strikingly,

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[7] Only nationals from Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan were part of the study and only those
FLEX alumni and semifinalists living in their home countries participated.
[8] It is worth noting that respondents paid in local currencies, no statistical differences were found between
the alumni's and semifinalists' salaries.

none of these evaluations included definitive reports of student return rate nor did they consider of the activities of those alumni who currently reside abroad.

This is not unique to this set of evaluations. Little research is focused directly on the population of those who have left their home countries for higher education, stayed abroad, and now are engaged in activities that develop the home country (M. Mawer, personal communication, 2016). Most researchers on expatriates' activities do not discriminate based on the geographical location of higher education. Moreover, scholarship program evaluators shy away from examining non-returners as such behavior does not match their funder's logic model, and therefore may not support their theory of change. To exacerbate the situation, program evaluations are rarely made publically available for review (Strömbom, 1989).

However, some research that considers the relationship between skilled internationally mobile individuals and their home countries, in a larger scope, is important for the context of this dissertation; this research may shed light on the relationships of scholarship program alumni to their home countries. When considering relationship of expatriates and their countries of origin, three interesting categories of research findings emerge: financial remittances, educational support networks, and diaspora engagement. We turn to each category briefly.

Financial remittances – money sent to the home country by émigrés living abroad – support family and friends back home and can – by extension – bolster the home country's economic and social development (Mohapatra & Ratha, 2011; OECD, 2007; Ouaked, 2002). Reports on exactly how much money is sent home by all migrants varies

considerably due to no unified data collection system, although the World Bank suggests the total formal amount is approximately 550 billion U.S. dollars in 2013 and may reach a record level of 700 billion U.S. dollars in 2016 (World Bank, 2013). Unfortunately, due to the paucity of unified and detailed data on global remittances, there is no way to know how much is sent specifically by those who pursued international higher education.

The sizable body of literature about the impact of remittances is mixed and there remains some ambiguity about the extent to which remittances boost economic and social development. In a positive light, remittances and other financial investments are believed to have significant immediate and long-term effects on low- and middle-income countries. Taylor and Adelman (1996) show empirically that remittances have quite substantial multiplier effects on communities. Moreover, remittances are considered to reach the household or rural villages in a way that other large-scale financial investments do not, and can support economic and social growth through paying children's school fees, affording health care, or reinforcing a family's resilience during time of economic or environmental stress (OECD, 2007). Therefore, for the population of scholarship alumni living abroad, sending money home may have a positive impact on the social and economic development of the home country at a community level.[9]

In addition to financial remittances, direct foreign investment is another route to spurring economic and social development and can be influenced by nationals residing

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[9] On the other hand, some scholars have asked whether the remittances and involvement of the highly-educated are really a substitute for the loss of that individual in the society. For example, the OECD (2007) suggests that money sent from highly-educated individuals is more likely to go to the country's major cities than in the rural areas where it is more needed. Woldetensae (2007), as quoted in Odhiambo (2013), argues that while remittances are significant to national economic growth, they do not substitute for the adverse effects of the outflow of skilled personnel and "brain drain."

abroad, especially by those who are well-educated, well-connected, and interested in the development of the home country. For members of the diaspora in positions of international business or development industries, they can "contribute to the economic structural development of their countries of origin…within the framework of the companies' transnational processes" and can take "an important role in the implementation of direct investments in their countries of origin by exploiting their good contacts to their home country governments, and playing a mediating role" (p. 23, Baraulina, Bommes, El-Cherkeh, Daume, & Vadean, 2007).

The second way, as supported by literature, that those with international higher education degrees may contribute to their home social and economic development is through educational support networks. For those educated elite who assume positions in academia or industry overseas, remaining in contact with home country universities and research parks is one option for contributing to the development of new technologies, advancing research, and introducing new subjects and modes of teaching in the home country. In a 2006 study, Welch and Zhen found that Chinese academics in Australia were interested in maintaining contact with Chinese mainland scholars, participating in conferences together, and (to a lesser extent) co-publishing.[10] Zweig (2006) notes that the Chinese government perceives short-term visits as efforts for scholars and researchers abroad to "serve the country" by "encourag[ing] people to return permanently, but even if they only bring back new information or technology, […] the state benefits" (p. 197).

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[10] Notably, Welch and Zhen found that the academics based in mainland China were significantly more interested in these types of partnerships than their Australian-based counterparts, and were also interested in the additional opportunities of student and staff exchange (2006, p. 525).

Likewise, in a 2005 report on African academics abroad, Mahamoud found that among

30 highly-trained African émigrés, all affirmed an interest and willingness to contribute

to the development of knowledge in Africa. Mahamoud notes,

> These individuals are also prepared and ready to offer summer courses, organise seminars and
> workshops, and review teaching and training curricula, etc, without charging for their services. In
> this respect, they all responded that their coaching and lecturing services would be free, as this
> would be a part of their voluntary contribution to this effort to transfer knowledge to Africa. As
> one interviewee eloquently expressed it, 'This is a way of giving something back to the society we
> have come from.' (2005, p. 14).

Moreover, some private funders have provided support for expatriates with foreign higher

education degrees to return to their home countries to teach, assist in curriculum reform,

and spur changes in university governance. The Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship

Program (Institute for International Education, 2014) and the OSF Academic Fellowship

Program (Open Society Foundations, 2011) are two examples; however, little information

about the impact of these programs is readily available.

The third way that skilled émigrés may contribute to the home country's social or

economic development while living abroad is through expatriate engagement in social

issues. Gribble (2008) notes that engaging the diaspora "is widely regarded as the most

effective way for skilled migrants to actively contribute to the economic and social

development of their home country" (p. 33). This engagement often takes the form of the

expatriate returning home and volunteering in some capacity that contributes to social

support and social advocacy. According to the International Labour Organisation's

Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work (2011), volunteer work has many

positive national development effects, such as contributing to the global fight against

poverty and addressing Millennium Development Goals; providing social services not

easily provided by paid workers, such as mentoring; enhancing social solidarity, social

capital, political legitimacy, and quality of life; and serving as a means of social inclusion

and integration of minority or marginalized communities. Terrazas (2010) suggests that

skilled expatriates are in an opportune position to contribute to their countries of origin

due to the fact they will provide discounted technical advice, have linguistic and cultural

familiarity which makes aid more effective, can counter the perceived effects of brain

drain, and can respond in an immediate and flexible way that circumvents much of the

burdensome coordination of international aid. Terrazas suggests that for these reasons,

skilled members of the diaspora are currently contributing a great amount of volunteer

time but that "their international volunteer work occurs under the radar of public

attention" (2010, p. 7).

While there are may be other creative and favorable ways that expatriates from

low- and middle-income countries are contributing to their home country, these three –

remittances, educational networks, and expatriate engagement in social issues – are

closely tied to the contributions made in economic and social change domains and will be

used to guide this research.[11] In the next section, we turn to the counterargument – that

international higher education programs siphon talent from developing countries and

contribute to a subsequent reduction of human capital in low- and middle-income

countries.

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[11] Other examples of ways that expatriates may be involved in home country development could include voting or supporting a political campaign from abroad, but these fall outside the social and economic realms that are the focus of this study. Moreover, activities which aim to educate neighbors or colleagues about one's home country or to do academic research on issues related to the home country may eventually lead to development gains at home; however, the relationship is too vague to be considered by human capital theory as discussed in this paper.

Section 2.3: International higher education and decreases in social and economic

development in the home country

Many international scholarship programs' theory of change is functionalist: higher education abroad leads to human capital development that leads to national development. Hand in hand with this logic is the idea that alumni will earn a higher income, support their family, participate in their firms, and contribute to their community in their home countries. In cases where students do not return home, the same effect is likely: Alumni will contribute to the families and firms where they currently reside. Correspondingly, alumni are not able to contribute – at least at the same level – to the home community or country of origin. In this section, the profiled scholars argued that when individuals leave a location, they take their personal earning potential and their influence over community change with them. In other words, scholarship alumni who leave their countries cannot substantially contribute to social and economic development at home.

Although the exact figure of those international scholarship students who remain abroad is unknown, supporting data paints a picture of the significant numbers who do not return home. Docquier and Marfouk (2006) estimated that for the period of 1990 to 2000, the educated elite migrated to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries at a much faster rate than their unskilled countrymen (63.7% increase from the previous decade as compared to a 14.4% increase for unskilled laborers). For foreign students studying in the United States, Chang and Milan (2012) state that for those foreign nationals who completed a Ph.D. between 2001 and 2007,

73% reported that their immediate postgraduate plan was to live in the United States and 67.5% reported actually taking residence in the U.S. following graduation. Moreover, in a study of scholarship program alumni, Dassin (2009b) revealed that between 77 and 82% of the Ford Foundation's International Fellows Program alumni were currently living in their home country (depending on the year), although the survey response rate varied considerably by students' home countries, ranging from 36 % to 66%– far from a comprehensive snapshot of program alumni (p. 235, 247). Given these figures, it is difficult to ascertain what percentage of alumni from across scholarship programs return to their home country in a given year, but it must be a sizable portion worth examining more closely.

Highly-educated individuals living abroad has been examined extensively in the economics and international development literature, as their mobility are central to understandings of the global knowledge economy, or the notion that with the rise of technology and changed global modes of production, a few select countries have emerged as national innovation systems (NIS) leaders, and these countries attract the best minds (Gürüz, 2011). Therefore, as these NIS countries further develop their capacity and fight to stay on the worldwide frontier of technology and innovation, they recruit the brightest minds graduating from the top universities, irrespective of home country. Wildavsky (2010) provides further support for this viewpoint, arguing that the global knowledge economy often ignores nationality in identifying and recruiting talent, provoking a global free trade of minds. It is not a stretch to imagine that graduates of international scholarship programs are among those in the top echelons of global talent.

Moreover, this movement of educated individuals – or "brains" – has spurred a litany of associated terms and research. *Brain drain* is commonly defined as the movement of educated and talented individuals from one country – often a low- or middle-income country – to another, often more developed, country; by taking their skills abroad, mobile individuals mitigate potential contribution to their homelands in pursuit of (real or perceived) greater opportunity in western countries (Rizvi, 2005). The popular phrase has spawned several associated terms (although less widely used), including *brain circulation* (talented individuals moving among different countries, perhaps including temporary returns in one's home country [Patterson, 2007]), *brain waste* (talented individuals choosing to remain in higher-income countries, where their training is not fully utilized, instead of returning home, where there is a perceived higher need for these skills [Mattoo, Neagu, & Özden, 2008]), and *beneficial brain drain* (the example of talented individuals migration may incentivize educational attainment by those who remain in the home country but wish to leave, thereby leading an increase in home country human capital levels [Di Maria & Lazarova, 2012]). While much scholarly debate exists about whether the migration of educated and talented individuals is significantly harmful to the human capital development of the home country (see Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport, 2008; Di Maria & Lazarova, 2012; Kuptsch & Pang, 2006), most scholars agree that many of the educated elite of low- and middle-income countries are moving to the wealthier countries with greater technology, wealth, and job prospects. Phillip Altbach (2012) states the trend succinctly, noting that highly skilled talent "flows

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largely in one direction – from developing and emerging economies to the wealthier

nations, especially to the English-speaking countries" (p. 10).

Zooming from lens of the global to a national perspective, the choice of students

to live abroad following their international degree is of particular relevance to this study.

For those Georgian and Moldovan students who opt to live in the United States,

European Union, or elsewhere, what are the factors that encourage them to leave their

countries or entice them to live abroad? For scholars who study global student flows, the

familiar terms for these phenomena are called *push* and *pull factors* and note it is rarely

solely the national conditions that 'push' out an educated individual, nor is it rarely

exclusively the enticing 'pull' factors of a host country; most certainly, it is a

combination (Chien, 2013; Odhiambo, 2013; Polovina, 2011). In some cases, the push

and pull factors are indicators of an individual preference. Other times, they are markers

of a national social or economic system. For this dissertation, it is the question of

differences in national contexts and systems and their influences on alumni behavior that

will be closely considered.

In one example, Weeks, Slinn, Henry, and Dumanova (2003) highlight the

national contextual factors that push or pull those nationals of four Balkan countries who

have received an overseas degree. They identify the push factors as those that create

political instability, promote distrust in the government, disrupt economic growth, and

sustain levels of high unemployment, as well as the existence of obvious and extensive

social problems, such as poverty and poor health services. On the other hand, the pull

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factors relate to the host countries' demand for skilled labor, higher pay, better living

conditions, and relative accommodating migration policies (Weeks, et al., 2003).

Looking at a larger group of countries, Huang (1998) provided further evidence

that home country characteristics were a significant factor in whether international

students would return home following a U.S. degree. She found that conditions of the

home country – including population control, government planning, and political civil

rights, which are all related to national social and economic context – often led

graduating students to "vote with their feet" and not return (p. 239). She goes on to assert

that it is possible that international students' "stay was motivated more by the

intolerability of their home country's political situation and less by professional

considerations" (Huang, 1988, p. 239).

Building off Huang's work, Bratsburg (1995) adjusted certain variables in the

model to consider the students' visa status and found that the proportion of international

students who remained in the United States after tertiary studies varied significantly by

the student's home country. Bratsburg echoed Huang's earlier findings, as he argued that

the variance could be explained by economic and political conditions at home. In short,

students were more likely to return home if their country was wealthier, geographically

closer to the United States (as proxy for both monetary and psychological migration

costs), and valued education at a high level. In a more recent study, Zweig (2006) polled

Chinese students abroad and discovered a list of 16 factors which were given for why a

person might not return to China; among the top 10 reasons were no chance to change

jobs, no opportunity for career advancement, poor work environment, and lack of modern

equipment (p. 206). To add to this point, additional scholars (Chien, 2013; Pan, 2011) found that internationally-mobile students graduating in the STEM fields choose to remain living abroad where salaries are higher, more research projects exist, and the facilities are of higher quality.

Looking specifically at the experience of international scholarship program alumni, Tung and Lazarova (2006) found that among Romanian students who had returned home following their studies in the United States or western Europe, 58% of survey respondents said they would like to leave Romania and work abroad if given the choice (p. 1859). Interestingly, one of the chief reasons for seeking employment abroad was due to the work culture, with a majority (54%) of respondents noting that the professional standards they had adopted to while studying abroad "were in conflict" with the prevalent work culture at home (p. 1863). Tung and Lazarova suggest that the students' scholarships "allowed them to attain further experience in western universities, thus making them even more valuable to their home countries – and ironically – less likely to return there" (p. 1857).

Moreover, Polovina (2011) argued that in Serbia, the international scholarship program itself should be considered an important pull factor for having talented individuals leave small countries. Based on qualitative data, she asserts that mobility of international higher education appears to enhance the rate at which young Serbs leave and that "the mobility of these highly skilled people could be a first step in leaving the homeland for good" (p. 180). Likewise, in neighboring Macedonia, Vangeli (2011) found

that government and other national-level stakeholders perceive that student and research exchange programs contributed to brain drain of the brightest Macedonian students.

Much of this research focuses on home country contextual factors that influence an international student to leave home. This study is not so keenly interested in the motivating push and pull factors that have led these individuals to leave their homeland. Instead, the focus is on specific national contextual factors that limit or encourage the pursuits alumni believe help their home country. On this point, it is worth noting that there is a difference between the intention and the behavior. This research will consider both actual behaviors alumni consider beneficial to national social and economic development, as well as plans or attempts to create change without success. Limitations to these intended activities could also be valuable findings.

Central to this study is the comparative design, with the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Although scholars (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton, 1999) have argued that the nation-state is outmoded in the transnational processes of social and economic development, the nation-state remains very relevant for the design, administration, and evaluation of international scholarship programs. The predominant approach, certainly seen in the period of this study, is that program participants are recruited based on home country and evaluation is organized around country of origin and of current residence. Moreover, several scholarship programs included in this study were intended for citizens of a single country, although similar models were duplicated in other countries. Indeed, scholarship programs are increasingly designed for citizens of single nation, given the recent growth of national government sponsored programs (Perna, Orosz, Gopaul,

Jumakulov, Kishkentayeva, and Ashirbekov, 2014). Additionally, in the context of this study, the attention is the nomothetic differences of a population of scholars from two different countries and not the idiographic experiences of individual participants. In sum, this dissertation seeks to understand the experiences of two national groups – scholarship alumni from Georgia and scholarship alumni from Moldova – and analyzes and compares the findings from each.

Section 2.4: A logic model of international scholarship programs for low- and middle-income countries

As noted earlier, many international scholarship programs offered in low- or middle-income countries are viewed as strategies to develop human capital and promote social and economic change. The logic models of these programs indicates a normative path that participants will follow: the individual is offered certain supports, expected to actively participate in the scholarship program, and will end up as a highly-skilled graduate who is willing, able, and successful at producing social and economic transformation in his or her home country. While the specific details of each scholarship program differ slightly, the basic components are very similar for initiatives that seek to spur social and economic change in low- and middle-income countries.

This logic is summarized in the following model of international scholarship programs whose aim is to create social and economic change in the students' home countries (Figure 1). This model is a composite of examples from several programs, including those available to individuals in Georgia and Moldova during the period of this

study (e.g., Edmund Muskie Scholarship Program and OSF sponsored programs[12]) and more recent programs, such as the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program (Cosentino, et al., 2013). In a review of the models available and related program materials, certain program elements and assumptions are common. These basic assumptions are included in this model, as the student is expected to move through each phase of the program logic model with success and be prepared to and able to create change at home.

Figure 1. Logic Model of International Scholarship Programs That Aim to Promote Social and Economic Change in Low- and Middle-Income Countries
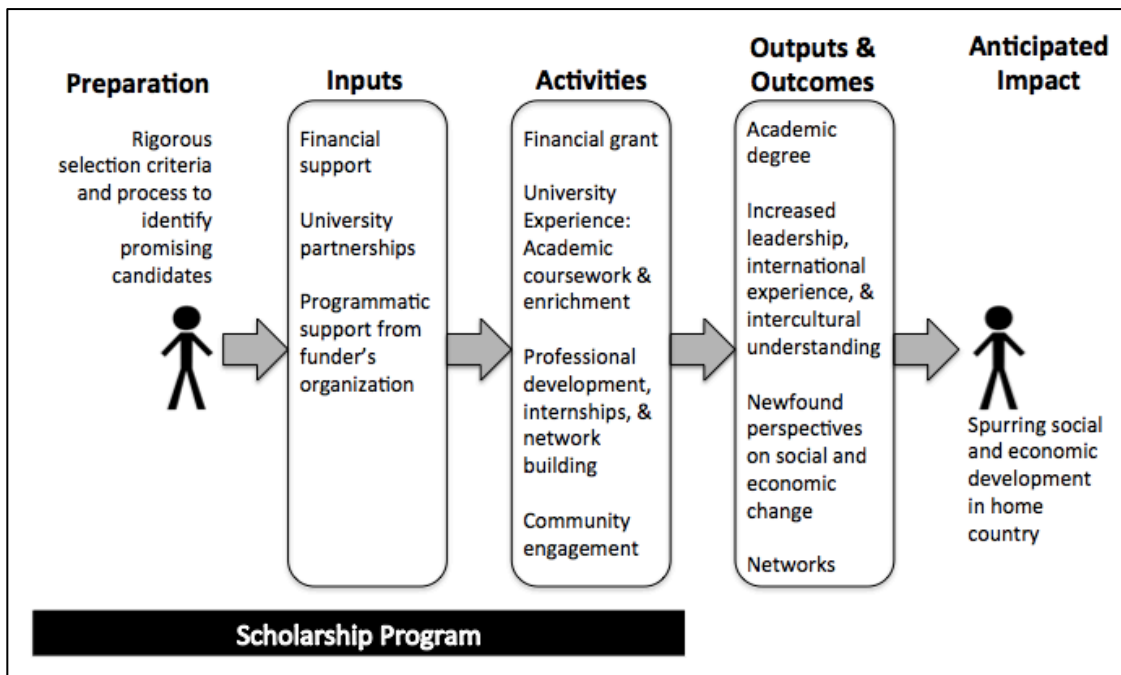
This logic model charts the pathway that the participant experiences in these programs through five key stages:

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[12] For parts of the model's description, I rely on my own experience managing scholarship programs with the Open Society Institute from 2003-2009 in the former Soviet Union countries.

- *Program preparation*: As part of the scholarship program administration, the scholarship opportunity must be shared with potential applicants, applications must be collected and reviewed, and a rigorous selection process takes place. Associated activities include program advertisement and candidate recruitment; management of application materials; setting of selection criteria and processes, including determining selection committees; review of applications, including possible interviewing of candidates; announcement of finalists, and communication with unsuccessful candidates. For most programs offered in the former Soviet Union, transparency and timeliness of the competition was considered of upmost importance.

- *Inputs*: Assuming that an effective selection process has identified promising candidates, the scholarship grantee is selected for the program. Three key inputs are offered to the individual at this time: financial support from governments, foundations, or other sponsors, which covers the bulk of the costs to study; an agreement with the host universities, which typically is arranged so that the participant receives a partial tuition waiver and additional on-campus support or accommodation; and additional programmatic support from the sponsoring organizations or a third-party contractor (such as pre-departure orientations, summer academic coursework, funds for technology or conference participation, etc.).

- *Activities*: With these inputs, the participant travels to their host university, supported by a generous grant that covers tuition, fees, living costs, health

insurance, and other costs typical of student life at the host university. While studying, students are expected to not only learn in the classroom, they are also expected to take advantage of academic enrichment opportunities, such as guest speakers, campus clubs, and access to the writing center. They are also encouraged to be involved in professional development opportunities, such as job shadowing, informational interviews, and internships; in some programs, professional internships are required. In addition, participants are advised to build a network of those who may be helpful to their future success, including with those in their academic or professional field, faculty and instructors, NGO and civil society actors, and others connected with their home country or region.

- *Outputs and outcomes*: Upon the completion of the scholarship, the individual is expected to have attained both concrete, tangible results (outputs) and a change in skills, attitudes, or perspectives (outcomes). These typically include an academic degree, plus additional "soft skills" needed in their professional field, in areas such as leadership. In addition, it is expected that by living and learning in another country, students will have greater familiarity with other peoples, places, and culture, as well as an increased ability to understand, appreciate, and communicate with others (intercultural understanding). Students are also expected to have acquired newfound perspectives on and approaches to address social and economic change, with the assumption that this knowledge can be applied in their home countries. Finally, students are expected to have an increased network of

both personal and professional contacts, both among the other participants in the program and outside of the program.

- *Anticipated impact*: These outputs and outcomes indicate that the scholarship program participant is well-prepared, motivated, and dedicated to create social and economic change in the home country. Notably, few program models discuss *how* the individual will do this; when compared to other elements of the scholarship program, there are rarely details or guidelines[13] about what may happen to the individual following their scholarship period, how they can meet the programs' expectations of social and economic change, or even where they are expected to reside (although the assumption is that they will return to their home countries). In addition, unlike other parts of the model that are bound in time (e.g., during an academic degree), there is rarely any timeline associated with expected change in the home country[14].

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[13] In the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program (MCFSP) model, Cosentino and her team (2013) provide more detail about expected behaviors and experiences for program graduates than have been seen in earlier models. These include "go back or remain in home regions; give back to [scholars'] communities through work, volunteering, activism, or advocacy; attain positions of influence" (p. 8). Moreover, in a more recent paper, the MasterCard Foundation and Mathematica Policy Research (2015) suggest that graduates are expected to be "transformative leaders," defined as individuals who will bring about positive change, lasting change, and ethical action in their communities. Specifically, positive change was defined "as change that increases the welfare of a leader's community – as opposed to his or her own personal welfare – or changes that redresses long-standing social inequalities" and lasting change as having an impact that lasts beyond the individual's time as a leader (p. 2). While these additional definitions and guidelines do help to clarify the expectation on scholarship students, they are still quite ambiguous. Finally, few similar guidelines were available to students who participated in programs in Moldova and Georgia during the period of this study.
[14] In the MCFSP model, it suggested that true impact of the scholarship program should be measured in the long term, with some significant outcomes emerging in 10 to 15 years (Cosentino, et al, 2013).

The logic model provided here is relevant to this study as it summarizes the expected trajectory of scholarship program participants offered in the newly independent states following the collapse of the Soviet Union. As stated previously, the goal of many programs was economic and social transition – at that time the objective was the conversion from a planned central economy to a more democratic and open society. (An overview of the specific scholarship programs included in this study is part of Chapter Three.)

Likewise, the model highlights gaps in scholarly understanding of how international scholarship program grantees actually create change in their low- and middle-income countries. Existing models suggest that the change will result, yet few details are provided on how the change will happen, whether individuals who live outside of their country are also "giving back" to their home nations, and what circumstances in the home country might influence the diversity of experiences among scholarship program alumni.

Section 2.5: Focus of this dissertation and research questions

In review of the research discussed above, international scholarship programs are clearly valued as a tool for national development and are demonstrably grounded in human capital logic. Yet important questions are missing from the logic models and have gone mostly unaddressed by researchers: How do graduates of scholarship programs apply the education and experience gained during their scholarship period to contribute to their home country's social and economic development? In the literature, one finds

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support for two ends of the spectrum: on the one side, students with overseas degrees return home to spearhead the development of their economies, and at the other, social reforms that talented individuals are siphoned off to wealthier countries thereby weakening their ties and potential contributions to their home countries. In both cases, human capital theory is relevant: education is a financial investment in a person that results in economic and social development returns for himself, his family, his firm, and his community – in the place where the individual chooses to live.

Therefore, when considering these two ends of the spectrum – returning to one's country to promote change and living abroad and having less influence – one familiar with the experiences of scholarship programs participants realizes that this continuum is severely limiting: there is little consideration for the home context to which the students return and how this environment might influence the way they interact with their family, firm, and community. Similarly, there is little attention paid to the overseas environment that the student may choose and what benefits an overseas scholarship alumnus may be able to provide to family, friends, and colleagues in the home country. Moreover, the expectation that a tertiary degree will always link to a higher salary has rarely been tested in comparative studies in low- and middle-income countries, especially when a degree was earned outside of the home country.

In reality, scholarship alumni are diverse, as are the various ways they contribute to national development, the diverse locations of their current residence, and the myriad national contextual factors which may support or limit alumni's ability to contribute to social and economic advancement in the country of origin. Moreover, the national

development impact of scholarship programs is best explained through the experiences of these "agents of change" themselves, who have first-hand experiences in these activities and can intimately consider their own and their classmates' role in national social and economic development.

To better understand the complexity of how scholarship program alumni conceive of their contributions to national social and economic development, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are there differences between scholarship recipients from Georgia and Moldova in how they view their subsequent contributions to national development?

2. To what extent is there a difference between Georgian and Moldovan scholarship recipients who live abroad and those who live in the home country in terms of how they perceive their contributions to national development?

3. To what extent do scholarship alumni cite home country contextual factors as barriers or supports for their perceived contributions to national development?

With these questions framing the exploration ahead, this study uses qualitative research methods to ascertain how Georgia and Moldova scholarship alumni conceive of their contributions to home country development and to determine the differences, if any, between countries. To provide a background on the two countries included in this study, the next chapter provides a historical and contextual overview of the Republics of Georgia and Moldova.

Chapter Three: History and Relevant Background

In this chapter the historical background and contemporary national profiles of both Georgia and Moldova are summarized to provide context for and enrich the findings of this study. As both republics gained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the historical overview will focus on this point forward, although events from earlier periods will be included to explain significant historical or contextual features. First the Republic of Georgia will be profiled, followed by the Republic of Moldova. The chapter will close with a synopsis of the main scholarship programs in which the interviewees participated.

Section 3.1: Historical background on the Republic of Georgia

To begin the story of Georgia's transition from communism to modern-day democracy, one must look first to Georgia's geopolitical position before the Russian Soviet Army annexed the province in 1921. Prior to this and throughout its history, Georgia had been a fairly autonomous region, mostly due to its rugged mountain landscape, its early adoption of Christianity among Muslim neighbors, and its unique language. The republic maintained much of its autonomy during the Soviet Union, as well, and as Parsons (1982) argues, "the success of Soviet policy in displacing the Georgian nation as the focus of its people's loyalties and in replacing the nation with the state remains in doubt" (p. 548). Notably, Joseph Stalin was a Georgian native, resulting in the Georgian population holding mixed views on his leadership and legacy (Bell, 2013).

Georgia was one of the early republics to declare its sovereignty from the crumbing Soviet Union in April 1991. Soon thereafter Georgia was engaged in a civil war until 1995, with a struggle between the new government in Tbilisi and three regions that had been autonomous oblasts under the Soviet Union and wanted to be recognized as independent states: Abkhazia in the northwest, along the Black Sea, and sharing a border with Russia; South Ossetia in the north, also along the border with Russia; and Adjara in the southwest, on the Black Sea coast. As a result of the fighting, more than 210,000 individuals were displaced, with many Georgians living in temporary camps (UNHCR, 2009).

With such violence and unrest within the Georgian borders, a skilled leader and the former Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shevardnadze, was called from Moscow to assume the role of president in 1995. He was re-elected in 2000, but in November 2003, when the parliamentary elections were widely believed to be fraudulent, the citizens protested against the nepotistic and corrupt government (Mitchell, 2004). The demonstration, known as the "Rose Revolution," ended when protestors entered the Parliament, carrying roses and demanding the resignation of the current government. Shevardnadze accepted defeat and stepped aside, leaving an opportunity for new leadership.

At the time, the Rose Revolution was considered a remarkable occurrence. As Fairbanks (2004) noted, it was a "stunning reversal" to the typically fraudulent elections so commonplace in the former Soviet republics at that time, adding "this unexpected opportunity should make us reconsider the methods by which fragile openings to

democracy may be sustained and widened" (p. 110-111). Three visionaries were credited

with leading the revolution; among them was then 35-year-old Mikheil Saakashvili.

Saakashvili ran for the open presidency and was elected by 96.2%, assuming the position

of President in January 2004.

Into this "fragile opening to democracy," victors of the Rose Revolution set a

clear mandate for government reform. In a piece entitled "The Way Forward" for the

Harvard International Review (2006), President Saakashvili wrote:

> Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia inherited a wide array of challenges inherent to the post-Soviet political, economic, and geopolitical landscape: entrenched corruption, unaccountable political elites, external manipulation, a lack of energy security, ethnic discord, and a government unable to pursue comprehensive reforms. The country also inherited something new for fledgling post-Soviet states: choices. Independence brought new opportunities for economic and political revitalization and also demanded that leaders form a comprehensive vision for the national future – a duty that had not rested in Tbilisi's hands for seven decades. (p. 68)

Saakashvili continued by spell out the facts: He was leading the "Georgian vision" which

is to "right the mistakes of the past and transform society" and guide the country to

flourish in its "role as a Black Sea nation with a European future" (p. 68-69). He also

argued that the government would fight corruption, revitalize the economy, and reform its

educational institutions. Georgia's future was with the west, with a strategy to copy

successful European or American policies – and to distance itself from Russia and its

post-Soviet past.

Notably, Saakashvili – who is commonly referred to as "Mischa," the diminutive

for Mikheil – was a participant in a U.S. Government-sponsored Edmund S. Muskie

scholarship program and had received a Master's in Law Degree from Columbia

University in New York in 1994. By many accounts, he valued western – primarily

American – higher education and had learned a great deal about democracy and

leadership while abroad. As Ó Beacháin (2010) notes, "What separated Saakashvili was his style and political technique, much of which he learnt while in the United States" (p.105).

To carry out his "Georgian vision" staring in 2004, the new government set about to replace ministers, department heads, and other employees who were associated with the Soviet system and were therefore deemed corrupt; these posts were filled with people supported reform and espoused liberal values. One obvious group of possible new employees was those who had lived and studied in the west like Saakashvili himself. Given the financial situation in the country at the time, few individuals could have afforded a degree from the west without support from a foreign government, a private foundation, or host universities[15]. According to various accounts, the new Georgian government sought and hired those with western higher education, "introducing a new ruling class," with freshly-appointed cabinet members and junior ministers in their twenties and thirties (Ó Beacháin, 2010, p. 107).

Under the Saakashvili government, reforms were not only talking points or good intentions. Several large-scale changes occurred, including developing relationships with Europe and the United States, encouraging foreign investments, targeting and rooting out corruption, and streamlining and automatizing administrative processes. In this period of rapid transformation, Georgia was recognized as an international "top 10 reformer" in

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[15] Some allege that the U.S. government aimed to overthrow the Shevardnadze government through educational exchange programs. In response, Mitchell (2009) explains, "It is certainly true that a broad range of American programs, including […] programs such as the Muskie Fellowship program and other exchange programs for students and young leaders, contributed to the conditions that made a democratic breakthrough in Georgia possible. However, to conclude the Rose Revolution was in any way the goal of these U.S.-supported programs would be inaccurate" (p. 113).

terms of business development (World Bank, 2006) and made considerable jumps in the

corruption perception index, from 124th place out of 133 countries in 2003 to 55th place

among 177 countries a decade later (Transparency International, 2016).

Higher education was also significantly reformed under the Saakashvili

government, as quality assurance measures were introduced and enforced. For example,

in the years following Georgian independence, the number of universities skyrocketed

from 19 universities in 1991 to 26 public and 214 private institutions by 2005

(Sharvashidze, 2005). This was mainly due to the presence of widespread corruption, as

university licensing and admissions provided additional income to underfunded

institutions (Janashia, 2004) and private institutions could be found in the buildings of

kindergartens and schools, hospitals, and former factories (National Center for

Educational Accreditation, 2006). Following a period of government reform including

quality control efforts, 28 accredited public and private universities operate in Georgia

today (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2015).

Despite these significant changes in the Georgian government and higher

education, several challenges remain prominent for the country today, including

economic development and protection of human rights. One significant challenge is the

ongoing tension between the government in Tbilisi and two of the autonomous regions[16]

within its national borders, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2008, fighting broke out

between ethnic Georgians, Russians, and South Ossetians living in South Ossetia,

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[16] The other region mentioned earlier, Adjara, has had fairly friendly relations with the government in
recent years.

highlighting increasing tensions between Georgia and Russia. A nine-day war[17] ensued, with a second front opening along the Black Sea as Russia sent support to Abkhazia. In the end, both South Ossetia and Abkhazia gained additional territory, and in doing so, severely challenged Georgia's authority, suggesting that the Saakashvili administration was not as strong or stable as it broadcasted on the international stage. In parallel, foreign investors were hesitant to continue their plans: The republic's upward economic trajectory halted.

In 2013, Saakashvili was not re-elected amid rumors of fraud, perceived authoritarianism, and inappropriate personal choices. He left office in shame. Giorgi Margvelashvili became president, considered to be a more conservative candidate with more centralized policies. Today Georgia continues its quest for closer alliances with the European Union. According to the According to the European Partnership Index (2014), a meta-analysis tool of 823 indicators that estimates a country's likelihood to join the European Union, Georgia second out of all European Neighbourhood Policy nations, and in 2015, Georgians were granted visa-free travel in Europe. Citing a population of 4.5 million in 2016, Georgia's GDP is $3,729, placing it in the World Bank's lower middle income grouping (Work Bank, 2016b).

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[17] Many Georgians cited deliberate Russian provocation and aggression; a special commission appointed by the European Union claims that the views on each side of the issue are "widely divergent" and "thus the truth seems increasingly difficult to ascertain and verify" (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, 2009, p. 7).

Section 3.2: Historical background on the Republic of Moldova

To better understand Moldova's transition from communism to the modern day, one must look first at country's geopolitical position. Before accession into the Soviet Union, the territory of Moldova was considered part of the Romanian empire: Moldovia was the easternmost province. The Soviet Union annexed the region in 1940. When Romania joined Hitler's Axis and invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, most of the land of modern-day Moldova was recaptured – along with a thin slice of land east of the Dniester River which is today known as Trasnistria. By the end of World War II, the Soviet Union had taken back this area and it became the Moldovian Socialist Soviet Republic.

During the Soviet era, Moldova was considered an agricultural hub, given its southeasterly location and relatively long growing season. Throughout Soviet occupation, Moldova retained much of its Romanian culture, including the language of Romanian, as well as adopting Russian.[18] In fact, the question of whether Moldovan cultural identity is separate from Romanian cultural identity remains a decisive issue. According to King (1997) the separation of Romania and Moldova is mostly arbitrary, as a distinct Moldova political and cultural identity was a tactic cultivated by the Soviet government to "buttress Soviet territorial acquisitions" (p. 16). The conversation of separate identities continues to today – both among Moldovans and with their Romanian neighbors.

Following the lead of other republics, Moldova declared its independence in August 1991. The new country implemented a market economy in the early 1990s, although it was slow to grow, and many Moldovans emigrated abroad. For the year 2000

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[18] Of important note, Moldova and Moldovans are commonly used in the Romanian language, whereas speakers of Russian prefer "Moldovia" and "Moldovians."

alone, a reported 32,759 citizens left Moldova, which is slightly more than twice that of

the population which left Georgia, a country with a higher population (World Bank,

2014). Those who remained in Moldova received significant remittances from their

family members. National-level statistics show that large sums of money were sent back

to Moldova for the years 2004 to 2008 (as reported in Canagarajah & Kholmatov, 2010),

with 704 million USD sent in 2004 and 1.182 million sent in 2006. Moreover, according

to 2002 data from the OECD (2006), 22.8% of Moldova's Gross Domestic Product

(GDP) comes from remittances, as the country has the 6th highest rate of remittances as a

percentage of GDP in the world.

During the late 1990s and 2000s, Moldovans living in the country –

disproportionately the youth and the elderly, as many middle-aged workers sought

employment abroad – existed under a government with an ongoing close relationship

with Russia and the neighboring country of Ukraine, with little change in terms of the

Soviet influence on the cultural, political, economic, and social systems. Notably,

Communist and conservative parties with close ties to Russia maintained control over the

government, often winning the majority seats in the Parliament. Moreover, perceived

corruption remained prevalent throughout the country, with a 2009 report noting that

"corruption is one of the most serious problem [sic] facing Moldovan citizens, but

Moldova is the only country in the Commonwealth of Independent States without persons

or public servants jailed" when committing offenses, and that "judges continue to be

highly susceptible to corruption and public control" (Freedom House, 2009).

Moreover, vestiges of the Soviet system also remained prominent in Moldovan higher education. Although Moldova was a signatory to the Bologna Process in 2005, indicating an intention to align with European higher education policies, national efforts to complete the reorganization of higher education are still in progress and other national reforms have "failed to take into account resistance and reaction from key stakeholders" leading to a lack of institutional autonomy and change (Bugaian, Cotelnic, Niculita, Pojar, Todos, and Turcan, 2016, p. 89). Increasingly, Moldovan universities are seeking international partnerships to improve research, curricula, and pedagogy, yet university administrators report a lack of "coherent and coordinated national government strategy" to enhance these internationalization efforts (Kushnarenko & Cojocari, 2012, p. 141). Today, Moldovan higher education has 18 public and 11 private universities (Ministry of Education of Moldova, 2016), as well as a new Educational Code of Moldova (2014) that attempts to reform Moldovan education across all levels and addresses the issue of corruption and unfair testing directly.

Another area of consistent strain for the government – similar to the experience of Georgia – is the government's relationship with regional groups who seek autonomy. In Moldova, there have been two regions seeking sovereignty: Transnistria in the east (along the border with Ukraine) and Gagauzia in the south. While conflict between the Moldovan government and Gagauzia was settled peacefully through an agreement for special legal status for Gaguzian residents, Transnistria remains steadfast in its quest for independence. Much of its political and economic support comes from Russia (Puiu, 2015) and Russia has established a consulate in the country. In 2009, NATO reported that

the "separatist region of Transnistria poses the Republic of Moldova's most pressing challenge" (2016) and the ongoing tensions between Moldovan and Transnistrian governments have limited Moldova's ability to secure its boundaries and attract foreign investment.

In April 2009, a parliamentarian election was held. Even before the official results – expected to indicate continued support for the Communist Party – were announced, activists called the results tainted. The protest began via social media with people using Twitter – and other web-based platforms – to call attention to the issue (Barry, 2009), with the protest being identified as the "Twitter Revolution." More than 30,000 protestors gathered in the center of the city, calling out "we are Europe," "we are Romanians," and "down with Communism" (New York Times, 2009). Snap elections were set for July 29th, with results indicating that the Communists had the majority of the votes but not enough support from other parties to gain control in the parliament. Instead, several minority parties united under the name "Alliance for European Integration" and decreed that together they would move the country's policymaking in a European direction.

Although the coalition was slow to organize and determine leadership positions, it did usher in reforms, with specific ministries seeking external guidance and financial support to design and launch new initiatives. Like was seen in Georgia, those with western education were a likely group of individuals to return to head ministries, although this effort was far less robust and coordinated as that which had taken place in Georgia five years earlier. Yet the Moldovan government has continued to push for reform, and according to the European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership

Countries (2014), Moldova was ranked first out of all European Neighbourhood Policy nations in its "progress to European integration."

In addition, Moldova has received support from its neighbor Romania, a member of the European Union since 2007. Highlighting the cultural similarities and shared history, Romanian officials have shown significant interest in Moldova, including offering any interested Moldovan citizen a Romanian passport – and thereby access to free travel around the European Union. By Romanian estimates, more than one million Moldovans have either received or applied for a Romanian passport by 2010 (Bidder, 2010).

Closer to home, Moldovans re-elected a Pro-European government in 2014, but by a very thin measure, indicating to many experts that the country continues to be polarized between Russia and the European Union, with potential difficulties yet ahead (Brett & Knott, 2014). Recently, in September 2015, a banking fiasco resulted in nearly one billion dollars (nearly one-eighth of the country's GDP) discovered outside of the country, resulting a huge inflation problem and protests demanding reform. Protests continued into early 2016, as Moldovans protested once again for a fair government, with leaders who were "strong" and could not be "blackmailed" (Gillet, 2016). Moldova's population currently stands at 3.556 million (in 2014 figures) with a GNI of $2,560, categorizing it as a lower middle income country (World Bank, 2016c). According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index of 2015, Moldova has a ranking of 103rd out of 168 countries (Transparency International, 2016).

Section 3.3: Overview of U.S. scholarship programs offered in both countries

Scholarship programs to study in the United States were available for both Georgian and Moldovan students starting soon after national independence in 1991. For the purposes of this section, only Master's level programs will be discussed, although sponsored academic study for students from the former Soviet countries was available at the secondary, undergraduate, and doctoral levels, as well as exchanges among faculty and researchers, business entrepreneurs, young political leaders, public servants, journalists, and other professions (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2016; IREX, 2014).

Of the various Master's level scholarship programs offered, the Edmund S. Muskie Program is perhaps most well known and is often referred to as "the Muskie program" and participants are called "Muskies." Established as part of the Freedom for Russia and the Emerging Eurasia Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act (1992) and funded by the U.S. Department of State, the Muskie program works to "ensure that countries in the region continue healthy economic and democratic growth" by bringing emerging leaders from the former Soviet republics to the United States for one or two years of academic study (IREX, 2016). The program began in 1992 and admitted the last cohort in 2012. The eligible fields of study shifted over the course of the program, although the attention was on "applied" social science fields – including public affairs, law, education, journalism, environmental science, library and information science, economics, public health, and international relations – and in business (IREX, 2015; Embassy of the United States in Moldova, 2014). Students were placed at various

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U.S. host universities, with American institutions applying to host Muskies each year and typically providing cost-share (reduced tuition or student fees) for these students. Upon completion of the program[19], graduates were expected to return to their home countries and share their experiences and newfound values with their workplaces and communities, as well as take leadership roles in various nonprofit, private, and government agencies (IREX, 2016). According to records maintained by national administrative offices, 365 individuals from Georgia and 155 individuals from Moldova were awarded the scholarship from 1992 to 2012 (IREX, 2015; Embassy of the United States in Moldova, 2014).

Another type of U.S. scholarship program that was available in both Georgia and Moldova was a specialized program to build capacity in specific ministries in both countries, co-funded by the respective national governments and the Open Society Foundations. In Georgia, this initiative was split between two programs, the Georgian Education Program – which funded Masters of Education degrees for 24 current employees in the Ministry of Education and Science from 2006 to 2009[20] – and the Civil Servants Award which funded Master's degrees for 15 employees in the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Environment between the years 2011 and 2014. In Moldova, the program was called the "Professional Training and Development Program for Civil Servants from Moldova" and had funding for 18 scholarships offered to employees across multiple priority ministries starting in 2011 (A.

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[19] Earning a Master's degree was not a requirement of the Muskie program, nor did the program guarantee funding adequate for a full degree. However, most Muskies finished their Master's degree.
[20] In the final year of the program, the Open Society Foundations was the sole funder.

Muset, personal communication, October 20, 2014). For these programs, placements were made at specific host universities, so cohorts of grantees were placed together; at some U.S. host universities, Georgian and Moldovan grantees enrolled concurrently in the same programs. Upon completion of their degree, scholarship participants were expected to continue working at their respective ministry for approximately three years, although not necessarily in the same position or division as their original post.

Another scholarship program that aimed to build the capacity of a specific field of practice is the Open Society Foundation's Social Work Fellowship Program. The program was offered in seven countries in the south Caucasus and Central Asia, including in Georgia from the years 2000 to 2011, with a total of 27 Georgians participating. Two U.S. universities with Master's of Social Work (MSW) degrees hosted students, with all scholarship participants "clustered" at these two universities (Watkins, 2013). After they earned their MSW degrees, participants were expected to return home. In 2008, a "home country project" component was added to the fellowship; the goal of this project was for the graduates to apply the skills and knowledge gained, as well as make professional connections. Examples included providing trainings for students or collecting baseline data for a new research project. OSF provided financial support for these projects.

In addition to these scholarships, there are two other programs in which individuals in this study participated. The first is a scholarship scheme of the Government of Georgia that aims to promote student mobility and access to quality overseas education for Georgian citizens. Originally established by President Saakashvili and transferred to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia in 2010, these governmental

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scholarships have been awarded to approximately 100 students per year at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level (T. Gakhokidze, personal communication, April 1, 2016). Applicants were expected to gain their own admission to their choice university in any country and then apply to the scholarship for funding, and through a competitive process, the government chose which students to support. In the current iteration of the scholarship, called the "International Master's and Doctoral Degree Program," master and doctoral graduates must "return to Georgia and continue working in the relevant sector for at least three years," and the "most successful graduates will be offered profiled state employment" (International Education Center of Georgia, 2016). Program alumni are encouraged to participate in networking, research activities, and structured alumni programming such as a small grants program, trainings, and thematic meetings.

The second program is a small scholarship program administered jointly by a foundation and a single U.S. university. Since there are few recipients of the scholarship, the specific name of the program is not mentioned explicitly to protect the identity of the recipient who participated in this research. The style of this scholarship program is similar to the others mentioned in this section, with an expectation that the recipient will apply their master's education to improving the status of the home country. Citizens of multiple countries are eligible for this scholarship, and students must first be admitted to the university before they are eligible for the scholarship, which is competitively selected.

These are only a subsection of the types of scholarships offered to Georgians and Moldovans to study in the United States in the years of post-Soviet independence. However, they provide an overview of the style of scholarships available to students

during the period of this research, as well as a glimpse to the program's aims and expectations.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Based on interviews with 40 scholarship alumni, this qualitative study had three aims: 1) to understand the phenomenon of how alumni define "giving back" to their home countries, 2) to identify supports or barriers, if any, to their efforts that are specific to the national context, and 3) to compare findings from two countries to reveal key differences in alumni's experiences by country of origin. Interviews were conducted in October 2014 to January 2015, with transcription, coding, analysis, writing and revising occurring in the period of January 2015 to March 2016. This chapter describes this study's methodological approach, methods and instrumentation, participation recruitment and selection, data collection process, analysis, and validity concerns.

Section 4.1: Methodological approach

This qualitative research incorporated elements of both a phenomenological approach and a comparative analysis approach. First, the researcher aimed to better understand the phenomenon of how scholarship program participants perceive their contributions to social and economic development in their home countries. This phenomenological approach was inspired by Schutz's (1970) theory of social phenomenology wherein research serves to explore the subjective experience of individuals in their daily lives, allowing them to make meaning of their experiences and then to create judgments of these experiences. As Natanson (1970) explains, Schutz's social phenomenology argued that individuals see the world as "ours," and "hold that my fellow-man [sic] is initially recognized as a 'someone' (not a 'something') and, further, a

'someone like me'" (p.103). Specific to this study, scholarship alumni were asked to explain their experiences of "giving back" to their home countries following their studies abroad, as well as evaluate their own and their peers' contributions to social and economic change.

Second, a comparative analysis approach was employed after the qualitative data were collected. This approach was intended to highlight distinct similarities and differences in the two sets of data, in line with Ragin's case-oriented approach to comparative study (2013). As Ragin notes, individual cases have their own "intrinsic value" yet through analytic comparison, they also can produce insight into "categories of empirical phenomenon" (p. 35). Whereas comparative analysis approaches in the field of international education are often used to select and copy successful programs, rate current systems, and identify areas for improvement (Bray, 2014), this comparative approach sought to compare and contrast how two country's home contexts influence how international scholarship program alumni's perceived ability to influence social and economic change at home.

In addition, it is worth noting that few studies conducted on international scholarship programs have included a cross-national comparative element. In a review of scholarship program methodology, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom has argued, "Where comparative designs have been used…some of the most detailed evaluation results have been produced" (2014, p. 28).

Section 4.2: Research methods and instrumentation

Interview data were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with scholarship program alumni. The interview protocol (Appendix A) was organized around the following themes: 1) scholarship program and return experience, 2) perceptions of economic and social development in his or her home country, 3) perceived connection between the scholarship program and development in the home country, and 4) national contextual factors. The aim of the first two sections was to encourage the interviewees to provide detailed information about their programs (to confirm their eligibility for the study) and to have them think about their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of social and economic change since they've finished their scholarship, especially as some of the interviewees had finished their scholarships nearly two decades ago. The second two sections asked interviewees to consider their – and other scholarship alumni's – role in economic and social change and the supports and barriers they encountered in creating change in their home countries. Finally, the protocol was designed to allow further probing on the topic of engaging in social and economic development from overseas for interviewees who currently live outside their country of origin.

The protocol was written in English. As all participants have a Master's degree from the United States, conversational fluency in English was assumed. With this in mind, the technique of *responsive interviewing* was utilized. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), responsive interviewing emphasizes the collection of people's experiences and perspectives and accepts and adjusts to the personalities of the interviewer and interviewee. Rubin and Rubin assert that in responsive interviewing, "the researcher's

role is to gather narratives, descriptions, and interpretations from an array of conversational partners and put them together in a reasoned way that re-creates a culture…in a way that participants would recognize as real" (2012, p. 7).

Section 4.3: Participant recruitment, selection, and response rate

To be included in the study, participants needed to meet the following criteria: 1) identify their country of origin as Georgia or Moldova, 2) have participated in a scholarship program to study at the Master's level in the United States[21], 3) started this scholarship program in 1996 or later[22], and 4) have completed the program. At the outset, it was estimated that approximately 30-80 scholarships were available to students from each country since 1996, so the total eligible population would be approximately 500-1000 alumni per country.

Participants were identified through scholarship program alumni lists, alumni associations, and social networks. Contacts were made through partnerships with three educational organizations in each Georgia and Moldova, plus the U.S. Embassy and its educational focus affiliations in each country. These eight offices offered to share information about this research and sought participants via multiple sources: listserv

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[21] Many of these scholarships were given in social science and the humanities fields, with an emphasis on applied social science. Two reasons that explain this focus include: 1) the U.S. had the perception that these academic fields were weakened during Soviet times and needed greatest development in terms of understanding, teaching, and research, and 2) funders believed that these fields spurred critical thought and leadership skills which could help open/reform their countries towards democratic thinking and multiple viewpoints.

[22] The starting date of 1996 is appropriate for this study due to the fact that many scholarship programs offered in Georgia and Moldova had the explicit aim to assist the development of the newly independent states following the dissolution of the Soviet Union began in 1992, yet it was several years before these programs ramped up to achieve maximum number of participants.

announcements, emails, messages via Facebook, phone calls, and in the case of Moldova, an invited presentation on my research with a group of alumni. In Georgia, these organizations are the Center for International Education (an independent organization with operational ties to the Open Society Foundation Georgia), the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) national office, the American Councils for International Education (American Councils) national office, and the U.S. Embassy's American Center for Information Resources; all three offices are located in the national capital of Tbilisi. In Moldova, these organizations are the Educational Advising Center (an independent organization which spun off from the Soros Foundation Moldova), the IREX national office, the American Councils national office,[23] and the American Resource Center (a U.S. Embassy sponsored educational affiliate); all offices are located in Chisinau, the capital of Moldova. Many of these offices maintain lists of alumni who meet the participant selection criteria – the quality of the lists and the extent of the alumni reach vary considerably among organization – and they also often serve as hosting organizations for alumni events. Additional information about these organizations and contacts at each office are listed in Appendix B.

All eligible participants were directed to either contact the research directly by email or phone or to visit a custom-made website[24] with more information about the research, which provided information about the project and a link to an online registration form. On the registration form, participants were asked to share their 1) home country, 2)

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[23] Ultimately, meetings with staff from this office were not held due to travel schedules. However, emails were exchanged with the country director, who was informed of this research. It is not known whether this office was able to share information of this research with any alumni lists.
[24] The website address was https://internationalscholarshipsresearch.wordpress.com.

scholarship program and sponsor, 3) year the scholarship started, 4) host U.S. university, 5) field of study pursued, 6) city and country of current residence, 7) current position of employment, 7) sex, and 8) contact information. In addition, possible participants were asked whether they would be interested in completing an online survey at a later date; this portion of the research was ultimately not included in this study.

From the list of those respondents who indicate they are willing to be interviewed, 20 alumni per country were invited for an interview. In the case of Georgia, 26 alumni registered to participate. In the case of Moldova, 25 alumni registered to participate in the study; of these, five potential participants were either ineligible based on the selection criteria or did not respond to a request for interview. From those who registered to participate, the aim was to select a diverse group of alumni to meet "maximum variation" in the sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with the intention that a diverse profile of alumni would provide as much range in terms of perspective and experience as possible. From among the Georgian sample, it was possible to select for diversity among the demographic factors to get a range of years of participation, host universities, degrees pursued, etc. In Moldova, several additional rounds of email communication were needed to recruit a minimum of 20 willing participants.

The final sample of participants is summarized in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1

Interview Sample Demographic Information

Demographic Factors	Georgian Interviewees	Moldovan Interviewees
Sex		
Female	15	11
Male	5	9
Scholarship program sponsor		
U.S. government	12	16
Private foundation	7	3
Home country government	4	0
Host university	0	1
Year began scholarship		
1996-1999	3	2
2000-2003	0	3
2004-2007	9	6
2008-2010	4	5
2011-2014	4	4
Country of residency at time of interview		
Home country	17	11
Another European country	2	3
United States	0	4
Other countries	1	2

Note. Some alumni participated on joint-funded programs, so they may have identified more than one program sponsor. In addition, most scholarship programs ask for a tuition waiver or reduced fees from the host university, so host universities also provided funding for many of these students.

Section 4.4: Data collection process

Interview data were collected between October and December 2016, during five-week visits to each country. (Due to scheduling conflicts, one interview was conducted via Skype after the researcher had returned to the United States in January 2016.) After alumni indicated interest in being interviewed and registered via the online form, the researcher contacted the interviewees to arrange a meeting time. Additional information about the research, the Information Sheet for Research (required by the IRB), and the interview protocol were sent via email to all candidates in advance of the interview. The protocol did not change during the four-month data collection process.

Interviews were held in locations selected by the participants. These included the interviewee's offices or organization's boardrooms, at the offices of the partnering organizations, in coffee shops and restaurants, in hotel lobbies, and in one case, in a participant's home. When the individual was living in the capital city, interviews were held in person. For those alumni who were living abroad or in another city in the country, or in cases where they were currently traveling abroad, interviews were conducted over Skype. In one case, a participant who lived in the capital city was ill and asked to move the interview from an in-person meeting to Skype. All interviewees agreed to be recorded by a portable microphone, and the researcher also took extensive notes during the interview itself. Typically, interviews lasted 45 to 90 minutes and the pace of interview was rapid.

Following the interview, a two- or three-page memo summarizing the interviews main points was created for each interviewee. If needed to clarify details, the researcher

may have contacted the interviewees via email with additional questions (e.g., in case where a comment was not heard correctly). All interview recordings were labeled, downloaded to the researcher's computer, and saved for later analysis. When the 20 interviews with each country's alumni were completed, a four-page memo of major themes from that set of interviews was prepared and shared with the participants for feedback. In the case of Georgia, 12 alumni responded with comments, and in the case of Moldova, six alumni responded. The summary memo was annotated with the participants' suggestions, as appropriate.

Section 4.5: Data analysis

The researcher transcribed the 40 interviews in the period of November 2014 to August 2015, starting first with the Moldovan interviews. Interview transcripts ranged in length from eight to 20 single-spaced pages. In some cases, small adjustments were made to individual interview memos, which had been originally written immediately following the in-country interview. Upon hearing the interview data again and transcribing word-by-word, the researcher was able to gain additional detail and greater insight; these points were added to individual memos to provide a more accurate and richer account of the interview.

Interviews were coded using a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The hybrid approach allowed the researcher to both keep the research questions and two longer summary memos in mind while coding (a deductive approach), "while allowing for themes to emerge direct

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from the data" through an inductive approach. During the period of September to November 2015, the interviews were coded using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software; the set of Georgian transcripts were coded first, followed by the set of Moldovan interviews. When new codes emerged from the inductive process, the researcher returned to earlier interviews to code these themes. As a result, there was one combined codebook (Appendix C) for both the Georgian and Moldovan sets of interviews created.

After coding was completed, the researcher used the codebook to compare responses both within groups (e.g., among Moldovans) and between groups (e.g., between Moldovans and Georgians). Those themes with significant frequency across the population – both within and between groups – that addressed the research questions were given close attention and are incorporated as findings in the following chapters.

In addition, several of the categories of participant responses were removed from consideration and were not included in the final codebook. These categories were removed primarily because they did not answer the research questions directly. Moreover, these categories of responses were often connected to protocol questions whose purpose was to guide the interview. For example, many alumni spoke about their satisfaction with their host university placement (in response to question 1, "can you briefly tell me about your scholarship experience?") or how grateful they were for their scholarship experience (in response to question 14, "Is there anything else you'd like to share with me?").

Section 4.6: Validity issues

In the qualitative data collection stages, two validity concerns were paramount. The first concern was the possibility that the interview sample in each country is skewed towards those who feel they have been exceptionally successful in "giving back" to their home country and are eager to share their good deeds through the interview process. To minimize this potential validity threat, interviewees were recruited via multiple strategies: equally engaging with all partnering organizations, using multiple listservs and alumni networks, promoting the study through social media, and intentionally seeking alumni living outside the national capital and abroad. Moreover, whenever possible, interviewees were selected across a variety of the demographic factors – none of which indicate perceived success.

The second qualitative validity concern was *interviewer bias* or the bias of certain data "standing out" based on individual preferences instead of thorough review and consideration of the data (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). In addition to acknowledging this bias, three steps were taken during collecting qualitative data in the field to combat this potential validity threat. First, 20 alumni from each country were interviewed to gain multiple viewpoints. With a total sample of 40 individual participants, this sizable sample will help mitigate the risk for outlier or skewed data responses. Second, as previously mentioned, the researcher formerly managed an undergraduate scholarship program for students from these countries. This situation presented a slight chance that one of these undergraduate scholars may also have participated in a Master's-level scholarship and be interested in participating in this research. Given the past power dynamic between

program manager and grantee, this relationship could influence a potential interviewee's responses. Therefore, the researcher excluded any alumni for whom she was their scholarship program manager; ultimately, this was not a problem in either Georgia or Moldova. Third, dominant themes will be shared with the interviewees by country at the conclusion of the fieldwork and their opinions and feedback was sought. Hopefully, any flagrant bias was noted by the participants and corrected.

Chapter 5: Findings Related to Differences between Alumni Groups

This chapter summarizes the findings of the first two research questions, related to the differences between Georgian and Moldovan alumni, and between alumni who live in the home country and those who live abroad, in their perceived contributions to national social and economic development. To provide detail on each of the section themes, there will be an introduction providing an overview of the topic and similarities in findings between the two countries. This will be followed by details on the Georgian case and then on the Moldovan case. Each section will conclude with a summary comparing the two cases to highlight the key differences in how alumni estimate their contributions to social and economic development to their home countries. Quotes from individual interviewees are included to illuminate main points.

Section 5.1: Differences between Georgian and Moldovan scholarship recipients in how they view their contributions to national development

When asked about how alumni contribute to social and economic development in their home countries, both Georgian and Moldovan alumni agree that it is primarily through their professional employment. The ways they contribute to national development span various professional activities, including founding and leading non-governmental organizations (NGOs), serving on boards, advising on government policy and programs, running and developing new civil society initiatives, conducting research, mentoring young employees, training others, reforming media, fighting corruption, advocating for marginalized individuals, and teaching. Scholarship alumni are working in

government, for international and national NGOs, in higher education, for multinational companies, in law firms, and as independent consultants. Many of the alumni – 39 of the 40 interviewees – either currently work, or have formerly worked, in positions that directly link with the academic expertise acquired in this U.S. Master's degree program.

Both Georgian and Moldovan scholarship alumni reported that in most cases, their U.S. degree positively influenced their career trajectories. Alumni described their American Master's degree as a type of credential that certified their knowledge and skills, especially as the American education was viewed to be of better quality than similar degrees offered at home. Moreover, alumni reported that the U.S. degree convinced possible employers of their pro-west attitude, work ethic, and English language ability. They noted that in most cases the U.S. degree led them to be qualified for higher-ranked jobs with greater salaries and had assisted them with promotions or being chosen as consultants.

Along with better job opportunities, most alumni (35 of 40) reported that the U.S. degree also had a positive impact on their current salaries or earning potential. With their U.S. academic credential, alumni reported that they could negotiate higher salaries on both the home country and international job market. However, six alumni (five of them Georgian) also stated that the U.S. degree raised their expectation for salaries, as well, and that good paying jobs in Georgia and Moldova were hard to find – with different reasons in each country, explored further below. A few alumni suggested that a U.S. degree indicated expectations for high salaries that dissuaded employers from hiring them.

Alumni spoke about how their scholarship education helped them to gain skills, knowledge, and experience – both inside classrooms and through community involvement and internship opportunities – in their current professions. Alumni credit their U.S. education with "learning how to learn" and mentioned how their time in the U.S. sparked their interest in new topics, gave them skills on how to find information and understand research, led them to develop new hobbies, and caused them to continue projects they began as international students. They also claimed that their education exposed them to a different lifestyle and they became more tolerant, open, and curious while abroad. Alumni from both countries beamed that their U.S. scholarship was a significant event in their lives, with half of the interviewees calling the experience "transformational" or using similar terms to indicate that it changed their life course.

Despite their overwhelming positive experiences in the U.S., almost all alumni mentioned that they retained a sincere concern about social and economic issues in their respective countries, highlighting pernicious problems, such as high unemployment in Georgia and pervasive corruption in Moldova. Notably, alumni also shared a deep and sincere interest in addressing these problems and fostering economic and social change in their countries. This is perhaps unsurprising, as these alumni were selected for their scholarship programs in part because of their desire to create change at home, and in some cases, their specific vision for a reformed nation. However, the fact that the alumni retained these interests for up to 16 years following their scholarship period illustrates their commitment to social and economic change and their devotion to their home countries.

As this study aims to assess how scholarship program graduates perceive their contributions to national development, it is important to note that the majority of alumni – 22 alumni from both countries – explicitly stated that "real change" must come from serious reforms orchestrated by and embedded in their national governments. This is perhaps due, in part, to the Soviet past, where the government aimed to holistically provide for the needs of the nation's citizens, and therefore civil society was virtually nonexistent. Alumni spoke about how, despite the longstanding presence of international organizations, incentives from the European Union and other foreign governments, and a growing national civil society, the government's leadership was at the core of sustained change for the country. Both Georgian and Moldovan alumni noted that this type of progress doesn't happen overnight and that real, sustained change takes time to trickle down from the government and become ingrained in social and economic norms.

On the whole, economic and social change – and the role that alumni have in influencing these processes – were viewed in a similar fashion by Georgian and Moldovan alumni. Collectively, alumni believe that their greatest contributions were made through their professional roles, that their U.S. education helped them to develop new skills and expertise that they use in these roles, and that "real change" must be come from – or at least be embedded in – the national government. Despite these shared perspectives on alumni's role in economic and social development, there are clear distinctions between Georgia and Moldova. This section focuses on the specific ways that alumni from each country differ in how they perceive their contributions to national economic and social development.

Section 5.1.1: How Georgian scholarship recipients view their contributions to national

development

As noted previously, Georgian alumni interviewed for this study reported that

they primarily help their country to develop through their professional posts. Among the

20 individuals interviewed, their professional areas span government work and

government reform programs at national NGOs, education (primarily higher education),

media, law, services for marginalized populations, public health, arts and culture, finance,

communications, and customer relations. Their types of professional posts are

summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Field of Employment of Georgian Interviewees at Time of Interview

Type of position	Number of interviewees in position
Higher education (teaching, research, or administration)	6 (2 abroad)
National NGOs	5
Independent contractors	4
International NGOs and UN System	3 (1 abroad)
Multinational business	2
Lawyers	2
Government of Georgia	1
Private Bank	1

Note. Four alumni were counted twice because they had two part-time jobs in different fields.

Of the 17 alumni living in Georgia at the time of the interview, 15 were living in the capital of Tbilisi and two were living in Batumi, Georgia's third largest city, located on the Black Sea.

The 20 alumni interviewed worked across diverse and numerous fields, and they mentioned that other scholarship alumni had similar breadth of experience. More than this, many alumni reported that they had changed jobs frequently, jumping among various sectors in the time since they completed their U.S. Master's degree. It was not uncommon for alumni to move from working for the government to consulting for an international organization to teaching at a university – all positions within Georgia. Moreover, some alumni worked in fields in which they had no previous experience. Although none of the alumni had studied banking or finance in the U.S., three alumni accepted positions in banks immediately after their return. In one particular example, an alumnus noted that she had changed jobs from a private bank to a civil society organization to the Government of Georgia in a high-ranking position to an independent consultancy within five years. Alumni suggest that this frequency of changing jobs is due to the high demand for their skills, to the major reforms introduced by a new government starting in 2004, and the volatile nature of the country's employment sector – topics which will be explored more closely later.

Despite their field of work, most alumni spoke about receiving multiple job offers, giving an impression that the job market – at least in the 2000s – was extremely welcoming to scholarship alumni. One Georgian alumnus who returned from her scholarship in 2008 explained her employment opportunities this way:

And, as expected, when I came back, I think a month – from the first place I applied to, I had an offer. […] But I had to turn them down because I was waiting to hear from another offer. Again, it was a matter of choosing which job I want, honestly, and turning down [the others]. And I have always been kind of employable, but this, you know, was extraordinary.

This alumnus was not alone. For many, they felt they were hired based on their profiles and the assumptions attached to their western degree. A U.S. Master's degree carried many expectations, including an individual's belief in transparency and efficiency, hard work, and strong English language and cross-cultural skills. An alumnus, who hires for her organization and looks for scholarship alumni candidates, summarizes this perception in the following way, "when I'm hiring, if I see [a western degree on a resume], it's like, 'Oh, I like this person already!' It's like a halo effect. [They have] the burden of disproving that they're not good."

Specifically, eight alumni who finished their scholarships between 2004 and 2013, during the presidential administration of reform-minded Mikheil Saakashvili, were placed in government positions immediately after their return. This included positions both the national government and state universities. For some, this placement was a condition of their scholarship program. For others, they were offered jobs across multiple fields, both related and unrelated to the fields they studied in the United States. One alumnus summarized the presence of scholarship students as "the face of the new government," and another noted that in the Saakashvili government, "if you look at our previous government, most of the Ministers and Deputy Ministers, and people in high positions had western education." Another alumnus supports this point by recounting a story she heard about graduates of the Muskie Program, "people would say 'As soon as

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you step out of the plane, there are people with contracts ready, employers lined up.'"
She continues, "And that was the reality. And I still think it is so today."

Scholarship alumni who worked in government positions ran programs, reorganized former Soviet structures, and streamlined administrative processes. One alumnus talked about reforming teacher education nationwide through developing standards, a certification system, and providing accreditation for teacher professional development programs. Another worked to introduce a national foster care program and subsequently close large orphanages operating in squalid conditions. In another example, an alumnus explains his position as head of billing in a government-controlled services agency. He introduced several reforms, including a digitized invoicing system, resulting in a boost to financially efficiency and transparency.

With the numerous examples of scholarship program alumni working in government during the Saakashvili administration, alumni seemed to expect that with an international scholarship they would assume a public service position to help within national reform. Five alumni reported that they even chose specific classes at their American host university in areas in which the country was lacking expertise. In one example, an alumnus discussed how she changed the focus of her Master of Laws (LL.M.) degree because of a perceived need in Georgia:

> When going to the United States, I did a lot of research about what our country needed, and I asked my friends [and] some colleagues. And so at that time, there were huge challenges in the context of tax law, corporate law, insurance – which was very underdeveloped back then – so, I decided to study those things in the United States.

By prioritizing their potential contributions to society over their personal or academic interests, in examples such as this, Georgian alumni indicated an understanding that their

scholarships – and the education they earned abroad – were tools for national

development.

However, this interest in national development did not mean that those who

participated in this study were blindly supportive of their government. Some alumni (at

least six) who worked for the government found these positions to be quite difficult,

overwhelming, or politicized. For some of those interviewed, there was little obvious

connection between their Master's degree abroad and the government positions for which

they were hired. Alumni suggest that they had little experience or knowledge of the

specific field.[25] One graduate in this position summarized her experience this way,

> I did not really feel like at [my specific] department I had any expertise that I could really
> contribute in a meaningful way. Moreover, I was exposed to a lot of political pressures, which
> were very demanding, and sometimes [seemed] to be quite unethical to me, in terms of packaging
> things in ways that I would never package them. Sometimes I felt like I was misleading the public
> in some ways because I felt that all my work served some kind of specific political interest of the
> party that was in power at the time. So, that made me feel quite uncomfortable. [Also], I had no
> skills in [this specific field.] I had to go and attend evening courses at one of the private
> universities […] because the Minister asked me to do that. So, I had to go and attend the lectures
> in the evenings, like twice a week or something, with the entire department that I was heading.

Other alumni spoke of similar challenges – difficult work environments, significant

learning curves, and frequent change of ministers – in their government positions.

Of the 11 Georgian alumni who worked formally for government, only one

remains a federal employee. Reasons for leaving their posts are varied, although about

half of the alumni specifically noted that they felt their values clashed with those of the

administration, especially after the new government of Giorgi Margvelashvili replaced

the one of Mikheil Saakashvili in 2013. (As noted previously, Margvelashvili's party is

widely believed to be more conservative and pro-Russian than the previous government.)

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[25] This was also mentioned by alumni who were hired in the banking industry.

A few alumni noted that they wouldn't be able to retain their jobs in government – or find a new position – because of their official or perceived affiliation with the Saakashvili administration. It is particularly interesting to note that according to participants of the Georgian Education Program, which specifically aimed to build capacity in the Ministry of Education and Science (see details in Chapter Three), none of these alumni work at the Ministry at the time of interviews. However, most program graduates remain in Georgia and are still involved in higher education teaching, research, and administration in some way.

In addition to working for the Government of Georgia as a way to "give back" to national development, a large portion of alumni interviewed for this study (seven out of 20) asserted that they had contributed – or were currently contributing – to national development through work in the higher education field. At the time of interview, four of the interviewees were either currently teaching or working in university administration in Georgia, and another two were in the field abroad. Of those in Georgia, all were associated with state universities, which are considered to be the best in the country. These alumni suggested that their Master's degree in the U.S. had a significant role in shaping them as instructors and developed their interests in teaching.

Alumni who teach or administer higher education programs see these careers as their way of helping Georgia in social development. When one alumnus was asked how he conceived of his contributions to Georgia's development, the alumnus emphatically responded, "I teach!" He went on to explain, "Because you know, the people at universities, they will be the ones who will be the leaders in the future. And I feel that

I'm doing a lot because I'm making them to think." This alumnus teaches at several different public universities in Tbilisi and noted that he immediately relied on the pedagogical style he observed in the U.S.

In addition to teaching, alumni in the field of higher education mentioned that they and other alumni were also involved with incorporating new themes into pre-existing topics, introducing new courses, and in some cases, developing entirely new programs. In one example, an alumnus compared her U.S. experience with her work in Georgia and identified a need to better train those who provided internship supervision for social work students. To address a perceived gap in skills and knowledge among supervisors, the alumnus offered "trainings for them about supervision techniques, actually what social work is, and then we did a fair – a job fair – and we invited all the organizations and state [agencies]" to help connect their social work students with employers. Other alumni brought international examples or new materials into their classes, or they worked on international collaborations in academia, including promoting exchange opportunities for their own students.

Regardless of the area of their work, nine Georgian alumni spoke of the importance of high salaries in their careers, and another three mentioned that they noticed it was very important for their scholarship peers. These salaries were not luxury stipends, but instead were considered adequate wages – enough money to support an individual or family, to care for elders who had been left with paltry pensions after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and to live in the increasingly expensive Georgian capital. To understand this notion within a broader context, in 2004, government employees' salaries were

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increased as part of the reform efforts led by the Saakashvili government. The idea was that with higher salaries, government employees would not resort to accepting bribes to carry out their work. To illustrate this point, one alumnus describes her experience working in one of the Georgian ministries before Saakashvili's administration:

> The Minister at the time asked me if I wanted to actually come and work for the ministry. And interestingly, I told him that I would work for the ministry if I could [have a higher salary, supported by an international organization]. At the time, the [government] salary was very small and I told the Minister that, you know, I wasn't going to be part of any shenanigans at the ministry, if there were any. [A higher salary] allowed me, actually, to stay above the fray in a sense that I didn't participate in any corruption that was probably going on at the ministry during [that] time.

However, not all scholarship alumni currently working in government noted that they were recruited with a promise of a high salary. Some admit that their specific position in government or university had a salary cap, and that they were not able to earn more than the high end of a pre-set range. However, they agreed that their U.S. degree gave them access to a higher position and associated salary grade, just not the ability to negotiate within this grade. High salaries were also offered to scholarship alumni in areas other than the government: independent consultants claimed they could charge international consultant rates, as well as be selective about the jobs they take. While the demand for salaries may not seem different than for non-scholarship recipients, when compared to Moldova – and likely other post-Soviet states – this is fairly unusual.

Furthermore, for some alumni, these high salaries are central to their interest in returning to and working in Georgia. Most alumni noted that their U.S. education had a positive impact on their salaries or earning potential; fifteen of the twenty Georgian interviewees stated this explicitly. According to interviewees, adequate salaries allowed them to "give back" in various ways, noting that it freed them from having to pick up

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additional consulting or other work. In turn, this extra time allowed alumni to volunteer for causes they support. Alumni spoke of serving on NGO boards, develop leadership training programs, drafting papers and translating materials, helping in one-day environmental projects, and advocating for minority group rights. A few alumni noted that they lowered or waived their consulting fees in order to serve national or local NGO clients. Eight alumni mentioned that this type of volunteer or reduced-fee work was another way they were contributing to Georgia's economic or social development. Alumni also noted that the taxes they paid on these high salaries and the income they spend in Georgia contributes to national economic development.

In addition, these high salaries seemed to be almost an expectation – both on the part of the alumni themselves and also on the side of employers – after returning with a western degree. In fact, some alumni admitted that they were interested in pursuing a scholarship opportunity specifically because of this perception: they saw the western education as an investment toward ensuring a better salary upon their return. One alumnus sought the opportunity for western education to increase his theoretical knowledge, "plus, to sell myself better on the job market, actually. Because like in Georgia […] having top school graduate degree, it helps you to better sell yourself on the job market, in different direction." He received three offers from Georgian financial institutions before graduation. He continued to explain that under his specific visa requirements, he didn't have to return to work in Georgia, but he chose to pursue one of these lucrative opportunities at home.

Despite this example, however, a few of the more recent graduates noted that this "halo effect" – that good jobs, with good salaries, would be automatically offered to alumni – may be fading rapidly. Four alumni who recently returned to Georgia, in fact, had a more difficult time finding high-paying jobs than their peers who graduated earlier. One alumnus said it took her nine months to find suitable employment that provided an adequate salary. Another noted that those with western degrees might not even be called for interviews "because they thought that maybe I will not even agree on a lower salary." Stating this trend succinctly, one interviewee said that perhaps these expected high salaries are "beyond what the country can support." Despite an unmet expectation for high salaries, few Georgian scholarship alumni indicated an interest in searching for higher-paying jobs abroad. This surprising phenomenon will be explored in the following section.

In sum, Georgian alumni perceive that the greatest way they are contributing to their country's national development is through their professional work, with 11 having worked for government and seven having worked in higher education (both at home and abroad). Alumni spoke about how their scholarship provided a "halo effect" that allowed them a greater chance at being employed and earning a quality salary, luring 17 of the 20 Georgians in this study to positions within the home country. Next we turn to the Moldovan case.

Section 5.1.2: How Moldovan scholarship recipients view their contributions to national development

Like the Georgian alumni, Moldovan alumni believe their greatest contributions to national social and economic development are through their professional posts. Of the Moldovan alumni interviewed for this study, 11 alumni were currently living in Moldova (all of whom were working and living in the capital city of Chisinau or its suburbs) and 9 were living abroad. Their professions are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Field of Employment of Moldova Interviewees at Time of Interview

Type of position	Number of interviewees in position
International NGOs and UN System	7 (4 abroad)
Multinational business	6 (3 abroad)
Government of Moldova	4 (3 as scholarship requirement)
Higher education (teaching, research, or administration)	2 (1 abroad)
National NGOs	2 (1 abroad)

Note. Of alumni employed at a multinational business, three were working in the field of informational technology (IT).

Among the Moldovan alumni, a significant number either currently work or previously worked for international organizations, especially the United Nations offices.

Among the sample, seven interviewees work for international organizations[26] currently and an additional seven have worked for one in the past. Ten alumni reported that despite an interest to work with government or higher education in Moldova, they decided to pursue a career with an international organization once they received their U.S. degree. An alumnus who works for the United Nations in Chisinau mentioned that his colleagues welcomed his "ideas from the west" and that these ideas carried "more weight" in meetings with national partners. He noted that many of his Moldovan UN colleagues had received scholarships to study in the U.S. or Europe.

In addition, several alumni have pursued positions in international companies – particularly the growing informational technology (IT) sector in Moldova. Three of the interviewees in this sample work for international IT firms; two of these live outside Moldova and have Moldovan partners on their projects. One alumnus reports that her contributions to Moldova have been through training and mentoring younger Moldovan employees in an IT firm. She provides volunteer trainings in areas such as communication, strategic analysis, competitive analysis, and risk management, drawing from topics she studied while completing a Master's of Business Administration (MBA) in the United States.

When alumni were asked what attracted them most to working for international organizations and multinational companies, two a key factors emerged: 1) a disinterest in working for the government or in higher education, and 2) the higher salary scale associated with international organizations and companies. In terms of government

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[26] At the time of interview, one alumnus is on temporary leave from a UN post in Moldova and was living in the United States.

employment, it was not the case that scholarship program alumni were unwelcome. In fact, several were offered positions but turned them down. The reasons alumni chose not to work for their national government included frustration with bureaucracy, the slow pace of change, expectations to be involved in corruption, and low pay. One alumnus said she chose business over government because, "[My friends involved in politics] ran into so much dirty corruptions and pressures – that at some point you do your best, but then you say, 'Yeah, it's not worth it.' So, I don't really believe that that path is right for me." Another said she served her country better as a government "watchdog" in an NGO position, raising public awareness on issues "not convenient to those in power." For those who pursued international organizations or multinational companies, they said the work culture and salary was far superior to working for the Moldovan government.

Another said she chose a UN position over a high level position in a ministry in Moldova because "of the support for the cost of living," although she qualified this claim by saying that choosing between an international career and ministry work in Moldova "stays as a tricky and more sensitive issue for me," and that working for a Moldovan ministry is a great opportunity to influence change, "in the context of how much impact you're doing, by your skills that you use and knowledge that you use."

Indeed, salaries offered to Moldovan government employees are low, and there is a staggering discrepancy between an international organization staff member's salary and one who is working for the Moldovan government. According to estimates provided by alumni, the salary of an international position based in Chisinau is four to five times that of a national government employee. And those who pursue international organization

positions abroad may make between 10 to 20 times that of a Moldovan government post.

This gulf in salary is particularly sharp for alumni of scholarship programs, who had

intended to help their countries and would be well qualified for these government jobs,

yet feel that the government salary is too meager for their survival. One alumnus, who

currently works for government as a stipulation of his scholarship, reported that his drive

and ambition cannot overcome the challenge of low public administration pay, when "at

the same time, you have to live your life, your decent life, your life properly." He

continues to say that, as government employees, "we do have in place a lot of incentives,

individual evaluations, some bonuses, but it's not enough."

Taking this point one step further, alumni indicated that for those who work for

the UN or other international organizations, their capacity to influence the Moldovan

government is compromised by the variance of salaries. One alumnus's story illustrates

this well. He worked for the Moldovan government before his scholarship and pursued a

job with the UN afterwards, and suggested that the difference in salaries between the

posts is a significant barrier when bridging partnerships. He provided this example:

> I was their guy when I was working for the [Moldovan government]. And I would come and say, "Look, we should do it this way." And it would be, "ok, great! Great idea." And [when I now] come from the UN, it's "Yeah, yeah, it's really easy for you to say when you're like four times better paid than me and we actually have to do the hard work." And you kind of say, "We are here to build national ownership, as it's about you learning how to do stuff, and you know, so that after the project ends, you have to own the results of this whole thing." And [they say], "yeah, yeah, that's just code language for you making us to do the big stuff and you get the big salary." So, it's an example. That is an interesting thing but it's actually an obstacle. Yeah, the difference of salaries – especially if you work in that environment, it's really felt.

In short, the work culture and low salaries associated with the Moldovan

government not only discouraged alumni from working in these positions, it also

appeared to limit some alumni's ability to transmit their ideas to colleagues within the

government. In other words, alumni who are eager to "give back" through policy change or government service are significantly restrained due to the persistent low salaries offered government employees. Perhaps, then, it is unsurprising that there are very few scholarship alumni were working for the Moldovan government or knew of other alumni in such positions.

The exception to this case is the four of the Moldovans were currently working for government – three are graduates of a program jointly organized by the Government of Moldova (see Chapter Three for details). All four alumni mentioned the strain of trying to reform a system and the exhausting nature of trying to consistently push for change against colleagues who were content with the status quo. One alumnus said that despite significant gains in her department:

> There is this discrepancy between [the] global mindset, and when you come into a small country, small environment, you understand that there is not so much drive, or there is limited capability to push for change. Small countries, not so many people who think creatively, who have this critical thinking, who want to challenge the status quo. And from this perspective, I feel like – I mean, I'm not satisfied with the status quo. I want to change the status quo. The reason I came back to Moldova was to change things.

The alumnus mentions how she believes she needs time to "recharge her batteries" after her government position has exhausted her. Of the four alumni who worked for government, three of them described their next step to be a position outside of the Moldovan government, suggesting they would look for positions in international organizations, academia, or the private sector – mostly abroad.

Moldovan alumni cited similar reasons for not pursuing careers in Moldovan higher education. Eight Moldovan alumni reported an interest in working in Moldovan higher education after their scholarships, as they viewed university teaching as a direct

way to share the quality education they received abroad. Yet only four actually pursued this track, and within two or three years of working in academia, all but one of the participants in this study had left the field. Alumni highlighted various reasons for avoiding or leaving positions within academia, including belief that the whole system needed top-down reform, the amount of work placed on instructors, expectations that they would comply with steadfast corruption, the students' relaxed attitudes, and low salary[27]. Of her choice to leave academia, one alumnus said, "I was expecting the minimum: people come to my lectures, they do some homework, they take exams, they take some tests." Then, when she was asked by the university's rector to pass a failing student from a rich family, she felt this was unfair to the other students who had worked for their grades. She said, "And then after that – after two or three incidents like that – I resigned. I didn't want to work anymore at the university."

In addition to their professional positions, six Moldovan alumni who live in the country mentioned that they included volunteer work among the ways that they were "giving back." Their efforts included environmental projects, human rights activities, serving on local boards, and working with youth, education, and children's rights. Another four alumni who live abroad mentioned that they have also volunteered for Moldovan NGOs, with two having an ongoing relationship with a specific project. However, it is also noteworthy that five alumni reported that they had anticipated being more involved in community and volunteer work in the country, yet remained uninvolved

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[27] The Academic Fellowship Program funded by the Open Society Foundations provided a salary supplement to instructors to introduce new courses. One alumnus mentioned that he took advantage of this program.

in volunteer efforts. They cited demanding work schedules, family obligations, and absence of quality projects as the main reasons they were not more involved.

In sum, the Moldovan alumni perceive their contributions to national social and economic development to be derived most from their professional activities. In aggregate, the alumni interviewed work for international organizations or international companies, both at home and abroad, at much higher rates than they work for the Moldovan government or in Moldovan higher education. Alumni report that salaries, work culture, and values are the primary reasons they do not pursue government or higher education jobs. In the next section, these experiences are compared to those of Georgian alumni.

Section 5.1.3: How scholarship recipients view their contributions to national development: Comparing the cases

To address the question of the extent to which scholarship program participants from Georgia and Moldova differ in their perceived contributions to national development, comparing the two cases brings key phenomena to light. Georgian and Moldovan alumni are similar in that they deem one's professional post is the primary way by which to contribute to the social and economic development of their home countries, in terms of the effects of their work on people, policies, and the development of systems. Alumni in both countries realize the power of a healthy civil society, yet they underscore that real social and economic change has to be facilitated by the government and embedded in fair and reform-minded policies and practices.

In the case of Georgia, alumni have been recruited into positions of leadership across an array of fields, ranging from government and institutions of higher education to private banks. Their western degrees have been perceived as an asset and their opinions mostly valued, especially at times when reform agendas were enacted. Alumni were able to design policies, lead programs, promote their visions, and share with their students new frameworks for understanding. On the other hand, in Moldova, alumni have felt restrained from being able to influence change – both in government and education. Inflexible and intractable Soviet systems have made individuals feel that they cannot pursue their visions or enact reforms, and the alumni do not want to associate with or tolerate perceived corruption. Moreover, the work culture was seen as largely unacceptable; in fact, most alumni who currently work for the government are envisioning their next steps outside of government – and perhaps outside the country itself.

If alumni believe that real, systemic change must be driven by and promoted by the national government, and alumni are not engaging in these opportunities in Moldova, is their ability to "give back" to the country compromised? There is some evidence for this premise, as is captured in the following statement by one alumnus:

> But I think in small countries like Moldova, where you don't have so many foreign investors, where all majority of business is practiced in Soviet style ways of doing business, I think innovation and change cannot come from anywhere but from the government. Of course, it could be civil society organizations, people, citizens, digital generation, but it will take time. If we really want this country to change, I really think we need a change force. An army of change agents inside the government who open up this government.

Therefore, when a government is slow to reform and not open to the ideas of those who promote change, alumni interested in helping their country may get frustrated and leave –

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both government and higher education positions, or ultimately, the country itself. Furthermore, by having scholarship alumni opt for careers outside of government and higher education, there is lost potential of alumni sharing their knowledge, skills, and ideas to shape social and economic reforms.

Moreover, if desirable jobs in government or higher education were available, scholarship program alumni reported that corresponding salaries were also significant consideration for them when choosing a post. The natural assumption may be that scholarship alumni – often termed "agents of change" and possibly perceived as generous and motivated to create change with few incentives – will strive for social and economic change without suitable payment. However, the assumption is not supported by this study. With a quality U.S. degree on their resume, graduates of western programs assume that their education and experience abroad will be valued through decent wages; they certainly could be rewarded significantly in the international marketplace. Therefore, decent salaries not only attract alumni to positions of "giving back," but – as is seen in Georgia – good salaries also entice alumni to return home and seek employment in the country and provide them with more time to pursue volunteer work or offer consulting services to low-budget NGOs. Where these quality salaries are not available, alumni tend to seek opportunities abroad – a topic we will explore more in the following pages.

Finally, when coalescing these ideas, it appears that for many scholarship program alumni, their intention was to "give back" to their home countries following their scholarships. Many of them talked of plans to shape the country, yearning to return home and find a position that allowed them to design programs, lead changes, and

influence others – and to have this career supported with adequate remuneration. In the case of Georgia, this scenario was a reality: high quality jobs with good salaries lured graduates back to the home country to assume posts in government and higher education, leading them to feel they were making contributions to social and economic development. In the case of Moldova, this environment remains elusive, leading alumni to choose against jobs in government and academe and seek professional opportunities in international organizations or private businesses, many of them overseas.

Section 5.2: *Differences between Georgian and Moldovan scholarship recipients who live abroad and in the home country in their perceived contributions to national development*

In the previous section, the differences between how Georgian and Moldovan alumni "give back" to their country was explored. To examine this phenomenon through a different lens, this section examines the question of whether alumni who live outside their home country contribute to social and economic development in different ways than those who live in the country. To state it directly: Do alumni who live in their home country "give back" in different ways than those who have emigrated?

Most Georgian and Moldovan alumni answer these questions with a "yes." During the semi-structured interviews, 22 of 40 alumni explicitly said that those who live abroad cannot contribute to national development to the same extent as those who live in the country, and another three alumni living abroad did not state this explicitly, but expressed frustration or loss of hope in the home country. (This is not to say that the other

15 alumni do not believe this; simply put, they weren't asked about this directly and didn't assert this clearly during their interview.)

In short, the majority of alumni who participated in this study asserted that the location of residence has a great influence on the types and scale of one's contributions to the home country's social and economic development. This finding is true in two regards. First, scholarship recipients who live in the home country following their U.S. degree perceive their contributions differently than those who live abroad. Second, alumni – regardless of location of residence – perceive a difference between alumni who live at home and abroad.

Collectively, alumni believe that those who live in the country are "on the front lines" of proposing new policies and programs; running innovative initiatives; and leading, training, and teaching others. In their various activities, alumni living at home are, as one alumnus said, "immediately available" for input and insight, resulting in their ability to have a prominent role in decisions. Similarly, they are thought of more often for influential assignments, and have a greater voice in new and ongoing programs and policies. Ten of 11 Moldovans and 15 of 17 Georgians living in the home country mentioned using the skills they gained during their U.S. education in their daily work.

As noted previously, 25 of 40 alumni assert that one's ability to shape social or economic development from abroad is significantly diminished; this belief is held both by alumni living in their country of origin (16 of 28 in this study) and emigrated alumni (11 of 12). On the whole, alumni who live outside the country report that while many retain great interest in their home country, they are removed from the locus of action, and

concomitantly, their ability to create change is limited. Overseas alumni observed that scholarship program graduates who live in the country are more involved and able to influence the system more directly. Many of the alumni abroad participate in small ways, especially in terms of supporting national organizations via financial and advising assistance. Given their daily demands of work and personal life, alumni who live outside of the country comment that they often feel ill-informed of national issues.

In the sections below, the term "in-country alumnus" is used to represent an alumnus who is living in their home country at the time of the interview. "Overseas alumnus" is used to describe an alumnus who is living outside their country at the time of interview. First, the Georgian case will be explored, followed by the Moldovan case. A comparison of these two cases will follow.

Section 5.2.1: How Georgian scholarship recipients who live abroad and in the country differ in their perceived contributions to national development

Within the field of international education exchanges in the former Soviet Union, Georgia is often determined to be a country with a high rate of return, although only anecdotal evidence is available. According to Phillip Watkins with the Open Society Foundation's scholarship programs, sponsored students from Georgia have had "a high rate of return" when compared to other countries in which OSF offers scholarships (2013). Alumni shared this perspective, with most estimating that 80 to 90% of their cohort of scholarship grantees returned to Georgia. One alumnus put it this way, "a lot

more of us came back [home] than from other countries. It just ended up that way, I don't know the secret."

This also seems to be true of the individuals who participated in this research. The Georgian scholarship alumni interviewed for this study widely agreed that almost all of their fellow scholarship recipients had returned home following their studies in the United States. Moreover, many said that the alumni stayed long-term, rarely emigrating. The demographics of this study also support this claim: Of the 20 individuals interviewed for this study, only three were currently living abroad. These three individuals lived in Europe, the Middle East, and another major city in the Caucasus; two were working in higher education and one was working for an international organization at a high level. All of these individuals had returned to Georgia after their scholarships and all three also worked for the Georgian government before pursuing jobs abroad.

When asked why they returned to the country after their scholarships, 16 of 20 Georgian alumni noted that they came back to the country for good job opportunities, to be close to family and friends, and to help their country develop; many cited multiple reasons. Eight alumni mentioned that one of the reasons they returned was because they were required to – it was a stipulation of their scholarship – due to either an obligation to work for the Georgian government or because of visa rules. One alumnus puts it this way, "First of all, I had an obligation to come back for two years. But I absolutely wanted to come back! There was absolutely no question in my mind that I was not coming back to Georgia to continue working in Georgia." She continued, "I mean, the picture was that I would come to Georgia and make it wonderful."

Nine alumni talked about having a "sense of duty" to return to Georgia, to work

for change, and to stay in the country. One alumnus, who spent seven months searching

for a job in Georgia instead of accepting offers to work abroad, said, "It is not right…to

leave because you have this U.S. degree and this opportunity to go abroad and work

there. That is not [your] right… You cannot think of only yourself." Another alumnus

summarized this allegiance to help Georgia in this way,

> I know a lot of alumni. […] They are the most amazing people. They do things to change society and they do things to change the situation locally. I don't know of anyone who has evaded from that responsibility. Because you know, we've left, we studied, we learned, and we saw what the better world is about and we want to make that better world here. That's what we do.

For Georgian alumni, on the whole, there was a sincere devotion to live in the country

long-term or to return in the future.

When pressed on why Georgians feel this duty to return, especially as it appears

unique among countries in the region, alumni couldn't pinpoint it. While some talked

about patriotism or identity, and others spoke about being close to family, the most

common response was that they – as an educated elite – had 1) opportunities to help their

country development, and 2) a supportive environment in which to make change. One

quote summarizes both points well. The alumnus stated that she returned to Georgia to

work "because there is so much to do here." She agrees that maybe she could attain a

higher salary abroad and have a higher position, but she explains that in Georgia there are

many opportunities and people who want to work with her to create change:

> It's like a wild west here. [Laughter.] Here, there is also the lamplight for very common things that are everyday stuff. And because I have this exposure and this experience, I can also make life easier here. […] I think that I can play this role of the agent that has the exposure to the west and knowledge of the local things, so that new things are not just directly implemented here, but also tailored to the local needs, which is really difficult and it's important. […] And I mean, if everyone runs away, the country stays as bad as it is. So, I mean, there are some people maybe who can do something new, and I don't want to sound arrogant now, but I think I have the

capacity to do some positive changes, especially with the other people who have also got the education there. That's why I keep quite close in touch with [other scholarship] people. Because together we can really do a lot.

And these opportunities appeared to be seized by scholarship alumni in high numbers.

As we have seen in the previous section, those who returned to Georgia felt they were affecting change within the government, in non-governmental organizations, at higher education institutions, in banking, and in other fields. Alumni said those who return home are "being used" – in a positive way – by the government to implement new change and are the leaders of reform in the country. Of course, not all felt that they could contribute as much as they wanted, or that change was happening as quickly as they would like, but most were eager to try new things and work towards Georgia's economic and social development.

Furthermore, all alumni who have moved abroad stayed connected with Georgia in various ways: by serving on NGO boards (attending meetings by Skype), assisting in research or preparing materials for NGOs, giving financial contributions to Georgian organizations, reviewing academic papers, serving as a fellow of a Georgian academic center, buying property in Georgia, and sending money home to family and friends. The reasons that the three alumni gave for moving abroad are various and personal; there does not appear to be a unifying theme. Moreover, the overseas alumni also noted they were "giving back" to Georgia in informal ways through providing their insights and opinions to friends who were in decision-making roles. An overseas alumnus put it this way,

> I feel very much connected. I keep in touch with a large group of friends, a very large number of those who participated in the same scholarship program. And they work in very different sectors, different fields, some not in education anymore, but we all discuss and talk about problems related to education policymaking. And try to contribute in different ways. Of course, they contribute more because they are there. But yes, I follow the events, and I try to contribute in some ways.

As the alumnus noted above, alumni believe that those who live within Georgia are able to "give back" at a better rate to those who live abroad. Of the three alumni who live abroad, two have plans to return to Georgia in the future, although no exact time schedule has been set. Only one alumnus stated that her career trajectory would certainly be outside the country.

Section 5.2.2: How Moldovan scholarship recipients who live abroad and in the country differ in their perceived contributions to national development

As noted in Chapter Three, the issue of migration has been a longstanding challenge for Moldova. The country's high rate of outwardly mobile population is also observed among international scholarship grantees. As no data are systematically collected about the number and profiles of Moldovan migrants, it is impossible to suggest that this study's interview sample represents the characteristics of highly-educated Moldovans abroad. However, alumni offered estimates based on their own experience: They predicted that 50 to 60% of their scholarship cohort resides overseas.[28]

As noted earlier, in this research sample of 20 Moldovan alumni, nine Moldovans are living outside of the country (see Table 3). Of these, four are in the U.S., one is in Canada, three are in Europe, and one is in Central Asia. Among this sample, there seems to be a great variance among their experiences following emigration and the level of their ongoing interest in and connection to Moldova. As one marker, the number of years

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[28] This does not include those alumni who are serving under contract for the Moldovan government at the time of interview.

living abroad varies significantly among this group, ranging from a few months to 15 years. Three individuals in this group pursued professional or educational opportunities following their scholarships and have never returned home for extended periods of time. About half of the Moldovan alumni who live outside of Moldova selected the term "disconnected" to describe their affiliation with their home country. Moreover, as was noted previously, the majority of Moldovan alumni reported that residing in the country was the most advantageous way to make a significant contribution to national development, with both in-country alumni (six of eleven) and overseas alumni (eight of nine) mentioning that the ability to be involved in economic and social change is greater when one resides in the country. One alumnus said that other scholarship alumni "had to move to Moldova to actually participate in actual change and have more of an impact on the country."

To examine this point more closely, seven of 20 Moldovan alumni suggested that they were "giving back" to the country by simply living day to day in the arduous environment. Alumni hinted that struggling with the daily contextual challenges in Moldova was the price you should pay, regardless of your professional post, to help the country. Alumni spoke about the daily challenges of low salaries, corruption, and the society's "resistance to change."

Likewise, some alumni called their daily struggle as "doing time for Moldova." When pressed to explain this idea, alumni noted that the daily challenges were the repayment of scholarship "debt" – or, in a more positive view, on capitalizing on your

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scholarship investment – by struggling with the daily living conditions in the country.

One alumnus explained it this way,

> I think it's important to really acknowledge the openness at that point and the risk and the willingness of people to leave behind their successful careers and work for very little money for the benefit of the country. And we always joke that you know, that everyone has to do a couple of years for the country, no matter what [laughs] what their career was before that or will be after that. [It] means working in Moldova for Moldova, where the pay is not that important. It's a bit being idealistic, it's like working in our field, in non-profit. We were, we never made a lot of money, but it was always interesting and very fulfilling. And I think that's somewhat similar, because it's really – how do I say? – it's gratifying and the impact is huge.

Therefore, for many Moldovan alumni, the idea of "giving back" was closely tied to the idea of "going back." And this idea included an important dimension: not going back indefinitely, but for a period of time. Several alumni indicated that the appropriate period of time for going back was two to three years. Notably, this term is similar to the guidelines of their J-1 visa – the visa granted to most of these alumni for their scholarship period. The rules of the J-1 visa state that before an individual can be granted another U.S. visa, she must live in her home country for a total of two years (and not consecutive years).[29] For most alumni, these technical guidelines are obscured and the rule is commonly understood to be a "two year home residency requirement" following the scholarship period. Therefore, many alumni believe that their visa mandates they must return home for the two years immediately following their U.S. degree.

Moldovan alumni cited this "two year home residency requirement" as a significant force in their trajectories in two ways. First, they adopted this two-year requirement as a guideline for the length of time they were expected to be in the country in order to "give back." In fact, four alumni idealized this notion of crossing borders for

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[29] There are certain exceptions to the J-1 visa requirement, like a specialized visa given to World Bank Employees (G-visa) that overrides the two-year residency requirement.

short periods of time as the best model for Moldovan development. By living abroad, these alumni suggested, they would have access to greater salary and gain additional skills and knowledge to bring back to Moldova in a subsequent stay. One alumnus put it this way, "So, I think ideally, Moldova would want to rely on people who did their Master's, maybe came back for one or two years home, and then maybe continued to work abroad." After giving a few examples of individuals who lived abroad and were now in governmental leadership positions, the alumnus continued, "So you want somebody who is doing the shuffle back and forth. And I think this kind of people are the best candidates to effect change." Ultimately, this idea of moving in and out of the country appealed to many Moldovans – as a concept, if not a lifestyle. Few of the alumni in this study had taken a similar schedule as their own.

Second, alumni noted that the home residency expectation influenced them as to next steps in their career – either to return home and serve their two years or to find ways to circumnavigate the requirement.[30] Several alumni spoke of investigating ways to avoid the two-year home residency requirement, but the difficulty in obtaining a waiver had them return to Moldova. Others succeeded in avoiding the requirement by emigrating a third country or seeking a specialized U.S. visa (e.g., G visas for World Bank employees). Regardless of the route selected, many Moldovan scholarship program alumni suggested that other alumni were living aborad in part because of the difficult circumstances in the country. Of the large group of scholarship recipients who have emigrated, one alumnus summed it up by saying that leaving Moldova "is the easiest

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[30] For those alumni who participated in the Civil Servants Award scholarship program, the commitment is three years of working for government upon completion of their degrees.

thing to do. […] The fact that they left, I don't judge them. It's their decision and good

for them. It's much more difficult to stay in the country. It's much more difficult."

Moreover, of the nine overseas alumni included in this study, six alumni talk

about making the choice, in part, for their families. As an example, one alumnus spoke

about her desire to want the best for herself and her family led her to live abroad

following her scholarship. She explained that she wasn't sure she felt a responsibility to

help Moldova because she wasn't keen to rejoin a society she felt would limit her

possibilities.

> If I speak about myself, um, I don't know if I feel that responsibility. … [By] seeing differently and seeing how things are done differently, you would try naturally to do that. But in talking to some of the people I know, I think they find that once you go back to the old ways, you become complacent very quickly. You just have to play by the rules of the society if you want to live in that society… I think I want to do the best for myself, you know? [Laughing.] That's kind of how I felt about it.

This alumnus, now living in North America, was not the only one who expressed some

guilt for living abroad. Most overseas alumni reported that they had spent considerable

time assessing their relationship to Moldova, brainstorming ways to share their expertise,

investigating salary options available at home, and wondering whether they had fulfilled

the requirements of their scholarships by living abroad.

When asked about for concrete examples of how they contributed to Moldova's

economic and social development from abroad, overseas alumni reported that they helped

in big and small ways: they talked about developing business partnerships; they invited

Moldovan leaders to participate in international commissions; they served on national

non-profit boards and advised NGO staff members; they returned to give invited keynote

speeches and advised or trained Moldovan employees; they led charity projects to help

Moldovan youth and volunteered when they visited their homeland; and they financially

supported their families and friends still living in the country. Of the nine overseas

Moldovans in this study, eight interviewees reported "giving back" from abroad in at

least one of these ways, although most overseas alumni tempered their contributions by

saying that they could have done more had they stayed in the country. Moreover,

overseas alumni say that they are keen to advise on policy and programs from abroad, but

that they feel "forgotten about" when they are not in the country. One interviewee said,

"During these two years – being active but not visible – made some people forget

somehow about me."

However, for those abroad who want to "give back" to national development,

other alumni call their contributions into question and admit that overseas alumni are

limited in their abilities to contribute to national development. One alumnus noted,

> I see some other people that do not come back and…write blogs, on Moldova, pretend[ing] like
> they're doing something for Moldova. It's insignificant, honestly. Because I see them more
> detached from the reality in Moldova, and I see them speaking more with their superiority, in a
> way. "You, those in Moldova, are not doing it properly." And that's criticizing Moldova more
> than actually helping it. And whenever I see that, I feel very compelled, telling them, "Why don't
> you come here? Roll up your sleeves and for a couple of years, do it." And I don't see many
> jumping at this idea.

When asked about reasons for pursuing careers abroad, alumni who currently live

overseas cited multiple and overlapping reasons – both push and pull factors – such as

that other countries had offered them attractive immigration packages for skilled elite;

marriage to non-Moldovan nationals and related concerns about the employment

possibilities for their spouse in Moldova; perceived low quality education for their

children; and few dynamic job opportunities with good salaries and quality working

environments. For those outside of Moldova, only four entertained the idea of moving

home at some point, and these notions were often vague. None of them have made

concrete plans; therefore, it seems unlikely that they will be returning home soon. Five of

the nine shared no plan to return to Moldova, and one interviewee has even let her

citizenship lapse. Only one alumnus offered to talk about his idea of returning home to

Moldova eventually, yet he said it is impossible to earn this level of income in Moldova

at this time; even with a sizable cut in his current income, his expected salary would be

way above what Moldovan officials currently make. He continues,

> I think that [salary] is a fairly fundamental question. Because yes, [scholarship program alumni] are all fairly patriotic and everything, but we have families, kids, and I want my kids to go to a good school and so on. All those things play against, in a sense. So, the question is, how much do governments really have to pay people like me to be able to attract them? […] How can you not just force people to come back? But how can you interest them to come back?

In summary, approximately half of Moldovan alumni live outside of the country –

a ratio found both among the interview sample and from alumni estimates. In-country

alumni and overseas alumni are similar in that they perceive that those who live abroad

have diminished opportunity to "give back" to social and economic development

compared to those who live in the country. More than that, a sizable number of alumni

perceive that simply by living in the country – enduring the day to day conditions – you

are "giving back." Alumni also reported that the time that one should live in the country

and "give back" may be stipulated by a two-year period, represented by the two-year

home residency requirement associated with their American visa. With these compelling

questions, we turn to the analysis of the two countries in terms of how individuals abroad

vary in their contributions to national and economic development.

Section 5.2.3: How scholarship recipients who live abroad and in the home country differ in their perceived contributions to national development: Comparing the cases

In comparing the cases of scholarship program recipients from Georgia and Moldova, scholarship recipients from both countries agreed that individuals who reside in their countries of origin are better able to contribute to social and economic development than those alumni who live abroad. While overseas alumni have varying degrees of connection to their home country, both in-country and overseas alumni estimated that those out of the country are limited in their ability to "give back." Alumni who live abroad indicated that they cannot do as much for social change because of the distance, both physical and imagined.

In terms of how alumni perceive their contributions to social and economic change, differences between Georgia and Moldova existed in terms of in-country and overseas alumni perceptions. First, it is important to note that it is hard to make accurate comparisons, as only three of the Georgian interview sample live abroad. Although exact figures are unknown, this proportion seems to be indicative of the significant portion of scholarship alumni who return to and remain in Georgia.

Furthermore, Georgian scholarship recipients tended to believe that returning home to work for the betterment of the country is one's duty. These beliefs were supported by the offer of good jobs, with matching quality salaries. On the whole, Georgian alumni returned home and took positions where they feel they are contributing to the social and economic development of the country. For those who are abroad, they

felt connected through NGO and academic work, although they admitted that they are not able to do as much from the country from overseas.

For Moldovan alumni, scholarship recipients had different perceptions about how alumni "give back" to national development. For those in the country, they were frustrated with the pace of reforms and many thought about – or were currently looking for – positions abroad. For overseas alumni, their ties to the home country had various strengths, from working in a multinational business with branches in Moldova to allowing one's citizenship to lapse. Some Moldovan alumni have not been back in the country for many years and none of the overseas alumni interviewed for this study indicated that they are planning to relocate to Moldova in the near term.

Moreover, for these Moldovan alumni, seven feel that by living in Moldova – struggling with daily challenges – that this is enough to "give back" following their scholarships. When asked, Moldovans indicated that the appropriate time to live in the country is two years, and taking this one step further, some Moldovans see the two-year home residency requirement as the designated repayment period for their scholarship. To fully understand how this concept evolved for alumni, further analysis is needed, but it is telling that they think of these two years in their home country as the financial return on investment.

For both Georgian and Moldovan alumni, salary was an important factor and alumni sought positions with adequate wages, commensurate to the difficulties of their task. They also sought progressive workplaces with collaborative colleagues and receptive managers who value their skills and ideas. In Georgia, these elements,

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including entrepreneurship and risk-taking, were found in multiple fields, as highlighted in the previous section. In Moldova, jobs that embody these values and attributes were rare, especially in government or higher education, causing many Moldovans in these fields to pursue opportunities abroad.

The tie to the home country was prominent in the overseas alumni who agreed to participate in this study. Most of them retained a sincere interest in their home country and in participating in its development. In the case of Georgia, two of the three alumni who live abroad were considering returning home at some point in the future, as they believed that they could be involved in local or national development and earn a quality wage – albeit likely less than they are making overseas currently.

For many overseas Moldovans, this link to their country of origin was much more tenuous. Many have been frustrated by a system that is slow to change, to absorb new ideas, to root out corruption, and to incorporate new ideas. For many scholarship alumni, they felt they have "put in their time" for the country and after their scholarship is "repaid," they sought better opportunities for themselves, their families, and their careers abroad. In sum, Moldovan scholarship alumni returned with great hopes and then, with time, were disappointed. Approximately half sought to apply their skills elsewhere.

Therefore, given that alumni widely believe that graduates need to be in their countries in order to maximize their potential influence on social and economic development, the fact that many Moldovan alumni left the country significantly compromises the possibility of scholarship alumni to influence social and economic change at home. In sum, it appears that the elements of a closed society that tend to stifle

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change and development in Moldova also drive out those who have been educated

through an international scholarship program. This question of the national environment

– job opportunities, salaries, and partnerships – is explored further in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Findings Related to Home Country Contextual Factors

If the aim of many international scholarship programs is for graduates to fuel social and economic change at home, why is it that Georgian alumni perceive that they have excelled in these areas and Moldovan alumni have had more difficulty? In this chapter, findings related to how alumni perceive home country contextual factors as helping or hindering their contributions to national economic and social development are explored.

When comparing alumni groups from the two countries, alumni identified two categories of home country contextual factors as having a significant influence on the ways scholarship program graduates contribute to national development. The first factor is a national revolution indicating a political shift towards Europe, and corresponding government reforms. These revolutions not only provided professional opportunities for alumni to be involved with new government policies and other social and economic reforms, but the moment of revolution also sparked the interest of many alumni to reconsider their relationship with the home country, and for some, to seize the moment and engage with national development in a new way. The second factor is the presence and vitality of scholarship program alumni networks. Alumni perceive these networks as opportunities and structures through which they can find social support and like-minded peers, identify employment opportunities, and organize to plan, fundraise for, and launch projects together. Each of these two categories are further explained below.

As was the case in the previous chapter, each section in this chapter will begin with an introduction providing an overview of the topic and those perspectives shared by

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alumni in both countries. After this, the Georgian case will be profiled, followed by the

Moldovan case. The section will conclude with a comparative analysis of the two cases,

focusing on the central differences between alumni groups in how they perceive barriers

or supports to contributing to social and economic development in their home countries.

Section 6.1: Government reform and revolution

The shift from a Soviet political and economic framework to a European Union

styled democracy, and the related social and culture contextual changes, has had a

significant influence on how alumni of international scholarship programs in both

Georgia and Moldova identify their roles in their home country's development. As is

argued in this section, it was each country's respective "Rose" and "Twitter" revolutions

that not only marked a change in the government, but also sparked a "revolution of the

mind" in alumni who sought new ways – or reconsidered their choices – in how they

"gave back" to their home countries. For some, these revolutions and the new, pro-

western governments that followed opened numerous opportunities for alumni to apply

their knowledge, skills, and experience – much of it gained during their U.S. scholarship

experience – to creating and establishing structures in their changing countries. The

inverse also looks to be valid: The pre-revolution, closed societies and the associated

absence of reform – or an adherence to the Soviet past – was supremely frustrating and

heavily criticized by the interviewees, and for some influenced their decision to emigrate.

In this section, the contextual aspects of the changing social, political, and

economic environment in both Georgia and Moldova – earlier, more aggressively, and

more systemically in Georgia and more recent, belabored, and ephemeral in Moldova –

are examined. However, for both Georgian and Moldovan alumni, the flashpoint of revolution shaped the alumni's decisions to go back to their home countries, and in some cases, opened opportunities for them to contribute to social and economic development.

Section 6.1.1: Georgian government reform and revolution

Following the Rose Revolution in 2003 and President Saakashvili's "Georgian Dream" plan for reform (see details in Chapter Three), many new ministers and government employees were hired to carry out this new vision, and as one interviewee said, "They really wanted to achieve a lot in a very quick time." As noted earlier, scholarship alumni were among those selected because they were skilled and shared the initial goals of the new administration to turn toward the west and away from Russia and the Soviet past. In fact, when invited to join the government, alumni jumped at the chance and found supportive, visionary colleagues. One interviewee stated, graduates of western education felt "there are some others waiting there for us, so we can work with them."

With respect to this pattern of western-educated Georgians working in government, almost half of the Georgian alumni suggested that scholarship grantees were well-suited for positions in a reform-minded government and provided the following justifications: alumni had received a quality education; they had experienced life in a more open democracy like the United States; and they had been selected for a competitive scholarship, connoting strong personal attributes. One alumnus nicely summarizes how scholarship alumni were then – and continue to be – perceived,

> [Being an alumnus of the program] means that the person has good time management skills, good leadership skills, is self-motivated, is a good employee, strong ethics and morals and incorporates

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them. So, when you do such a rigorous program, and get a degree in U.S., to me, it speaks volumes about your ability to commit – dedication, you know, how hard you work. And you know it's a competitive program, so if they selected you. […] I know that [scholarship programs] take the skim of the milk, so to speak, so to me, it's a token of being the best of the best.

In other words, the scholarship program's selection criteria were assumed to rigorous enough to identify individuals who could serve as reformed-minded, qualified government employee – as if the scholarship program's selection process had already vetted the candidate.

In addition, many interviewees credited Saakashvili personally for placing so many scholarship alumni into top government positions. One alumnus stated it this way, "Mischa, our previous president, was himself a recipient of a scholarship. So, he valued it, he appreciated it, he brought in with him the team that also had the same experience." Several interviewees mentioned rumors that Mischa would call scholarship alumni as they were finishing their scholarships and invite them back to work for him – although none of the interviewees reported experiencing this first-hand.

Although few alumni interviewed for this research were on scholarship at the time of the Rose Revolution, many identified it as a turning point for the country of Georgia, which subsequently shaped their own paths. Alumni credit the revolution leaders, especially Saakashvili, with setting a vision that made working for the government, seeking change, and pushing reform attractive to them. To this end, an interest in national policy and reform led many young, optimistic students to apply for scholarships as a pathway to eventually working for social and economic change in Georgia. One alumnus summarized the situation well in saying that the new government "was really the encouraging turning point" because so many western-educated individuals were in

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leadership positions. She continued,

> [T]hese are the professional people, western-educated people, people with the right values, whom I can identify myself with. And this was the point when I decided to go and come back. Otherwise, if I went in 2000, I would not come back. Because there was no point in coming back. You would not be allowed to do – maybe only 20% of the things you wanted to do.

As noted earlier, 14 of the 20 interviewees in this study had formerly worked for the Georgian government (including Georgian public universities) at some point after they received their U.S. Master's degree. Alumni were involved in setting strategic plans, developing new programs, designing policies, introducing new ideas (e.g., social work or environmental sustainability), making decision-making processes more transparent, and leading teams of government employees towards greater work productivity. These alumni – young, well-educated, familiar with the west, proficient in English – became "the face" of the new administration, indicating that the old guard of the Soviet times was being replaced by a well-trained pro-Europe contingent of educated elite professionals who had, as one interviewee put it, "the right values."

To get a better idea of the scope of reforms that scholarship alumni were creating in government, one alumnus's story is particularly illustrative. As a Deputy Minister, the alumnus was hired to "clean up" the ministry. She aimed to increase transparency in decision-making, persecute and fine those companies and individuals who did not follow the law, and respond to constituent's letters. She provided one example, "In my tenure, we simplified the procedures for application for administrative disputes. There [had been] no resolution. Those cases were hanging somewhere there." She continued, "So, I kind of eased that pipeline. I really made decisions quickly and […] for me, it was very important that the person got the answer." Continuing, she explained that the previous government

either provided no response or the response was so vague that disputes were not settled. After spending hours writing letters with "a very specific answer" to the citizens' inquiries, she felt satisfied. "I did get feedback from people that it was the first time from the ministry that actually the answers were coming over" to both business owners and citizens who could proceed with their plans.

In addition to working as ministers, deputy ministers, government staff, or parliamentarians, scholarship program alumni became consultants to the government, advising the president or ministers in both formal and informal ways. One example sheds light on the process of how this advice was given. This alumnus, who completed an LL.M. degree, said that after his law firm was hired to complete one task for a high-ranking official in the Saakashvili government,

> I had direct contact with [the official] and was working with him quite a lot, so whenever I were to come across some problem in a law, I would pick up the phone and just call the guy or he would just call me up and say, "What do you think about this? What do you think about that?" You know, we would just go to his office or university and sometimes just sit through the night, thinking of what can be changed. [Or the government would] pass a law that made no sense, I would just call him, "They did this stupid thing again." And he would say, "Ok, just come over and let's talk."

It is worth noting that many alumni who worked in formal government positions did not stay in their positions for very long. Although few alumni reported the exact length of their government terms, none of those who did stated they had worked for the government for more than three years, and three mentioned their employment lasted for approximately one year. One reason for these short terms was the frequent replacement of senior government officials (some of whom were scholarship alumni themselves), sometimes without explanation. Alumni complained about having to constantly adjust to their new ministers' priorities, strategies, and styles. When alumni were asked about this

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rapid turnover in ministry leadership, several noted this was a characteristic of a "young democracy," with one alumnus adding that these leadership changes were not in the interest of the country, nor in the interest of retaining scholarship program graduates in the government, adding "it could have been better if [scholarship alumni] stayed at policy-making positions."

The year 2008 was the end of this golden period for the Georgian government when scholarship alumni had such influence to reform the social and economic policies of the country. Notably, this was when war broke out in South Ossetia (see details in Chapter Three) and the Georgian government seems to have lost the confidence of the international community, a perception shared by approximately half of the Georgian interviewees. Subsequently, foreign investment dried up, economic development slowed, and the population became more wary of, as one alumnus put it, "this instability and this constant fear that something might happen." Alumni noted that with these "frozen conflict" areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazi (See Chapter Three for more information), there is less foreign investment and subsequently fewer opportunities to advance the nation's development. For alumni in search of dynamic positions with corresponding high salaries, this tense situation equates to fewer jobs, with their western education being less highly valued and themselves less employable than in the previous decade.

In sum, the Rose Revolution in Georgia – and the subsequent reform agenda of the Saakashvili government – was one of the key national contextual factors that Georgian alumni mentioned as encouraging them to "give back" to home country social and economic development. This new government valued western education and sought

out scholarship program graduates for leadership and policy-making positions in the government, paying them a high salary.

Section 6.1.2: Moldovan government reform and revolution

Although Moldova's Twitter Revolution came five and a half years after Georgia's Rose Revolution, the Moldovan alumni interviewed reported being hopeful that their national revolution would bring a similar set of swift changes to their own government. In fact, Moldova's unambiguous pivot to the west - away from Russia and toward the European Union – spurred great hope among many young Moldovans with international education. Accordingly, many alumni reported being optimistic that the Twitter Revolution would be the singular event that marked the beginning of a serious change in their country. Consequently, during the six days of the Twitter Revolution in April 2009, alumni noted that they observed the events closely, clearly understanding what hung in the balance: a possible opportunity for them to have a meaningful role in opening and reforming their nation. One alumnus noted, "even from the United States, I was following closely what was going on back home." Another alumnus suggested that the Twitter Revolution:

> was really a moment that caused people to think more thoroughly or clearly about their role in society. And so that, I think is definitely something. …When there is the potential of the new government and especially around this shift or revolutionary shift toward a new paradigm or possibility, that really resonates with alumni.

In the following months, those parties that supported closer affiliation with Europe struggled to organize and appoint leadership. In their interviews, several alumni spoke

about having hope in the new government that assembled – although it was much delayed – and feeling an eagerness to use their skills and talents to promote change at home.

When the new pro-west government was assembled and hope for change was high, ten alumni reported either deciding that they would work for the new government, seriously searching for opportunities to support the reforms, or knowing other alumni who returned to Moldova from abroad for public service positions. One overseas alumnus said, "I think right immediately after the Twitter Revolution, then we saw a surge in the people coming back, even working for very little money, they would basically donate their time [because] they want to have an input – a direct input – into the development of the country."

To provide additional details of how the Twitter Revolution influenced individuals, the following vignette highlights one alumnus's choices in 2009, which she identified as "the moment to do something, to pay back" those organizations and individuals who had sponsored her. At the time of the revolution, she was living in Washington, D.C. and she had obtained, through professional contacts, the phone number of the new Prime Minister. She decided to call and offered her help. At this time, she also recalled the words of one of her scholarship sponsors: that the donation to her Master's tuition was the sponsor's "investment in Moldova." The alumnus continues her story:

> So, I felt, I felt even more obliged to be back and to do something for my country. So, in 2009, after I spoke with the Prime Minister, I was waiting for 2 months. Nobody called me back. So I just bought a ticket and came to Moldova. And I met, finally, the Prime Minister, and, I started to work [for the government].

The perseverance and motivation demonstrated by this alumnus was unique among the alumni interviewed for this study, and it is difficult to estimate the total number of alumni

who acted on this impulse to return from abroad. However, another five interviewees

mentioned that the Twitter Revolution was a time when they reconsidered their personal

role in Moldova's development or explored options to help the country advance its

transition towards a liberal democracy and integration with Europe.

Most often, alumni interviewees identified two notable individuals working for

the Moldovan government who were driving social or economic change at home: the

Minister of Education, Maia Sandu, and the Director of the E-Governance Program, Stela

Mocan. Both women had received a scholarship for their Master's studies at Harvard

University.

Minister Sandu was commended for tackling some of the greatest challenges in

the education system by rooting out corruption, reorganizing the elementary and

secondary school system, and advocating for fair teacher pay. One of the alumni said,

> Now they call her "Maia the greatest." Like [the national hero] Stefan cel Mare – "the greatest" –
> because she's making changes, very difficult ones [in education]. But they are good. They see the
> results. You don't see these results, for example, in other areas – in economy, or social life, you
> don't see that as much as you see here.

Minister Sandu's work has been recognized internationally, as well. In 2015, she was

awarded the World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability Award for

Leadership (Global Partnership for Social Accountability, 2016). Due to ongoing

corruption in the Moldovan government, Maia Sandu left her position in 2015 and moved

to Washington, DC, and she has started a new Moldova political party and also has been

identified as a possible future Moldovan Presidential Candidate (Radio Europa Libera,

2016).

The second alumnus mentioned by participants in this study was Stela Mocan, who was appointed the head of the E-Governance Project beginning in 2010. By putting many of government services online, the aim of this project is to upgrade the government's modern technology, instill transparency, curb corruptive practices, and promote more agile, cooperative, and collaborative government. For this work, Director Mocan's project has earned the respect of and funds from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and has partnered with Singaporean and Estonian officials to learn how other small countries implemented similar programs. Alumni view her as one of the top reformers in Moldova. Of Director Mocan, an interviewee said, "She's a very people-oriented person. You can see that her knowledge is really applied. [Her work] is a matter of commitment, not a matter of obligation. She is doing this because she cares."

Although Sandu and Mocan were often mentioned as success stories of individuals with foreign degrees leading reform initiatives, these two appeared to be unique. Despite the successes observed in the Ministry of Education and the E-Governance Unit, the scale of change, in the same time period, has not been observed in other ministries. Additionally, several interviewees indicated that for a long time, there were no role models among the alumni of the international scholarship programs who excelled in government positions. Despite this trend, these two individuals – at least in the eyes of many scholarship program grantees – are examples of western-educated alumni who have successfully applied their U.S. degrees to Moldovan development.

In the end, however, the expectation of many individuals with western education – that they and their peers would attain government and higher education positions in Moldova following the revolution – did not come to pass. Most (10 of 11) of the alumni living in Moldova note that despite some reforms, they currently have reservations about working for government. As was noted in the previous chapter, this is primarily due to three reasons: First, the low salaries of government employees. Second, high corruption is perceived at "all levels" in the government, with some exceptions (notably, areas of education and E-Governance among them). Third, alumni perceive that their efforts to advance reform will either be thwarted or that they will face great and ongoing opposition.

A good example of this is in the story provided by one alumnus who currently works in Chisinau. In his interview, he expressed interest in one day working for the Moldovan judiciary system. However, the judiciary's well-known reputation for entrenched corruption has kept him from exploring this possibility further. He said,

> What precludes me personally from taking or getting involved with judiciary at this point in time is the high level of corruption perception associated with judiciary. And I simply don't want to associate myself with this system, as it is now. That's perhaps also because of – I know that – I have to be a little bit crazy to go into that, not really care about things like your reputation and how, because sooner or later, you might – for good or for not – end up in situations when somebody's going to perceive you as being corrupt. And I don't want this type of stuff – not now, I'm not ready. I'm just waiting for something better, some changes in this respect. But it's highly perceived as being corrupt. And it is, in fact – the system is quite corrupt. And the system does not really tolerate people that oppose some practices and fights to sort of "take care" of them by either posting them in unpopular positions or somewhere in rural areas.

Later in this interview, the alumnus also mentioned that he has similar interests in running for office, but that he has been likewise deterred because of assumptions that elected officials are seeking financial rewards for their service and that he would need to be affiliated with a political party and "play the game" to be a legitimate candidate.

Therefore, since the perception of corruption remains high in certain areas of government, alumni expressed hesitancy to take government posts and try to reform the system from within.

Other alumni agreed that in addition to the perceived corruption and low salaries, oftentimes alumni were frustrated that the Moldovan government and higher education refused to hear new ideas or try new approaches. One alumnus stated the workplace culture is threatening, suggesting that "pushing for change can lead to negative consequences" such that "motivated people get frustrated and leave." Moldovan alumni said specifically that they were enthusiastic to pursue new projects, advocate for change, or pursue new employment opportunities following their U.S. education, yet this fervor was thwarted after multiple attempts, without success, to create something new. Nine alumni used the word "disappointed" or a similar term when describing how they felt about their home country upon return. One focus of this disappointment was the government itself – including the state universities – that appeared resistant to change.[31] An alumnus put it this way,

> Because you come back with an extra set of skills… So, you know, you're thinking the sky's the limit, and then it's not. So, that's where I think it actually, it sounds really funny, but without the [scholarship program], I might have been able to go higher and stay in Moldova.

This alumnus is now a permanent resident in Europe.

Alumni whose scholarship program stipulated that they work in government positions for three years following their studies corroborated this sentiment. While they expressed gratitude for the exceptional education they received in the United States, they

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[31] One notable exception to this can be found in the Information Technology (IT) section in Moldova. Alumni who worked in this industry noted that it is growing quickly and changing rapidly, as it establishes new relationships with western European and U.S. partners.

noted a frustration of returning to a job that doesn't reward their degree or utilize their

expertise. One of the three alumni in this particular program said that foreign education

provided "a lot of perspective of how it was in a developed country" and one brings

newfound expectations back to Moldova, yet "it's tough for civil servants, because you're

still part of the system." Another alumnus mentioned that he's not even sure if his new

supervisor was aware of this academic expertise or scholarship commitment. Yet those

currently working for the Moldovan government or in higher education continue to

suggest changes and to be part of teams that are promoting new programs and services

within the government. While the scholarship program is "starting to bring that change,

mental change… and to bring some benefits – some concrete benefits – to the citizens,"

the alumni of these programs state that the pace has been slow and frustrating. Two of the

three mentioned that they have plans to pursue doctoral degrees outside of Moldova

following their three-year commitment.

In sum, almost all of the interviewees mentioned that the Soviet system – or

similarly, the lack of change from their Soviet past – influenced their opportunities and

decisions following their scholarships. The areas of great concern were low salaries,

perception of corruption, and a workplace culture that is hesitant to change. For some

alumni, the Soviet system curtailed their plans and led them to pursue opportunities

outside the country; this was especially true for those who completed their scholarships

before the 2009 Twitter Revolution. Upon reflection of her own choices, one alumnus

said, "So, Communists were quite powerful for quite a long time. And I'm wondering if

that wasn't a deterring factor for others to return or to contribute more intensely in the

country." For other graduates, the transition from Soviet economy and governance to the liberal economy – sparked by the Twitter Revolution, and with subsequent elections that retains officials who have their sights set on joining the European Union – opened the idea of, yet not numerous examples of, opportunities to apply their skills and experience. Next, we turn to comparing the cases of Georgia's and Moldova's revolutions and how these contextual shifts provided opportunities for alumni.

Section 6.1.3: Government reform and revolution: Comparing the cases

When comparing the cases of scholarship alumni's perceived contributions to national social and economic development, the moment of significant transition from a Soviet past and ties with Russia to a pro-west and democratic government – a "democratic revolution" – is a meaningful event in the eyes of scholarship alumni. From their perspective, these political transitions influenced their career opportunities and choices, helped to create the vision of a prosperous future for the country, and censured the level of perceived corruption.

In the case of Georgia, the Rose Revolution in 2003 ushered in comprehensive and enduring political, economic, and social reforms. As part of these processes, scholarship alumni were widely selected for leadership positions to drive these reforms in a government that valued western education and were open and encouraging of fresh ideas from the west. By comparison, Moldova's Twitter Revolution was almost six years later and resulted in less dramatic and slower-paced reforms, at least in most areas. The same employment and career opportunities available in Georgia were not seen in

Moldova, and fewer alumni assumed positions in government. Consequently, talented alumni with high expectations that the Twitter Revolution would bring economic and social change were disappointed, and some left for posts abroad or did not return to Moldova following the Twitter Revolution.

Despite the dissimilar reform trajectories following the Rose and Twitter Revolutions, numerous alumni from both Georgia and Moldova spoke about these revolutions as a flashpoint when they considered anew how they might be able to "give back" to their countries. A national political uprising – in which none of the interviewees in this study admitted to participating in directly – catalyzed or brought about a similar "revolution of the mind" in which these alumni honestly considered how they might be able to work more intensely and directly toward the development of their countries. In fact, alumni reported that they – or other alumni that they knew – accepted posts in the government, relocated from abroad, or were inspired by other alumni to follow in their footsteps and apply for education overseas as a way to help their home country. This "revolution in the mind" appeared to be especially acute for those alumni who lived abroad during these revolutions, as they admitted to watching the events closely and investigating opportunities to return – both temporarily and long-term – to help with various development projects that reflected their expertise.

Naturally, multiple and varied internal and external factors must coalesce to create the right conditions for a political revolution. The Rose Revolution and Twitter Revolution were a culmination of such events, conditions, and individual personalities. Nonetheless, similar revolutions and smaller related uprisings have been seen across the

post-Soviet space over the last 15 years, including the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan in Ukraine, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and even recent protests in Moldova in 2015 and 2016. According to this research, these revolutions can spur a reawakening in alumni's interest and desire to contribute to national development – termed in this paper as a personal "revolution of the mind." For many alumni – especially in Georgia – this translated to direct engagement in policymaking and planning through government positions. That is not to say that the pathway to shedding a Soviet-style government and taking up democratic reforms is swift; both countries appear to have struggled with their young democracies since the revolution. Yet these revolutions appear to spark graduates' ideas about how to be more seriously involved in national development, with Georgian scholarship alumni trusting that they are the forefront of leading this change and Moldovan alumni struggling to believe the same type of change is possible.

Section 6.2: Alumni networks

A second home country factor that has a significant influence on how alumni contribute to their home country's economic and social development is alumni networks. Alumni tend to view these peer networks as useful to provide support for their activities, find collaborators for projects, and build a network of like-minded individuals – all of which help ambitious individuals to organize to drive social and economic change in their home countries. Both Georgian and Moldovan alumni expressed a sincere interest in maintaining ties to and establishing new relationships with others who had earned an

overseas degree in the United States, calling other alumni "very interesting and successful people" and "like-minded comrades." By connecting with other alumni across years of participation, professional fields, and levels of experience, interviewees in both countries noted that the networks were – or could be – instrumental in the country's social and economic development.

In Georgia and Moldova, alumni networks included both formal, registered organizations and informal collaborations. Membership was organized in various ways: participants in a single scholarship program, alumni who have been sponsored by the United States government, advocates of a social issue or cause (e.g., promotion of the field of social work), or graduates of a single host university. The origin of the group also differed; in some cases, the scholarship sponsor started the network, while alumni themselves founded others. A few had been incorporated and registered as independent organizations, and there were several cases where these alumni organizations had received grants or administrative support from the entities that sponsored their scholarships. The structure and frequency of meeting was quite different among groups, although the main communication function was conducted electronically, primarily through Facebook and email lists.

It would be logical to assume that when the same or similar scholarship programs are offered in multiple countries that the alumni networks' purpose, structure, and level of activity would be correspondingly similar. This would seem even more likely to be the case when the alumni express interest in keeping connections to their peers, as well as meet others from different cohorts who have similar profiles. Moreover, many

scholarship funders – including the U.S. Government and the Open Society Foundations
– are also eager to keep connection with their scholarships grantees to identify successful
cases in the countries, to support their innovative projects, or to be able to recruit
volunteer reviewers for future scholarship competitions.

However, despite similar motivations for starting and facilitating alumni networks
in multiple countries, there were striking contrasts between the networks in Georgia and
Moldova. First, the number and vitality of the alumni networks differ. Second, alumni
viewed the efficacy of these networks quite differently, which included their rate of
participation in alumni activities or how they utilized the networks to make connections
and friends, seek partners or volunteers for projects, or find employment. For Georgians,
alumni networks embodied a "critical mass" that was leading change in the country, with
alumni organizations serving as the hubs of activity. For Moldovans, interviewees
described the alumni network as diffuse and an "underused resource."

Section 6.2.1: Georgian Alumni networks

Feeling connected to other scholarship alumni was a significant part of the
scholarship experience for Georgian participants, as they consider themselves to be part
of the "critical mass" of western-educated individuals who have led Georgia's
development. When asked about their familiarity with other scholarship alumni, almost
all Georgian alumni (17 of 20) mentioned they had existing ties – formal or informal –
with other alumni. Many regularly spoke with those who were in their same scholarship
cohort, while others had made connections among those who participated in different

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programs and or at different intervals. There appeared to be no noticeable difference in the number or quality of these relationships between alumni who lived in Georgia and those who lived abroad.

Moreover, this familiarity led to trust, both professional and personal, among those Georgians with western degrees. In one example, an alumnus talks about her relationships with 12 other alumni who were in the same scholarship cohort, "So, it was very easy for me and for us to keep together as a group, and we still keep in touch, almost 20 years later." She continued to say she trusts others in her program because "I know what [they] went through, sort of, because I went through the same. So, I'm sort of assured of your quality, as well, in a sense." Another alumnus suggests that when she learns that someone else had a scholarship,

> It's like a business card. [Laughs.] You know, if I know someone [had a scholarship], it's much more easier for me to approach this person. Because there are, definitely, the shared values. And you know, there is not only the shared values, there is some quality to the education, because you know what this person went through and you know that if they have got the degree from the American university, they have to have at least a minimal standard. And this is already a very positive thing for me, and even if I know that this person studied somewhere, and I need a consultant or something, I would rather approach a [scholarship] alumni than someone else, you know? And because, psychologically, it's opened for me a lot of doors, you know? And, you have, as I have said, a certain guarantee of quality. Maybe something also about the work ethic, this kind of stuff. And they are also more willing to volunteer for certain things.

Another 11 alumni echoed this belief that scholarship alumni have certain values or principles, many of which they had when selected for the scholarship and some which were further developed while studying in the United States.

The alumni networks in Georgia took several forms, ranging from groups organized by donors, associations formed by alumni of the same university, and alumni organized around certain social issues. The alumni interviewed for this study mentioned two formal alumni networks most often: 1) The U.S. Government Exchange Program

Alumni Association of Georgia (EPAG)[32], and 2) The Georgian Association of Social

Workers (GASW). In addition to formally registered groups, alumni mentioned informal,

non-registered groups organized around their specific scholarship programs, individual

interests, or host universities.

Membership in these associations not only helped alumni to meet others similar to

themselves, but they also allowed them to make connections for future employment or

volunteer projects. This was especially true for those alumni based in the capital city of

Tbilisi, where alumni claimed that other scholarship graduates were a vital part of their

professional networks. Several interviewees admitted to turning to the alumni

communication network to advertise open positions in their offices; likewise, alumni

provided stories about finding employment opportunities from other alumni, even those

they had not met in person. Five alumni noted that they prefer to hire other scholarship

grantees, and one alumnus noted that western education was a prerequisite for starting

work at his law firm.

In addition, Georgian scholarship recipients noted that other alumni were a

significant part of their personal network, as well. Those with scholarships in the U.S.

tended to socialize and know the personal details of other alumni. As one example, an

alumnus talked about how a group of alumni decided to gather for a Christmas

celebration, inviting those not just of their own scholarship program, but others who had

attended the same university on other scholarship initiatives. The alumnus recounted the

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[32] The Muskie scholarship program formerly had its own specific alumni organization for Muskie alumni, but this has morphed into EPAG.

conversation, which turned to the topic of educational development. An excerpt from this

interview is included here:

> A: Most of us do have this sense of we are a little more responsible than an average Georgian. […]
> I just met with most of the people a week ago, in fact, and we just discussed all these aspects –
> some of these aspects.
>
> Q: Oh, really? Did that conversation come up naturally?
>
> A: Absolutely naturally. It was a get together before Christmas because some of our friends who
> we met in [the United States], but those people were not part of our program, came to Georgia and
> some other locations, so we went together. And then a small get together turned out to be an
> alumni get together and so all of us invited each other, and naturally ended up in discussing our
> roles in helping developing this country.

She continued to explain that those living in Tbilisi had decided that together they would

organize a club and try to apply for grants related to education programming and reform.

This act of organizing alumni into groups, using the groups to form teams

committed to a certain project, and having the team apply for funding was fairly

commonplace among Georgian alumni. Alumni noted that these groups were the center

of organizing alumni around social causes, as they could easily connect with others to

design and engage in certain projects, both as project leaders and volunteers. In some

cases, the alumni organization served as the administrative body to receive and manage

the grant funds directly.

To illustrate the power of the network, one alumnus recounted a time when she

recruited consultants via an alumni listserv managed by the IREX office in Georgia. She

gave one example of trying to introduce a new policy approach into the ministry for

which she was working,

> [At that time] nobody in Georgia understood what sustainability meant – really, nobody
> understood that. So, the Minister created a department, but we couldn't find a head of department.
> And also we were looking for local trainers or temporary consultants for very specific [type of]
> analysis work. So, I went back to – I went to IREX – to ask for professionals, maybe for graduate
> students, who were doing research, who wanted to contribute.

Having these networks allowed alumni to find those with special skills, as well as to further enhance and hone specific ideas. Alumni mentioned being involved in projects that included efforts to start new degree programs at universities, to offer programs for children with disabilities, to raise awareness about domestic violence, and to clean up the environment.

In addition to finding consultants or volunteers, alumni also noted that working within the parameters of a formalized alumni organization – one that was registered with the government, had a leadership and communication structure, and operated with a code and bylaws – allowed them an administrative and fiscal structure that facilitated and hastened project development and partnership with other organizations. Perhaps most importantly, these associations allowed the alumni to apply for, receive, and appropriately manage grants and other funds, allowing small ideas to grow into larger and more nuanced organizations to promote social change agendas and influence policy and practice. Ten of the twenty interviewees noted that they were currently active in an officially registered alumni association.

One association of scholarship alumni that appeared to be quite successful – according to alumni interviewees – in organizing for social change is the Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW). Established in 2004, GASW was founded by participants of the Open Society Foundation's Social Work Fellowship Program. With their Master's of Social Work degrees, alumni returned to form a non-profit association "advocating for the rights, recognition and importance of social workers in Georgia, and the clients they serve" (Georgian Association of Social Workers, 2015). In addition,

GASW worked closely with two universities in Georgia to establish undergraduate, master, and doctoral degrees in the social work field. Now with more than 300 members, GASW leads trainings on social work for professionals in other fields, partners with international organizations to deliver psychosocial support throughout the country, evaluates government services, and advises on policies and programs.

As is true with the GASW and other formalized alumni groups, as well as other informal alumni networks, scholarship alumni saw their peers as action-oriented and able to execute programs that led to social and economic change in Georgia. Alumni spoke courteously and complimentarily of other scholarship alumni, and viewed alumni as working together to create change. In fact, at least four alumni used the specific term of "critical mass" to explain why scholarship program alumni had been instrumental and effective to bringing social change to Georgia, and five others used similar terms, such as "ideological comrades" who coalesce around important issues, or "a community that once was selected as the people who could get degrees from the best universities in the world and then come back and then help develop areas in which we would work." These passages indicate that the alumni were in positions of leadership and able to influence a larger group, introduce and explain new ideas, and shape values of their peers or colleagues. The alumni also noted that the time was right for introducing new ideas, although they admit that not all of their projects have been successful or supported.

On the whole, Georgian alumni identified these alumni networks – on part with their individual contributions – as helping them to contribute to social and economic development. These networks symbolized not only social support for alumni, but they

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also represented a group of trusted partners and future collaborators with a shared enthusiasm for social and economic change in Georgia. It is not just that the alumni networks existed but that the quality of networking – relationships built on trust, partnership, and action – was vital and ongoing.

Section 6.2.2: Moldovan alumni networks

If Georgian alumni networks can be described as boisterous conference of various individuals coming together to discuss ideas and plan projects, Moldova alumni relations are more like a casual conversation in the office break room. Very rarely did Moldovan interviewees mentioned alumni networks as a vehicle to spur social and economic development at home. Out of a sample of 20 interviewees, only two interviewees – both alumni of U.S. Government programs – mentioned alumni activities as part of the way they "give back" to Moldova, and both times they were asked to volunteer by the Embassy. Three alumni mentioned the international networks of their host universities as well, but they only mentioned these in vague terms of being organized and hearing from their university services, not in terms of active partnership.

When Moldovan alumni spoke about alumni networks, they mostly mentioned alumni activities that are organized and maintained by the U.S. Embassy in Moldova or the U.S. Department of State. The U.S. Embassy maintains an Alumni Resource Center that provides reference materials and leads activities for alumni. This organization is for all alumni of U.S. Government educational exchange programs: academic degree programs, short-term visits, professional exchanges, and high school and undergraduate

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non-degree programs. Each year these alumni are invited to an Alumni Congress, where selected alumni are awarded for outstanding alumni contributions to Moldova. In addition, the U.S. Government supports alumni initiatives and organizations – including a group called Creative Development Association, which was started by a group of Muskie alumni – and has offered a small grants competition to support activities that build democracy and support the U.S. Government's aims in the country.

Despite the attention and effort put into these alumni events by the U.S. Government and several alumni in leadership positions, interviewees referred to the alumni network as "not close." One alumnus who had a leadership position among the group of alumni described it this way, struggling with her apparent ambivalence, "So, it's a pretty close community. Not close. It's, um, a big community of alumni and we work together on a lot of events. So, it's kind of easy to keep in touch with them." Yet the alumnus continued and suggested that the network is not strong. She says that she keeps in touch with other alumni, "not because I choose to but because I kind of have to," suggesting with some reluctance, "you never know who you might collaborate with because, as I said, it's a small country, it's a small city, so we do get to meet all these alumni."

Although alumni may have been at one time very interested in alumni networking or service through an alumni organization, seven Moldova alumni mentioned that with time, their interest has waned. As an example, one alumnus living in Chisinau said,

> I'm not as good as keeping with alumni here in Moldova. I went to a few events at some point, but I didn't find that this was a great place to meet [others]. Because they kind of mixed everyone in one pool. They didn't have a Muskie-specific group. So, I never used that again.

Another alumnus said that she was asked several times to provide free trainings to different students or alumni or to judge applicants for the Muskie program. However, other than these invited talks, the alumnus has not been so involved. Three of these alumni indicated that their involvement with the alumni community dwindled when the Muskie program was discontinued after selecting the final cohort in 2012. One said this was an extreme disappointment because he applied to Muskie specifically because "the Americans seem to take care more of the whole process [of networking]" and he was seeking to connect with other alumni upon his graduation.

Several other alumni noted that despite the work of the U.S. Government's Alumni Resource Center, the alumni networks could be improved to attend to the needs of their members. As one alumnus stated, there is still much to do "to make sure that alumni have opportunities to develop and grow in Moldova when they come back." Of the current structure, one alumnus summarized her position, saying,

> I do want this association to work for the alumni that return, but I also want to promote this idea that we also need to help them facilitate their activities in the country. Because, first of all, a lot of alumni are leaving the country – even the Master's programs. How many can you see [here in Moldova]? There are some, but not too many. The majority have [sic] left in the first three years. If you look at that, which means that – and that's only about Muskies – but if you look at other programs, it's the same thing. And there are some alumni that work somewhere in the region, and maybe they would want to do something, but they don't have that support. We're not offering that, and at this point, I don't think that they can figure out what kind of support they can receive.

Moreover, five alumni mentioned that it would be helpful for the success of scholarship programs and alumni networks to profile western educated alumni who have returned, stayed in Moldova, and excelled through outstanding contributions. Although this has recently changed with the examples of Maia Sandu in the Ministry of Education and Stela Mocan with the E-Governance Project, alumni claimed that historically it has

been difficult to stay interested in contributing to Moldovan society when alumni perceive that so many peers are going abroad – even those who had leadership roles in the alumni community. One alumnus who currently lives in the United States noted that these examples of successful people are what make him feel "encouraged." He said that in the United States, "you can see with your eyes that it's possible, that the world is wide open for anyone that is […] open for new opportunities and hard work to pursue their dreams. And you don't have so many cases in Moldova."

On the whole, alumni of U.S. Government programs who live outside the country say they have been very inactive in the Moldovan alumni network. One alumni who lives in the United States said, "So at some point [while living in Moldova], I got disconnected from the association or the community, and especially when I moved the U.S., the disconnect became even bigger." He continues to say that he follows the alumni association activities on Facebook, saying, "I'm not that connected. […] I'm just more of a passive observer or participant." In another interesting example, one alumnus who lived in Moscow after her scholarship talked about her role with the alumni of U.S. Government programs – however as an active member of the Russian Muskie club, not the Moldovan.

Although alumni indicate that they have not been so active in the established alumni organizations, those who live in Moldova emphasized their desire for a vibrant alumni network. Some thought it was too difficult to mobilize alumni when so many were overseas, while others were more optimistic, believing that alumni can work together to make a significant impact to improve Moldova's economic and social

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situation. One alumnus noted that while some alumni may take the lead, others must be asked to be involved. She explained, "If you have a couple of persons that are stubborn and they still want to make a difference, then 'yes! We can go!' But some may be modest, like 'Ok, you don't ask me what can I do.'" She goes on to suggest that there should be a leader who can "work towards developing opportunities for alumni…to come back and feel useful."

One possible improvement to the alumni network in Moldova, as suggested by alumni, is to turn the control from the U.S. Government to the alumni themselves, permitting them to structure the activities and programs in a way that suits the alumni community needs best. Of the current structure, one alumnus said,

> There is an alumni program, but it's all funded by the U.S. Embassy, it's maintained by the U.S. Embassy, when all the alumni are welcome. We have alumni meeting. We have Alumni Congress. But this not done by the [Moldovan] government. This is not done by Moldovan society. It keeps maintaining [sic] by U.S. Embassy. They still do the part of the job that I prefer Moldova would do for us. It's like U.S. is paying for us, U.S. is hosting us, and when we come back, U.S. is still trying to integrate us back.

On the whole, Moldovan alumni seem rather uninspired and nonchalant about the current alumni network, yet recognize that it could be a powerful force in spurring social and economic reform in the country. Of the alumni of her scholarship program, one alumnus said, "it's a network unused." Strikingly, very few alumni interviewed for this study mentioned a desire to take the lead of this network or to start a new alumni initiative in the future.

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Section 6.2.3: Alumni networks: Comparing the cases

When comparing the cases of Georgia and Moldova, it appears that a strong and vital system of alumni networks is a quality of the home country that helps graduates of international scholarship programs contribute to national social and economic development. In the case of Georgia, multiple networks provided the frame and support for ambitious and creative alumni to propose projects, find collaborators, and apply for funding for their progressive ideas. In Moldova, the networks were loose or nonexistent – and to some alumni, considered ineffective – and alumni wished for stronger ties with other scholarship program graduates as a way to promote social and economic change.

Notably, both Georgia and Moldova received similar support and resources for alumni networks. Alumni from both countries see other scholarship recipients as possible collaborators, interested in learning more about others' expertise, experiences, and skills. So, why would Georgian alumni develop and participate in networks at a greater rate than Moldova alumni? And why would they identify them as more successful in contributing to national change?

While the exact answers are outside the scope of this research, two contributing factors provide some clues. First, as was noted earlier, an estimated 80-90% of Georgian alumni return to live and work in their home country, compared to 40-50% of Moldovan alumni. With more alumni in the country, there are more people to contribute to networks, thereby building stronger projects, developing more ideas, and having a larger network of trusted peers with whom to share information about jobs and projects. Moreover, as previously argued, western education – especially American education –

was highly valued during the Saakashvili administration and alumni claim much of this aura around scholarship alumni remains pervasive today. Therefore, graduates of scholarship programs are further incentivized to affiliate with these prestigious alumni groups to build on their connections and reputations. Comparatively, in Moldova, a much smaller proportion of the alumni population lives in the country, reducing the number of willing collaborators and presenting additional barriers to seek partnerships or support from those who live abroad.

The second factor that could influence the difference between alumni networks in Georgia and Moldova is the transition to a more open society that happened earlier in Georgia. With the Georgian Dream, new mechanisms of civil society groups proposing new programs and leading change became possible. Community leaders looked to others with similar experience in the west – including education at American universities – and asked these peers to help with various initiatives. In many ways, formal and informal alumni associations served as a meeting place or clearinghouse for ideas, from which projects that could facilitate change emerged. In Moldova, on the other hand, many alumni perceived that the society that was impervious to change or new ideas, and consequently, alumni perceived this environment as one unwelcome to their ideas or proposed projects. This, in turn, resulted in alumni not seeking others to support their work, and when they looked for partners in other alumni, they felt disheartened by the large number abroad.

In summary, one key finding from this research is the realization that motivated individuals seeking change in their societies – like those selected for competitive

international scholarship programs – tend to seek the support and partnership of other

scholarship alumni to advance their work. Oftentimes, in scholarship recruitment

materials or program summaries, individual contributions are highlighted: the individual

is selected for the scholarship due to individual (not team) accomplishments, and the

individual is expected to return home and "give back" in unique or innovative ways. This

research indicates, however, that when a community of like-minded individuals share the

experience of an overseas degree and then return to their home country to form a

community and work together, alumni perceive their work to influence social and

economic development. When this does not happen as easily – as in the case of Moldova

– alumni note that the lack of networking or community with other alumni is a barrier to

their own meeting of the scholarship aims.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined how international scholarship grantees viewed their contributions to their home country's economic and social development by comparing the cases of the Republics of Georgia and Moldova. The three main objectives of the research were 1) to understand the difference between Georgian and Moldovan alumni in terms of how they view their contributions to national development of their home countries, 2) to determine the extent to which there is a difference between scholarship recipients who live abroad and those who live in the home country in how they view their contributions to national development, and 3) to explore the degree to which alumni cite certain home country contextual factors as barriers or supports for their perceived contributions to national development.

Findings indicate that alumni who participated in this study feel their greatest contributions are through their professional activities, instead of their volunteer work, parenting, or other roles. More so, alumni collectively believe that of all professions, positions within national governmental structures – including state institutions of higher education – have the greatest influence on social and economic change in their home countries. Alumni also estimate that roles in international organizations, such as the United Nations, or with national NGOs, businesses, and banks can also effect change. The most common perception, however, among Georgian and Moldovan alumni is that real change must be embodied in new, government-led initiatives for social and economic development that are embedded in policy.

Working for governmental and state universities was a common occurrence among the Georgian alumni included in this study, in both current and previous positions. Georgian alumni spoke of being able to implement change and apply the knowledge they gained during their scholarships. Moreover, many have earned quality salaries in these positions – as well as in NGOs and other fields, like banking and law – and feel that their ideas are welcomed and valued in their workplaces.

This was less the case for the for Moldovan alumni, a majority of whom either sought positions with international NGOs in Chisinau or opted for opportunities abroad. Due to a conscious choice, many of those involved in this research eschewed government and university posts, deterred by low salaries, a high level of perceived corruption, and the system's monolithic culture. Of those four individuals working for government at the time of their interviews, three were intending for their next step to be outside of the Moldovan government, and perhaps outside the country itself.

Therefore, if alumni perceive that the greatest way they can "give back" to national social and economic development is through government positions, comparing the cases of Georgian and Moldovan alumni is informative, as well as sobering. First, the different experiences between groups indicate that not all scholarship alumni will be on the same track to assume government positions – which, by their own estimation, have the greatest opportunity to push for reform – following their foreign scholarship. In the case of Georgia, where scholarship program graduates have been historically able to find quality jobs in national government positions – and where their ideas are valued and subsequently supported with an appropriate salary – scholarship programs whose aim is

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to help develop low- and income-countries can be deemed to be highly successful. Largely favorable conditions in the country have facilitated the alumni's high rate of return and ability to influence social and economic change – the logic model of scholarship programs is intact. In the Moldovan case, certain conditions have hindered the alumni's perceived ability to contribute to change. With a government that has historically appeared to be resistant to change and reform, that doesn't seem to value the alumni's newfound perspectives, and that is not willing or able to pay these alumni well, graduates of scholarship programs will likely seek opportunities elsewhere, including many abroad.

The second objective of this research was to determine the extent to which there is a difference between scholarship recipients who live abroad and those who live in the home country in how they "give back" to national development. Alumni from Georgia and Moldova are alike in that they feel that living in the country provides greater opportunities for involvement in – and ability to influence – social and economic change. Alumni mentioned that those living in the country contribute directly through their daily work, by paying taxes, by volunteering, and by staying connected with others with western education. Alumni who live in the country are also considered more frequently for open posts and as collaborators on new projects.

Correspondingly, alumni from both Georgia and Moldova, and both alumni who live in the country and outside, perceive that those scholarship program alumni who live abroad have diminished ability to "give back" to the home country, despite their best intentions. For Georgians who live outside the country, they continued to seek close

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collaboration with in-country partners on various projects and activities – although they admit that these ties are looser than those who live in the country – and two of the three Georgians living abroad have plans to return home. In contrast, far more Moldovans live outside of the country, with estimates of approximately 50% of scholarship program alumni living abroad. Those Moldovans abroad range considerably in their relationship with the home country, with a few occasionally thinking of returning home, and one allowing their passport – and *de facto*, their citizenship – to lapse. Considering that scholarship program alumni were once rewarded based on their specific plans to contribute to their country's social and economic development, many graduates' lack of engagement in the home country is quite a remarkable contrast.

Therefore, the notion that one can live abroad after their scholarship yet still "give back" following a scholarship period is not a belief held strongly by scholarship program alumni who participated in this research. Indeed, there was a strong consensus among participants in this study that an alumnus who lived and worked in the country was much more influential in creating change than one trying to do so from outside. Interestingly, it is worthwhile to note that for many Moldovans, simply living in the country for two or three years constituted "giving back" and fulfilling the requirements of their scholarship. (This perception was linked to the U.S. visa rule that scholarship winners should "go back" and live in their home country for two years before receiving another U.S. visa.) This notion of a two- or three-year in-country scholarship requirement was not common among Georgian alumni; instead, many Georgians reported that they had a "sense of duty" to live in the country in order to help it grow and develop. This particular

difference highlights how, in the absence of clear program expectations or publicized examples of outstanding alumni contributions to national development, groups of alumni may create their own definition of what it means to "give back" following their scholarship period.

The final goal of this research was to better understand which, if any, home country contextual factors are considered barriers or supports for the alumni in their contributions to national development, and the extent to which they influence scholarship program graduates. Alumni in both countries highlighted two contextual characteristics that they believe had a significant influence on their individual trajectories, and therefore, the overall effectiveness of scholarship programs. The first contextual factor is the role of a prior national revolution as a demonstrative shift from the Soviet past to a more liberal, democratized future and subsequent opening of the government for new ideas, policies, and programs. The second is the enthusiasm and vitality of scholarship alumni networks existing in the country.

On this first point, alumni spoke about how the government's transition towards the west opened up both professional positions for them, as well as sparked their thinking about new possibilities in how they could "give back." When the former Soviet governments were no longer in power and new leadership set a course for reform and closer integration with Europe and the west, alumni felt that this was the right moment to reconsider their involvement in their home countries. In the case of Georgia and Moldova, both had short, and relatively peaceful, revolutions that signified this shift

away from the Soviet past and ties with Russia and alignment with democracy and closer

affiliation with the west.

In comparing the cases of Georgia's Rose Revolution and Moldova's Twitter

Revolution, there are two attributes of these events that seem to influence alumni most in

terms of their choices and activities regarding social and economic reform. The first

attribute is the moment of revolution itself. Alumni spoke of these revolutions as

flashpoints in their minds and moments of hope – termed in this paper as "revolution of

the mind" – when they paid particularly close attention to what was happening in the

home country. Although few alumni in this study reported participating in the protests

themselves, these events led them to analyze how they might be able to seize this

opportune moment to "give back" and be involved with the new government or help in

some other way during this precarious – yet momentous – time. As was detailed in

Chapter Six, some alumni did act on this "revolution of the mind" sentiment and sought

new employment opportunities, including moving back to the home country from abroad.

The second influential attribute of these revolutions for alumni was that these

events jumpstarted the push for reform. As part of this long journey from a Soviet style

government to a European Union styled democracy, new officials were hired, old policies

were amended and new ones crafted, corruption was targeted and rooted out, new

programs were designed and launched, partnerships with western countries were

strengthened, and new university courses were developed. In this shifting terrain, new

perspectives and skills were needed, and those with quality foreign education were in

high demand. In Georgia, one reform initiative – Saakashvili's Georgian Dream – opened

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many opportunities for alumni, and they were paid a quality salary. In Moldova, the reform agenda following the 2009 Twitter Revolution became mired in lack of consensus, change of leadership, and corruption – some qualities that are still identified in the Moldovan government today. Subsequently, Moldovan scholarship program alumni remain skeptical that the government can implement wide-ranging and lasting reform and they have been deterred from working within a system they feel is slow or even resistant to change.

The second contextual characteristic that alumni highlighted as influential to their perceived contributions is that of alumni associations and networks. These networks – official and unofficial – are mechanisms by which alumni share experiences and seek advice from likeminded individuals, solicit partners for new projects, and seek support from those who similarly struggle to pursue new economic and social policies and programs in their home countries. In Georgia, alumni felt that these networks helped them to feel part of a "critical mass" of individuals, whom they could trust and rely on, working in partnership to promote change. In Moldova, alumni did not feel very connected to other scholarship program graduates, yet interviewees mentioned a desire to have a network similar to what is observed in Georgia. In-country Moldovan alumni reported that they wondered if the alumni networks were weakened due to so many of their peers living abroad.

In comparing these two cases, findings from this study indicate that alumni networks afford scholarship participants personal and professional connections, collaborators for reform initiatives, and membership in a larger network that promotes

social and economic change in the home country. Where these networks are not vibrant, it is a forfeited opportunity to capitalize on the knowledge, skills, and interests of scholarship program alumni who want to be involved in social and economic change.

Taken together, these findings point to the conclusion that international scholarship program alumni do not perceive that they have the same influence on social and economic development across these two countries. According to participants in this study, alumni believe that their individual influence – and that of other of scholarship program participants – depends primarily on two factors: 1) the openness and transformation of the country's government, which spills over to good quality jobs, and 2) the strength of existing alumni networks among scholarship program alumni. Moreover, this study indicates that the national context has a sizable role in shaping the career trajectories of alumni and is a significant factor in their desire to return to or remain in the home country after their studies.

In sum, Georgian and Moldovan alumni state that they are more likely to "give back" to their home country when the conditions in the country – as exemplified by the government – are such that others are interested in their ideas, value western education, financially reward their industriousness and skills, and are on course to accept new policies and programs. In addition, alumni seek supportive peers for their progressive ideas and unorthodox approaches via alumni networks, organizing themselves to design and enact plans together.

Section 7.1: Implications of the findings

This study indicates three concrete implications for international scholarship programs: 1) for program funders and administrators to scrutinize the national context of scholarship countries and adapt programming accordingly to increase the chance that alumni can influence their home social and economic systems, 2) for program funders to consider offering flexible financial support for alumni who wish to take a new role in their home country at the time of "revolution," and 3) for program funders, administrators, and alumni themselves to prioritize and potentially redesign alumni networks in the home country.

First, as stated above, since international scholarship program alumni identify prominent ways they are able to influence social and economic change in their home countries, scholarship programs should be continued. That said, there are ways to increase program effectiveness. The first recommendation is for funders and administrators to carefully investigate and thoroughly consider specific national contextual factors of the home country, listed below, when designing and reviewing scholarship programs; this examination of the home country context ultimately leads to greater likelihood of selecting individuals from participating countries whose cultural and political contexts are currently amenable to alumni going back and "giving back." Specifically, these contextual factors are: 1) availability of employment opportunities in the participants' field of study and quality salaries associated with these positions, 2) the value that employers – including the government and higher education institutions – place on western education, as this value indicates the likelihood that program graduates

will be hired, 3) a low level of perceived corruption within the government and higher education system, and 4) the quality and strength of existing alumni networks.

In countries where one or more of these factors is absent or in question, funders and administrators may consider supporting or boosting supplementary initiatives to address these conditions. For example, if scholarship program administrators learn that governments and state-sponsored higher education institutions are particularly resistant to those with western degrees, they may wish to adjust expectations that alumni will seek – and stay in – government positions as a way to spur policy and program reform. In addition, they could consider ways to incentivize alumni to promote change, such as awards for alumni innovation or early career accomplishments. Another approach would be for scholarship program funders to look at career counseling or other employment services to link skilled graduates with available opportunities and possibly reduce the chance that alumni will seek positions abroad.

Furthermore, for the existing cohorts of alumni, program sponsors and governments that are interested in having western-educated individuals remain and promote change in the home country should back efforts that provide quality salaries for all government employees and fight corruption within government systems. This is especially relevant when the national government co-sponsors the scholarship program and intends to see capacity built within their ministries. To be clear, since the most frequently cited reasons for alumni not accepting – or for leaving – government posts were low salaries and rigidity in the system, funders should look at ways to facilitate these alumni's roles by influencing the systems in which they work.

Obviously, these types of initiatives are not without their own difficulties. Trying to shape workplace culture to be more open, fighting intransigent corruption, and increasing public service salaries requires sizable, ongoing efforts and comprehensive strategies for new compensation and rewards systems. Moreover, they would need to be led by the governments themselves, or in partnership with a neutral international organization, like UNDP, as to not appear that international foundations or other governments are meddling in the affairs of a sovereign nation. However, these kinds of reform initiatives – many of which are in progress already – may be the best approach to removing barriers not only for scholarship alumni who wish to work or their national governments, but for many future generations of young professionals.

On a related note, funders may wish to both understand that national alumni groups will have different ways of "giving back" and calibrate their expectations accordingly for how alumni will contribute to social and economic change by country. On the one hand, in countries where the national context appears advantageous to scholarship program alumni – for example, those countries seriously pursuing democratic reforms or where possible revolution is afoot – scholarship program administrators and funders may observe the logic model of scholarship programs working well. However, in countries that appear closed, have high rates of corruption, or which have low paying government service jobs – as was the case in both Georgia and Moldova before their respective national revolutions, and is still found to some extent in Moldova today – alumni will likely not feel that they are contributing by using the skills and knowledge they gained while on scholarship. In truth, some may get frustrated and leave.

At this point, there are notable warnings to heed. First, this research intends to call attention to the contextual factors in the country as a way to understand the alumni's relationship with social and economic development at home; the aim is not to suggest that these contextual factors be used as guidelines to determine which countries' citizens should participate in scholarship programs but instead to calibrate funders' expectations. This is an important note because it may be considered unfair or questionable to deny students in closed or highly corrupt countries the opportunity for sponsored study abroad, further isolating individuals in these societies. A second, related point is that this research has stopped short of adequately examining the variable of time. Certainly it is impossible for scholarship program administrators to predict when a country may have a national revolution or elect a government looking to transform their country, moving more closely in line with democratic values and ideals. Therefore, there is still a case to be made for investing in an educated elite who is ready to take leadership positions in a new government once conditions change, even if it doesn't seem likely in the near term.

The second recommendation is for funders to offer a second installment scholarship or alumni grant at the moment when a country is experiencing a "revolution." These funds would be available for scholarship program alumni who feel called to "give back" to their home countries at a moment of significant political or social change. This recommendation is based on the research finding that Georgian and Moldovan alumni – including those who live outside their home country – sense a call to action, or a "revolution of the mind," when the country experienced a national revolution.

Given the unexpected nature of these events, the funding would have to be flexible, project-based, and ongoing, with the aim to support the alumnus who has identified a new opportunity to contribute to social or economic development due to the changing circumstances at home. As some examples, second installment scholarships could be used to fund travel for those overseas alumni who want to return to the country for professional networking or job interviews, to establish new alumni networks or reboot collaborative projects or international partnerships, to spread information to other western-educated individuals about their social or economic project or policy idea, or even to provide funding for individuals to successfully transition from an old position to a new post within the home country government or national civil society organization.

In addition to determining the types of activities that they're willing to support, funders would have the prerogative to decide the parameters of a "revolution." This revolution may take the form of a shift of government from a Soviet past towards democracy and closer links with Europe, as was seen in Georgia and Moldova. Or it may be another type of upheaval, such as a natural disaster or an emerging social change movement (e.g., call for government transparency or sexual minority rights). While many of these "revolutions" may appear to pop up quickly, subsequent reforms will likely be in process for many years henceforth. As this study has shown, scholarship program alumni are eager to participate in such movements by applying the skills and knowledge they gained while on scholarship, and Georgian and Moldovan alumni provided many examples of their efforts or from their alumni peers. Further research would assist

scholarship program funders to be better able to execute these kinds of initiatives. (More details to follow in a later section.)

While this type of second installment funding may be considered unorthodox in current scholarship schemes – as the bulk of financial support is to facilitate the student's overseas study – several funders currently offer alumni grant support. At the moment, these programs take the form of small grants with calls for proposals, alumni conferences, and other events. Therefore, one possibility would be to redirect this money to targeted countries in times of "revolution" to assist those individuals who express interest, curiosity, and desire to promote change within this emerging context. To put it more succinctly, alumni grant funding could be concentrated in places and at specific moments when a certain country is particularly fertile for new leadership and ideas from abroad. This type of flexible funding model would likely required additional research, monitoring, and time on behalf of the scholarship administrators, but it would capitalize on the alumni's interests and capabilities at the moment when they want to and can significantly influence national policy or shape social and economic programs.

The third recommendation is for scholarship funders and administrators – and program graduates themselves – to prioritize alumni programming and to advance initiatives that promote networking, support collaborative projects, and foster leadership of alumni organizations. While the idea of organizing alumni networks and providing funding for alumni projects is not new, this research sheds light on ways to improving existing initiatives. For example, instead of funders or governments designing and leading initiatives, alumni leaders should direct meetings, events, and projects to create a

greater possibility that the network will respond to the perceived concerns of the alumni themselves. On a related point, funders could offer a consulting fee so alumni leaders can devote the needed time and attention to this work. As was determined from this study, alumni themselves keenly desire to meet other alumni and have numerous ideas on how to connect and collaborate. Therefore, it is recommended for funders to invite alumni themselves to administer the group and design and execute projects together, with the sponsoring organizations providing administrative support, contacts, and funding for the network.

In addition, alumni networks should bring greater attention to alumni accomplishments and role models – at least in post-Soviet countries that are undergoing political transition. This specific task is important for three reasons as identified in this research. First, by profiling specific individuals and drawing attention to their accomplishments, new graduates can see models of success in the transitioning post-Soviet context and perhaps follow a similar path or seek these more experienced alumni for advice. Secondly, showcasing individual profiles enhance alumni's ability to connect with each other as individuals and develop a better sense of potential collaborators or introduces them to movements and projects they would like to join, thereby further strengthening the alumni community.

Finally, models of successful alumni who stayed in – or returned to – the country and excelled may quell additional "brain drain." This suggestion is based on the reports of many Moldovan alumni who commented that the alumni who came before them sent a forceful message that successful scholarship recipients don't often return to Moldova or

will emigrate after meeting the two-year home residency requirement, seeking better opportunities abroad. The opposite was true in Georgia, where scholarship graduates witnessed successful alumni in national government positions. By highlighting successful models of alumni who have stayed in the country[33], scholarship program administrators and alumni themselves will not only build the network among alumni but provide new graduates with blueprints that are alternatives to going abroad.

For some alumni who participated in this study, close connections to other alumni formed at their scholarship program's orientation. Therefore, scholarship administrators may want to focus on building connections among alumni – specifically those from the same country – throughout the program's activities. Moreover, funders and administrators should consider the possibility of selecting a sizable cohort from one country, placing citizens of the same country at the same host universities, and including among their selection criteria an aptitude of partnership and working with others (as opposed to rewarding those who have primarily demonstrated independent accomplishments), as these programmatic considerations could strengthen the eventual in-country alumni network. As was determined by this research, a more active and connected network indicates a greater chance of alumni being involved in social and economic change in their home countries, therefore creating an increased likelihood of overall program effectiveness.

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[33] As is done annually with the "best alumni award" at the annual Alumni Congress in Moldova, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Chisinau.

Section 7.2: Contribution to the literature

As noted in Chapter Two, a review of literature on scholarship programs identified gaps in understanding about the context of the home country in determining the relationship between international scholarship programs and national development, the stated goal of many initiatives. In addition, there is little research – either comparatively or in single case studies – about how alumni perceive their contributions to national social and economic development in the long term.

Findings from this research indicated that the environment to which the graduates return significantly influences the ways they "give back:" their chosen career path, their likelihood to remain in the country, their ability to advise on policy reform and propose new programs, and their ability to find peers who will support their initiatives. In other words, some countries are well primed for scholars to return and enact their plans. Other countries are resistant to change, ignore new ideas, and do not financially support talented individuals. These conditions frustrate many alumni, often leading those with desirable training and honed cross-cultural communication skills to pursue better opportunities abroad. Many countries provide opportunities somewhere in between.

With these findings, additional details can be added to the international scholarship program logic model that was introduced in Chapter Two. As a reminder, this logic model is a composite of several existing models mapping an individual's trajectory through a scholarship program and is constructed from the perspective of the program funder or administrator, charting how the scholarship recipient experiences the program. In the updated model (Figure 2), the first four stages of the scholarship program logic

model remain the same: preparation, inputs, activities, and outcomes & outputs.

However, the final stage – the anticipated impact – is separated into two overlapping

categories: 1) government transition to democracy, and 2) alumni networks. The top

bubble, labeled "government transition to democracy," captures elements such as the

national government seeking to shift towards the west, the promotion of transparency and

reduction of corruption, an availability of government positions for individuals with skills

and education from abroad, and quality salaries associated with these positions. The

bottom bubble, labeled "alumni networks," indicates both formal and informal webs of

alumni groups, where scholarship program graduates communicate with and rely on each

other for project collaborations, expertise, and social and emotional support.

Figure 2. Amended Logic Model of International Scholarship Programs That Aim to
Promote Social and Economic Change in Low- and Middle-Income Countries
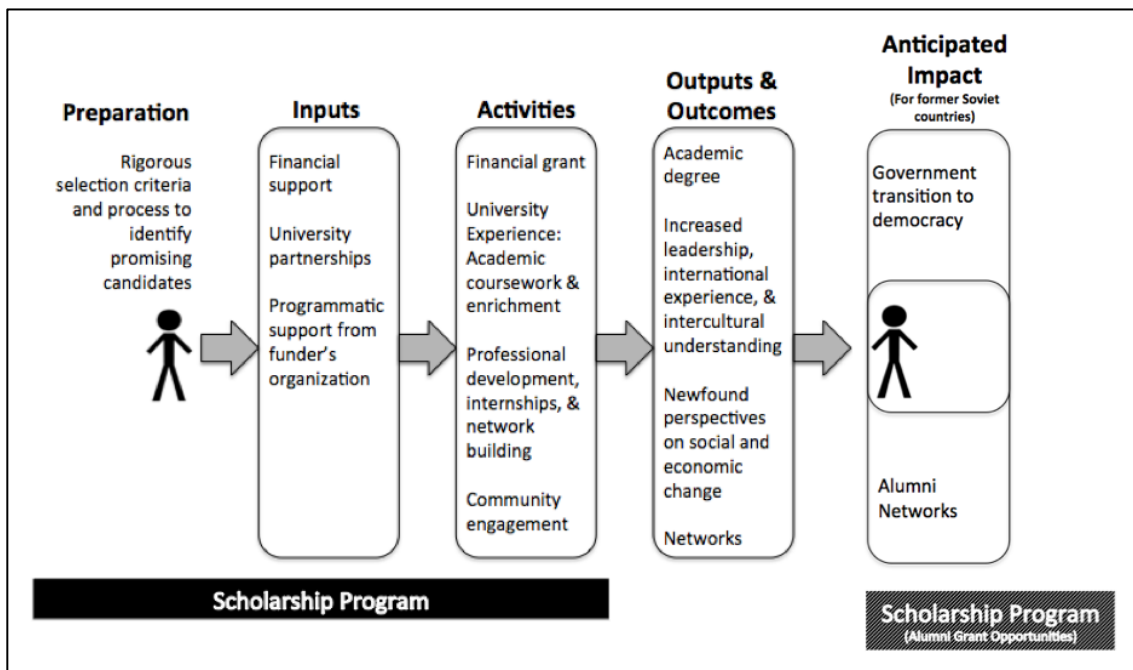
In addition, the model shows a second shaded gray box to the right side of the logic model. This box indicates recommendations made earlier in this chapter that scholarship program funders consider additional funding opportunities for alumni to facilitate the anticipated impact of the program. This funding would be made available to alumni once they had achieved the expected outcomes of the scholarship program and were in a position to increase their impact by returning to the home country, assuming new positions, starting new projects, or otherwise developing or capitalizing on the scholarship alumni network.

Based on the findings of this research, and with the addition of both elements to the model, funders and administrators of scholarship programs have an improved understanding of how graduates of scholarship program experience "giving back" to the home country. Depending on the features of these two contextual elements in the home country, alumni will likely experience different types of contributions to their home countries. In other words, funders should calibrate expectations of anticipated impact based on these two characteristics in the home country – at least for the former Soviet republics.

Section 7.3: Areas of proposed future research

From this study, five areas of additional research emerged. Three of these stem from the first four key findings of this dissertation, while the fourth area compares the overall findings with other populations. The five areas of research include: 1) quantitative analysis to discern the behaviors of a larger sample of Georgian and Moldovan alumni in

how they contribute to social and economic development, 2) additional research on what makes scholarship alumni networks successful and how to transform a fledgling network, 3) further exploration of the ways – both existing and potential – of how overseas alumni can ramp up their involvement in home country development, 4) deeper analysis of the notions of "revolution" and the corresponding call to action, or "revolution of the mind," experienced by alumni, including of the other contexts in which this association exists, and 5) a comparative study of the findings in this study against a population of students who studied at the secondary, undergraduate, or Ph.D. levels or in countries other than the United States. Each of these areas will be explored briefly below.

First, following this study with quantitative research on similar themes would provide greater insight into the ways scholarship program alumni conceive of their contributions to national development and the perceived differences between countries. The findings presented here are based on interviews with 20 Georgian and 20 Moldovan alumni of scholarship programs to better understand the specific ways in which these alumni view "giving back" to their home country's development. As a next step, a questionnaire could be designed based on these findings to solicit responses from a larger representative sample of alumni in both countries. To complement this research, quantitative findings may permit more specific comparisons between alumni groups from the two countries or between in-country and overseas alumni.

Second, further research is needed to fully understand what makes scholarship alumni networks successful and how to transform a network that is struggling. From this research it is clear that alumni desire a connection with other graduates of scholarship

programs and when these connections can be cultivated and sustained, alumni feel that these associations are central to their ability to "give back" to the home country's social and economic development. However, not all scholarship alumni associations are as successful as those observed in Georgia. Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that the term "alumni" and "alumni associations" are not familiar to many outside of the western context. Therefore, many related issues are prime for further study, such as: What form of association – e.g., social issue based vs. university-based – is most successful to reach a scholarship program's aim to spur social and economic change in the home country? What is the most effective way for scholarship program sponsors, administrators, or alumni themselves to revitalize old or extinct networks or launch successful programs?

Third, this study found that scholarship program alumni who live abroad reported a sincere interest in helping their home country's development. At the same time, some of them reported they felt disconnected from their home country – especially those from Moldova – and almost all alumni who participated in this study agreed that those who live abroad are unable to contribute to the same degree as those who live in the country. Additional research could dig deeper into the reasons for these opinions. For example, do alumni who live abroad feel restricted from helping the home country because they are distanced from the site of the action, or because they have not been asked to "give back"? Similarly, do alumni abroad feel less able to contribute because of available technologies in the home or adopted country (a technical problem), the ways of "doing business" in the home or adopted country (an adaptive problem), or because of individual interest (a question of personal agency)? Moreover, further research may indicate what are the most

effective mechanisms for well-educated diaspora to "give back," whether this varies by home country, and whether overseas alumni may be better suited to lead certain kinds of change (e.g., designing new curricula) – and how these types of projects can be best supported.

Fourth, as stated in Chapter Six, it appears that Georgia's Rose Revolution and Moldova's Twitter Revolution spurred a renewed interest among Georgian and Moldovan alumni to be involved in national social and economic development efforts. In Georgia and somewhat in Moldova, this also led to an increased rate of scholarship grantees participation in developing new social and economic development policies and programs. These findings raise questions for further study, as specific terms and the nuances of this relationship could be closely investigated. For example, what are the parameters of this revolution? Could natural disasters – like the 2010 earthquake in Haiti – also spur a similar "revolution of the mind" among Haitian scholarship program alumni? Second, are we seeing a similar phenomenon in other countries – both neighboring nations, like Ukraine with the Euromaidan Revolution, and further afield, in the Middle East with countries that experienced the Arab Spring? In other words, is this a uniquely placed phenomenon among post-Soviet countries? If this phenomenon is replicated across various contexts, how might a "revolution of the mind" among alumni influence scholarship program design or participants themselves? And what might this mean for scholarship alumni from countries with authoritarian or repressive governments?

Fifth, and finally, this study focused on Georgian and Moldovan alumni from scholarships to study in the United States at the Master's level. These populations were

selected, in part, as their sizes were comparable, their countries had similarities, and the researcher had experience with scholarship programs and with program administrators in these countries. Therefore, the next logical step would be to compare these findings with those from other scholarship program alumni groups. Do we see similar trends for alumni who studied at the undergraduate or Ph.D. level on a scholarship? Or for alumni who studied at universities in countries other than the United States? What about for scholarship program alumni from different countries? Additional research could examine whether alumni of all international scholarship programs identify similar supports and restraints in the home country, or whether there is something specific to the group of Georgian and Moldovan alumni in this study.

Section 7.4: Limitations of the study

In closing, the findings from this research need to be considered in terms of the study's limitations. There are three main possible limitations of this study. First, the study participants were not be selected randomly from the full population of scholarship alumni who meet the participant selection criteria in Georgia and Moldova. Random selection among this population was not possible given outdated contact lists, the fractured nature of scholarship program administration, and the high rate of mobility among the target population. As noted in the methodology chapter, steps were taken to widely recruit research participants through phone, online communication, and existing alumni networks, in order to identify a wide and diverse pool. However, despite these attempts, it was impossible to collect a complete listing of all alumni who meet the participant

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selection criteria. Therefore, it was impossible to contact the population of possible

participants and obtain from this group a random sample for participation in this study.

The second limitation was that of self-reporting data; in other words, the alumni

were identifying, estimating, and reporting their own involvement in national social and

economic development – opening opportunities for biased viewpoints or limits to one's

own understanding of one's role in society – without outside, independent corroboration.

To address this concern of self-reporting bias and to attain a wider understanding of the

types and range of alumni experiences, participants were asked to address the perceptions

of both their own and their classmates' contributions to national social and economic

development in the home country. In other words, alumni reported both self and outsider

perspectives. This technique addressed some issues related to self-reporting bias, such as

self-aggrandizement or the perceived effect of situational or dispositional factors on

behavior (Barker, Pistrang, & Elliott, 1994).

The third limitation of this study is related to the notion of transferability. As the

comparative findings will hopefully shed light on the situation of national development in

Georgia and Moldova or for those interested in the specific scholarship programs

included in this study, how might they be informative for a wider audience? According to

Noah (1984), "Transplantation is a difficult art, and those who wish to benefit from the

experience of other nations will find in comparative studies a most useful set of cautions,

as well as some modest encouragement" (p. 556). It is the aim of this research to provide

a "modest encouragement" for scholarship program administrators or government

officials who estimate international higher education as a worthwhile national

development strategy; however, any transference of findings to other countries and

contexts are cautioned.

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Interview Protocol
for Georgian and Moldovan Alumni
of Scholarships for Master's Degree in the United States
Starting in 1998 to 2008

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Notes on the protocol

Purpose
This protocol was designed to understand how alumni of scholarships that supported Master's study in the United States between the years 1998 and 2008 (inclusive) conceive of their contributions to their home countries and to what extent they identify national contextual factors as limiting or supporting their behaviors. The protocol is designed to both encourage original perspective and to evoke responses to more specific questions.

With the participants' responses, a questionnaire will be designed that highlights different ways that alumni could "give back" to social and economic development in their home country. This questionnaire will be distributed to a large group of scholarship alumni and results will be analyzed to determine the types and frequencies of contributions alumni make, as well as the identification of national contextual factors that shape their activities. Results from the survey will be compared based on a number of factors, with the comparison between students' home countries and between students who live in their countries and those who live abroad being tantamount to the analysis.

Method
Using this protocol, interviews will be conducted with 20-25 scholarship alumni from each Georgia and Moldova. Alumni do not need to be located in the country; in fact, those living outside the country will be sought for inclusion in the sample. For those interviewees located in the country, interviews will be conducted in person; for alumni outside of the country, phone or Skype will be used to conduct the interview. Before the interview, consent will be obtained in accordance to the University of Minnesota Internal Review Board regulations and the rules of the Republics of Georgia and Moldova. All interviews will be conducted in English, as interviewees studied at the Master's level in the United States and a proficient level of English can be assumed. All interviews will be conducted, recorded, and transcribed by Anne Campbell.

Interview protocol

Interviewee's Information (This section should be completed before the interview, as this information will have been obtained from a participant database.)
Date:
Name:
Email address:
Scholarship program:
U.S. University:
Years of participation:
Current employment:
Current city and country of residence:
Recording number:

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Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is 1) to hear your perspective on how your U.S. scholarship program experience has influenced you and your life choices, 2) to understand how you conceive of a scholarship participant's role in your country's social and economic development, and 3) to learn if you perceive that any national contextual factors have shaped you or other scholarship alumni's role – either positively or negatively – in the development of your country. (*Give participant IRB informational sheet with research questions, goals of study, and my contact information. Explain information on the sheet.*)

Your responses will be kept anonymous and not associated with your name or other uniquely identifying characteristic. You may choose not to respond to any of the questions. At any point during our conversation today or in the future, if you would like to skip a question or discontinue your participation in this study, I am happy to respond to your request. Your comments can be removed permanently from my study. You may contact me at any time for further questions at camp0620@umn.edu or by my local mobile number [insert number] until [date which I leave the country].

The interview should last between one and two hours.

Do you have any questions?

Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Do I have your consent to continue?

Part one: Scholarship program and return experience

1. I would like to begin by asking about the scholarship program that permitted you to study in the United States. Can you briefly tell me about your scholarship experience?

    a. Can you tell me what motivated you to apply for the scholarship program?
    b. Once you found out you received the scholarship, did you have specific vision in mind for your future?
    c. Did you complete your Master's degree?

2. When you returned to [your country] from your scholarship studies, what was your impression of your country?

    a. Do you remember any of your impressions about what needed to be changed?

3. Immediately after your return to [your country], what did you do? Continue your studies? Find employment?

   a. Since that time, what have you done professionally?
   b. Have you looked for jobs abroad?
   c. Did you leave the country for an extended stay (more than 4 consecutive months) at any point since returning from your scholarship program?
      i. If yes, how many times, to where, for how long, and for what purpose?
      ii. [If applicable:] Why did you decide to return?
   d. [If applicable:] Do you plan to return to your home country? If so, when and for what reasons? If no, why not?

4. In this interview, I also want to ask you about your perceptions of other scholarship program alumni and their role in economic and social development. Before we get to those questions, I wanted to ask: How well do you maintain contact with others who had a scholarship for a Master's degree in the United States?

Part Two: Perceptions of economic and social development in your home country

5. Next, I would like to ask you for your perceptions of economic development in your home country. Here is a definition I like to use to describe economic development: *(Definition will also be placed on a card and given to the interviewee to read.)*

   Economic development is a set of actions made by individuals – citizens and policymakers – that leads to progress in the economy and general improvement in living standards. It includes increased productivity by the workforce, reduction of unemployment, innovation and new technologies, and financial investments a country, including remittances from abroad.

   a. Using this definition as a guide, what do you think is the greatest economic challenge facing your country right now?
   b. Have you seen change in the way this challenge is perceived and addressed over time?
   c. How have you been involved in trying to minimize this challenge in a personal way? Can you tell a story about your involvement?

6. Now, I would like to ask you about your perceptions of social development in your country. Here is a definition I like to use to describe social development: *(Definition will also be placed on a card and given to the interviewee to read.)*

Social development is a set of changes in society that is focused on the social, emotional, and personal development of the individuals within the society, believed to be moving towards 'progress.' It includes increased attention and support for all people in the society – especially those at the margins – and often addresses issues of education, human rights, and health services. It may also include issues that support the general wellbeing of individuals, such as environmental concerns, animal rights, or cultural promotion.

    a. Using this definition as a guide, what do you think is the greatest social challenge facing your country right now?
    b. Have you seen change in the way this challenge is perceived and addressed over time?
    c. How have you been involved in trying to minimize this challenge in a personal way? Can you tell a story about your involvement?

Part Three: Linking your scholarship program and economic and social development in the home country

7. Now I want to talk more about the link between your scholarship experience and economic development activities in [country]. Earlier you mentioned [summary of answer to question 5c]. Other examples of economic development activities include starting your own business; employing others; sending money to villages or sending money from abroad; or investing your money in some other way. Would you say that your scholarship experience influenced how you perceived economic development, either positively or negatively?

    a. What about your activities related to economic development? Since your scholarship program, have you been involved in activities related to economic development not previously mentioned?
    b. [If applicable:] Do you sent money home?
    c. What about for other scholarship alumni? How do you perceive their role in economic development activities? Can you give an example?

8. Next, I want to ask you about the link between your scholarship experience and social development activities in [country]. Earlier you mentioned [summary of answer 6c]. Other examples of social development include working at a non-profit organization as a staff person, board member, or volunteer; raising awareness or protesting on behalf of about a social issue; educating others on human rights or teaching; or pursuing higher education reform. Would you say that your scholarship experience influenced how you perceived social development issues, either positively or negatively?

      a. What about your activities related to social development? Since your scholarship program, have you been involved in activities related to social development not previously mentioned?

      b. What about for other scholarship alumni? How do you perceive their role in social development activities? Can you give an example?

9. In your opinion, to what extent has a Master's from the United States had an impact on your career?

      a. Do you believe a Master's degree from the United States has had an impact on your salary or earning potential? If so, how?

10. Has your scholarship experience impacted your life in some other way that you would like to share with me?

Part Four: National contextual factors

11. Do you think those individuals who received a scholarship to study in the United States have responsibility in trying to create change in the society? Why or why not?

      a. Do you believe that individuals who live outside of the country can contribute to social or economic change at home? If yes, how?

      b. Do you know someone who could be considered an exemplary example of an alumnus who contributes to the country but doesn't live here?

12. What qualities of your country do you think have helped scholarship alumni – you and others – to contribute in a positive way to the social and economic development of [country]?

      a. How do you believe that higher education reform has influenced to social or economic development in [country]?

13. What qualities of your country do you think have hindered or limited scholarship alumni – you and others – to contribute in a positive way to the social and economic development of [country]?

      a. How do you believe that corruption has influenced economic and social development in [country]?

14. What one element of your home country do you think has the greatest impact on the decisions and behaviors of alumni of scholarship programs?

15. [Briefly explain next stage of my research in compiling the questionnaire.] If you were polling alumni of U.S. scholarship programs about their contributions to national economic and social development, what question(s) would you like to ask them?

16. We are almost done with the interview. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me?

17. Would you be willing to be contacted again in the future if I have additional questions?

   a. If yes, what is the best way to reach you?
   b. When it comes time to administer the questionnaire, would you be interested in helping me find other scholarship program alumni who studied for a Master's Degree in the United States between 1998 and 2008?
   c. Do you have any suggestions on how to find alumni with this profile?

I very much appreciate your time. Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix B: List of partnering organizations

American Councils
Contact: Timothy Blauvelt
27-29 Chavchavadze Ave.
0179 Tbilisi Georgia
Email: tbildir@amcouncils.ge
Website: http://www.americancouncils.ge/
Phone: +995-32-229-21-06

Center for International Education
Contact: Nino Chinchaladze
10 Chovelidze Street
0108 Tbilisi Georgia
Email: nino@osgf.ge
Website: http://www.cie.ge/index.php?lang=2
Phone: +995-32-225-26-15

IREX
Contact: Ekaterina Kupina
Marjanishvili 6
0102 Tbilisi Georgia
Email: ekupunia@irex.org
Website: http://irex.ge/
Phone: +995-32-291-26-08

United States Embassy in Georgia
Contact: Tea Kuchkuhidze
11 George Balanchine Street, Didi Dighomi
0131 Tbilisi Georgia
Email: kuchukhidzet@state.gov
Website: http://georgia.usembassy.gov/
Telephone: +995-32-227-76-03

American Councils
Contact: David Jesse, Daniela Munca-Aftenev
81 Kogalniceanu Street
MD-2009, Chisinau Moldova
Email: david@americancouncils.md
Website: http://www.americancouncils.md/
Phone: +373-22-225-860

Educational Advising Center
Contact(s): Angela Muset, Olga Rusu
16 Puskin Street
MD-2012, Chisinau Moldova
Email: eac@eac.md
Website: http://www.eac.md/
Phone: +373-22-221172

IREX
Contact: Iurii Datii, Natalia Dubencu
202 Stefan cel Mare Blvd, 5th Floor Central Bldg.
MD-2004, Chisinau Moldova
Email: idatii@irex.md, ndubencu@irex.md
Website: http://www.irex.md/
Phone: +373-22-233-231

United States Embassy in Moldova
Contact: Ludmila Bilevschi
103 Mateevici Street
MD-2009 Chisinau Moldova
Email: BilevschiL@state.gov
Website: http://moldova.usembassy.gov/
Phone: +373-22-851-709

Appendix C: Combined codebook

ABOUT U.S. SCHOLARSHIP
      Perspective on scholarship's role in national development
      Describe U.S. scholarship as "transformational" or similar
      Learned more than academics
            wanted theoretical to back up practical
            democratic values or ethics
      Intended to work for government upon return
      Chose courses in U.S. with home country in mind
      Disappointment programs ended
      Other thoughts on educational exchanges
REASONS WHY ALUMNI CAME HOME AFTER SCHOLARSHIP
      Requirement to work for government as part of scholarship
      Sense of duty/wanted to "give back"
      Job opportunities
      Family, friends, partners, children
      J-1 or visa rules
RELATIONSHIP OF JOB AND SALARY OR EARNING POTENTIAL
      Expectation of high salary with scholarship
      Scholarship had negative impact on salary
      No relationship/change
      Scholarship positively affected salary
EMPLOYMENT AS "GIVING BACK"
      Paying taxes/spending money
      Professional skills in demand
      Professional posts
            previous jobs
            type of current job
                  looking for jobs abroad
                  desire to change careers/fields
            in banking job
            in international NGO job
                  in international NGO job immediately after scholarship
            in government job
                  reasons left or did not accept government job
                  in government job immediately after scholarship
      Teach at university/higher ed work
            left higher education field
            interested in higher ed but did not pursue
            teach at private university
      Field of study matches job
      Influence policy

Change jobs frequently/volatile job market
Having "outsider" perspective
VOLUNTEER WORK AS "GIVING BACK"
LIVING ABROAD AND "GIVING BACK"
      Outsources work to home country from abroad
      Salary lured abroad
      Didn't come home after scholarship
      National NGO work - serve on boards, volunteer, etc.
      Remittances or financial contributions
      Those abroad don't do as much for country
      Those abroad feel disconnected
      Transition in and out of country
RELATIONSHIP WITH HOME COUNTRY
      Disappointed with home country
      Responsibility to "give back"
      Living in country way of "giving back"
      Must be in country to make "real" change
      Retain sincere interest in home country
      Planning to move out of home country
      Planning not to return to home country
      Planning to move back to home country
HOME COUNTRY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS
      Mass exodus of middle-aged people
      Value of English language
      Western education valued
      Hard to find employment
      Salaries
      Workplace culture
          frequent change of ministers
      Corruption
      Society resistant to change
          political allegiances
          country less secular
          soviet system prevails
      Society turning towards democracy, liberalization, reform
      Government must make "real" change
          leaders who change society
              about Saakashvili

                  his example good for scholarships
                  his leadership good for reform
              about Maia Sandu
              about Stela Mocan
      About revolution

Concern about relations with Russia
> 2008 Georgia War with Russia
> 2014 Moldova elections

ALUMNI RELATIONS
> Host university alumni group
> Few outstanding alumni examples
> Ties with other alumni
> Formal alumni groups (registered)
>> stated membership in alumni group
>>> *U.S. Congress Moldova*
>>> *EPAG*
>>> *GASW*
> Informal alumni groups (unregistered)
> Alumni activities as "giving back"
> Participated in alumni-organized projects
> Alumni for professional networking
>> prefer to hire other western educated people
> Used "critical mass" or similar term
> Opinions of other alumni
>> opinions of scholarship alumni in other countries

MENTION OF OTHER FUNDS BY SCHOLARHSIP ORGANIZATIONS
PH.D. TOPICS (PAST, CURRENT, AND FUTURE)