Bureaucratized Morality: Professionalization, Institutional Cynicism, and Social Commitment in the Peace Corps

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Sociology at Brown University

Providence, Rhode Island

May 2016

Providence, Rhode Island

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by the Department of Sociology as satisfying the

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- Kallman, Meghan Elizabeth. 2014. 'Making the Cosmopolitan Canopy in Boston's Haymarket Square'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol 38 (5), pp. 759-774
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Acknowledgements: I gratefully acknowledge the support of my dissertation committee in this project—Mark Suchman, Nitsan Chorev, Josh Pacewicz, and Patrick Heller. You advice, experience, and perspectives on its many drafts have been invaluable. To my colleague and dear friend Tim Syme I owe tremendous thanks, for supportive, daring, and critical conversations, not to mention humor and perspective. I am deeply grateful to my musical family, the Extraordinary Rendition Band, for joy, shenanigans, and support throughout this process. To Tim DeChristopher and my family, with love. I am also indebted to the agencies that funded parts of this research, including the National Science Foundation, the Horowitz Center for Social Policy, and the Cogut Center for the Humanities at Brown University. Tremendous gratitude to the Peace Corps itself, for affording me access to its workings, and to its various staff members for dealing so generously with my many questions. Finally, and most importantly, I am grateful for the participation, acceptance, and engagement of the many current and returned Peace Corps volunteers with whom I spoke. This project is dedicated to all of those who give their time to make the world a better place.

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PROLOGUE

In the summer of 2015, as I was completing research for this project, I took a trip to Bolivia to visit some friends. I had lived in Cochabamba for several years before beginning graduate school, and wanted to do doctoral study based on my experience working in nonprofit and social change organizations, both in Latin America and in the United States. I came to graduate school to understand why people in social change work retained such dissatisfaction with what they did, even though they were ostensibly living their values through their occupations and, by almost all accounts, leading interesting and thoughtful lives.

When I entered my PhD program, I found that the puzzle was as profound on an intellectual level than as was on a personal one. Theories of social change and civic engagement—not to mention of development—suggested that workers such as myself should be experiencing fulfillment. We had resources, organizational support, and opportunities for long and interesting careers working on issues that we cared about. We were motivated not by lucre, but by our convictions. We worked for organizations, meaning that we had some degree of credibility in the things we undertook to do, and frequently, at least a modest amount of resources to support it. And yet we still experienced persistent disenchantment. It articulated at different times and in different ways, but it followed us like a long shadow.

So in this book I set out to understand what has been occurring. The data that I present here tells a story of professionalization, and the mismatch of professional structures onto altruistic or activist motivations. I have, in short, argued that something is lost in the process of high degrees of professionalization of people who are driven by emotional commitment, and that in the process of turning workers into professionals, organizations can inadvertently strangle the – perhaps naïve, but certainly authentic—political convictions that bring people to social change work in the first place.

And yet, as I walked around a tiny village outside Cochabamba, Bolivia, where my friend lived, I was assailed by doubts about my conclusion. An overloaded microbus clattered past, belching black smoke and bouncing over the town's main street, which was itself haphazardly paved and pitted with knee-deep potholes. A three-legged dog dug for supper in a pile of trash outside the open market, flanked by a few scrawny puppies. This was the kind of place that Peace Corps volunteers typically live—in fact, I seemed to remember this very village hosting a volunteer before the program was expelled from the country in 2008. Would my respondents accept the story that (as they spent two years in places without running water or telephones, isolated from other Americans) they were being professionalized? Would such a conclusion seem absurd to them?

When I returned to the city the next day, I found the experience of reading my email jarring. Awaiting me were any number of correspondences from the States, with any number of demands (revisions on articles, fellowship applications, grant progress reports) that seemed almost preposterously incompatible with the dusty Internet café with its sticky keyboard where I sat, surrounded by small boys playing online computer games that involved a lot of shooting. As I stood up to leave, I again viscerally understood the disconnect that I have attempted to describe here. The experience of being somewhere very different, very remote, and very personally demanding, sits in uneasy tension with the demands of professional development as articulated by agencies in the United States, and more broadly, by a rationalist society that values quantifiable modules and demonstrable success above nearly all else. Being asked to quantify your impact on a far-flung community—when there mere feat of getting from Point A to Point B in under three hours seems worthy of celebration—feels absurd, as does trying to describe your "contribution" when, for the previous night you have sat with your friend in a stifling hospital waiting room while her daughter was treated for dehydration. Some things need to be explained in a different language.

In short, it is neither the experience of being a socially motivated person, nor professional organizational structures per se, that account for these feelings of cynicism, but rather the mismatch of one on to the other. In these pages I describe how that this occurs.

INTRODUCTION

When asked to picture a Peace Corps volunteer, most of us summon to mind earnest young people—starry-eyed idealists who are inexperienced, perhaps, but passionate and energetic. We might think of calloused hands and sunburns. We would be forgiven for picturing most of them middle-class and educated, or for thinking that most of them are white. We might picture faded jeans and abused footwear. We would also be forgiven for thinking they are deeply socially committed, that they want to make the world a better place. (Throughout this work, I use the term "social commitment" to describe a feeling of concern for others' needs, a desire to help meet those needs, a feeling that a "better world is possible", and a general commitment to creating such a world. It is a term intended to capture dimensions of both altruism and idealism). In the course of this research and in talking with Peace Corps volunteers in different parts of the world, I found—somewhat to my surprise—that such an image is largely consistent with the type of people who *actually* join the Peace Corps. As far as stereotypes go, ours would not be far off.

However, most of our imaginations, and indeed, the sociological literature, does not have a well-resolved idea about what happens to Peace Corps volunteers after they return home, or what the experience does to them over the long term. There is a substantial body of somewhat older research suggesting that organizational membership is linked to individual civic participation, and, at least at some point in time, that organizational participation was also linked to increased feelings of efficacy (McAdam, 1982; Neal & Seeman, 1964; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Walsh & Warland, 1983). In other words, the organizational literature would expect people coming out of the Peace Corps to feel *more* powerful and well located in their worlds, as well as in their democracies. We might think of returned volunteers as teachers or workers in the State

Department, still holding fast to their ideals and bringing intrinsic motivation to their occupations going forward (cf. Bénabou & Tirole, 2003; Gagné & Deci, 2005). We would expect them to seek out public service or helping professions, and organizational sociology would certainly expect them to find higher of fulfillment in their work once they did so (Benz, 2005; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Mirvis, 1992). This, too, would be partially correct—but only partially.

By the time they come out of the Peace Corps and move into the rest of their lives, many of these volunteers, though they do seek out work in public service and nonprofits, have become what I call "institutionally cynical". My data shows that they are politically liberal in some areas but not in others; they experience burnout; they have little to no critique of large-scale social dynamics, and instead focus on individual behavior when talking about social change or human development; international development feels problematic, if not downright wrong; and they see the power to make change as the exclusive purview of formal professional organizations. They have lost their idealism and their proclivities towards activism, replacing it with this particular breed of cynicism—a cynicism that goes beyond "typical" burnout in the way that it alters their politics and convictions.

Volunteers remember their Peace Corps experiences very fondly, and those happy memories of friendships made and languages learned are important pieces of how they talk about their experiences. In the course of my research, I met only very few people who said they regretted going into Peace Corps, or who didn't find something to love about the experience. However, those fond memories have not, in large part, translated into the type of social change outcome that most volunteers claim to have originally wanted. Instead of retaining a critical engagement with the world, and wanting to transform whatever institutions they become a part of subsequently, volunteers tend to follow very standard—though very prestigious—career paths, while retaining a vague but palpable sense of discontent. They are not just emotionally exhausted: they are politically reshaped.

This extraordinary finding puzzled me not a little. Why should Peace Corps volunteers, young, skilled people full of passion and curiosity, partaking in a celebrated and prestigious international service program, feel this way at the end of it? Why should people who bring such social commitment and intrinsic motivation experience such a perplexing change in their politics? So I set out to discover the answer, attempting to discover what accounts for institutional cynicism among returned volunteers.

My findings suggest that high levels of professionalization within the Peace Corps bureaucracy itself foment institutional cynicism among my interlocutors. In other words, most volunteers come into the Peace Corps with a heavily activist orientation and all the emotions that accompany it; they are treated, however, as would-be professionals by a large bureaucratic entity that makes few accommodations for the emotion that animates them. Because activists and professionals have very different needs in the workplace, this mismatch is, as we shall see, the root of the institutional cynicism that I document.

This finding, in turn, led me to ask a second question: why has so much professionalization occurred within the Peace Corps in the first place? The Peace Corps is a volunteer organization working with lay people; it is not USAID, or the World Bank, or UNICEF. What could have induced it to adopt the attitudes and characteristics of those other professional organizations to the extent that it has?

I argue here that the organization adopted a professional orientation in order to enhance its legitimacy. When the Peace Corps was formed, the agency needed to find a way to be taken seriously in American and international politics, as well as in the emergent field of international development. Accordingly, and in spite of its identity as a scrappy, grassroots, on-the-ground, people-to-people organization, it professionalized, adopting outcome measurements, training programs, and a theory of organizational practice that mimicked some of larger development organizations, in essence mimicking those other groups in order to capitalize on their legitimacy. As the Peace Corps grew, it diffused its professional norms through the career trajectories of its

volunteers, many of whom work for well-known agencies like the State Department and USAID. The norms of professionalization spread through the field of international development, in part aided by the experiences of former Peace Corps volunteers.

I begin this book with a history of the Peace Corps and state-led development, looking at how the nature of the organization and the pressures of its external environment produced a culture of highly professionalized training for its volunteers—answering my second research question first. I show how this complicated external environment drove adaptations (in this case, professionalization) in the organization that became heavily institutionalized. Professionalism became so important within the Peace Corps that it is now a taken-for-granted way of doing business. The agency adopted it as an institutional logic.

I then show how professionalization fosters institutional cynicism among Peace Corps volunteers. This occurs both at the meso and the micro levels (both in the organizational field, and in the organization itself). Specifically, I identify the organizational processes that, by neglecting volunteers' social commitment and their emotions, have triggered institutional cynicism, which have had lasting effects on volunteers' politics going forward.

My book develops a sociological theory of the organization effects for "on-the-ground" workers in ideologically motivated fields. In doing so, it makes three main contributions to literature. First, as an organizational-sociological account of cynicism, it problematizes much of the other writing on motivation within organizations that tends to see intrinsic motivation as an immutable individual-level characteristic; as my case study is a public organization, it also adds dimension and richness to our knowledge of how motivation works. Instead of focusing on the psychological elements of burnout as an explanation, as prevalent in the literature (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), I emphasize the structural-organizational factors of bureaucracies that shape their participants' experience. I also contribute to political and cultural sociology by providing a mechanism to explain how political disengagement can occur (Eliasoph, 1997; McQuarrie, 2013.). Finally, in telling the story of how professionalization emerged within

the field of international development, I provide an analysis of why and how international development organizations tend towards failure (Ferguson, 1994; Pritchett, Woolcock, & Andrews, 2013), taking a serious empirical and theoretical look at the political consequences of organizational decisions.

As the vast majority of social change work—ranging from philanthropy to voluntarism, to nonprofit work to faith work—in the US is channeled through formal organizations, this work has wide-reaching implications. This book's goal is to understand—in order to improve—the ways that our social change organizations both create and are shaped by the socially committed individuals who constitute them.

Types of Social Change: Professionalism and Activism

For researchers, the relevance of institutional cynicism is its relationship to social change. There are many ways to think about bringing about social change and human development, and the debate rages about which approach is more effective or preferable. The two most common approaches are: activism (working "outside" the system through community organizing) and professionalism (working "inside" the system through established organizations and typically in the context of professional careers). Interestingly, sociological theory tends to conflate these approaches far more than those working on the ground. In this book, I explore the process and consequences of shifting from one framework to the other.

Smith (2014) defines activism as "organized efforts of challenger groups to promote or resist social change through disruptive means". The advantages that have been attributed to an activist theory of social change have to do primarily with the flexibility to make direct criticisms while mobilizing large numbers of people, the ability to target both state and non-state actors (Van Dyke, Soule, & Taylor, 2005), the ability to utilize emotion as motivation and sustenance (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2008) and the ability to do so in solidarity with others (Hunt & Benford, 2007). A further benefit of activist organizing comes in the form of collective identity,

or a sense of group-ness. Collective identity is "a shorthand designation announcing a status […] an individual announcement of affiliation, of connection with others. To partake of a collective identity is to reconstitute the individual self around a new and valued identity" (Friedman & McAdam, 1992, p. 157). In general, social movements are understood as relatively populist expressions of discontent; precisely because of their non-state character, have the ability to apply pressure to powerful actors towards a desired end. Importantly for this project, social movement analytic frames permit researchers to understand volunteer activists' non-material motivations.

The disadvantages of (primarily volunteer-based or low-paid) activism have to do with sustainability, both in terms of human and material resources. Volunteers can be fickle and organizing requires a great deal of time; as such, movements may ebb and flow as resources do. A second disadvantage to activism regards political opportunity structures, which are the institutional variables that scholars have used to explain, in part, the lives of social movements (Eisinger, 1972; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996). Movements do not have direct control over the structure of political opportunity, and are therefore somewhat beholden to it (McAdam, 1982). Third, movements that depend on mass participation cannot summon such participation out of a void—it must be cultivated, and activists only choose protest when they believe it is both potentially effective *and* necessary. Finally, because of the sometimes-confrontational nature of activism, collaboration with powerful allies is not a given in these movements; in fact, the degree of antagonism that sometimes exists can be a distinct disadvantage, provoking refused handshakes and even repression.

The advantages that scholars have attributed to professionalization include stability, relationship building, resource mobilization, amplification of message, and the like. Particularly since the 1970s, an analytical focus on social movement *organizations* has emerged (Edwards & McCarthy, 2008; Morris, 1984; Staggenborg, 1988) to analyze how specific groups access political opportunities and affect sustained mobilization (Cress & Snow, 1996), and this strand of research has emphasized the benefits of formal organization and professional social change

workers. McCarthy & Zald (1977) introduced the notion of a professional social movement organization within their theory of resource mobilization, describing organizations whose staff prioritizes raising money over recruiting volunteers as a way to maintain the group in periods of limited political opportunity or abeyance (Taylor, 1989). Professionalization of social change work typically occurs in democracies, when the state is willing to integrate movements into its decisionmaking process (Suh, 2010); some analyses, in fact, see professionalization as a mark of success of any given movement. McCarthy and Zald's earlier analysis suggested that paid organizations may represent the interests of disadvantaged communities, and that professionals can therefore be an appropriate substitution for other types of (unpaid) activism (McCarthy & Zald, 1973). Paid organizational staff can support organizations through periods of limited political opportunity (Taylor, 1989); more than this, they may also be able to contribute to increased volunteer activity when the political opportunity structure opens (Morris, 1984). Professionalization may also increase the effectiveness and the duration of volunteer engagement (Staggenborg, 1988).

The disadvantages to professionalization in social change work have principally to do with inflexibility of professional structures and, as I will demonstrate in this book, the uneasy relationship of those professional structures to people's emotional commitment. Michels (1915) first documented what he termed the "Iron Law of Oligarchy", which, coupled with Weber's theories on the routinization of charisma, describe oligarchical leaders of social movements being cautious and conservative, trying to preserve the organization and its survival and in doing so, minimizing opposition within the group, and attempting to maximize their own career chances at the expense of the movement itself (Kleidman, 1994; Zald & Ash, 1966). More broadly, Piven & Cloward (1978) argue that for poor people's movements, organizational development, and professionalization cause mass *de*mobilization. A related prong of this argument is that the external funding that often accompanies formal organization can dramatically alter the stakes for organizations, refocusing their attention on lobbying, publicity, and relationship building rather

than protest (Jenkins, 1998). Further, elites can respond to professionalization by funding the most moderate professional groups, rather than the grassroots, who may have a more radical critique (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986).

This book will explore the relationship between the two types of social change, in an attempt to see how their interaction, without care for the emotions of organizational participants, can foment institutional cynicism. Ultimately, I believe that the activist mindset is important, and if it disappears something is lost. I turn to this issue more thoroughly in my conclusion.

CHAPTER 1: From Institutional to Individual: The Peace Corps and its Volunteers

> *Jake Houseman: Baby's starting Mount Holyoke in the fall!*
> *Max: Oh, great. Are you going to major in English?*
> *Baby Houseman: No. Economics of underdeveloped countries. I'm going into the Peace Corps.*
>
> --Dirty Dancing

It is a sweltering hot afternoon in Africanea[1]*. The PCVs' summer camp—which they are running for local boys, aged 6 to 14—has ended for the day, and the volunteers have broken off into small groups to decompress, smoke, or seek respite from the heat in their dormitory rooms. I follow a group of five volunteers into the room that they are sharing for the two weeks of the summer camp; we climb three flights of stairs encircled by a concrete hall. A few stories up, a slight breeze comes through the slatted windows, though the dust is not noticeably less.*

Arianna[2]*, Dolores, Henry, Jolene, and Guy sprawl on their single beds, each spread with a sheet. The volunteers range in age from about 22 to about 26; they are all white, and all streaked with sweat. The women wear baggy pants and t-shirts, but in the protected environment of the summer camp they have discarded the scarves they frequently drape over their heads in*

[1] All country names are pseudonyms
[2] All names are pseudonyms

this majority Muslim country. Guy has a battered ukulele lying next to his backpack on the floor, and he is plainly delighted to find that I can play as well. We spend a few minutes exchanging songs and chords, and the others hum along when they can. Henry smokes a cigarette, blowing the smoke out the window and then inexplicably, it seems to me (given the cigarette and the oppressive heat), announces his intention of going for a run. From a portable refrigerator, Arianna has produced a 2-liter bottle of Coca-Cola, which we drink from flimsy plastic cups. It is so hot that the sweetness sticks to the lip of the cups, and within minutes of putting it down ants have moved aggressively in on the remains of our drinks.

These volunteers are visibly at ease around me, and curious about my project. Only several years older than they, I am demographically similar—we all have college degrees, experience living abroad, and several of us are even from New England. These similarities permitted me extraordinary entre into their world; I was perceived as almost indistinguishable from the rest of the volunteers. They were excited to talk, but more importantly, willing to do so with a degree of frankness that I initially found surprising. Before the evening is over both Arianna and Jolene will have cried as they try to explain their experience—Jolene openly, and Arianna on the back steps of the dormitory building when our conversation finished. I will come upon her as I leave the building for the evening, and we will spend an additional half an hour leaning against the railing on the steps, looking out at the sea.

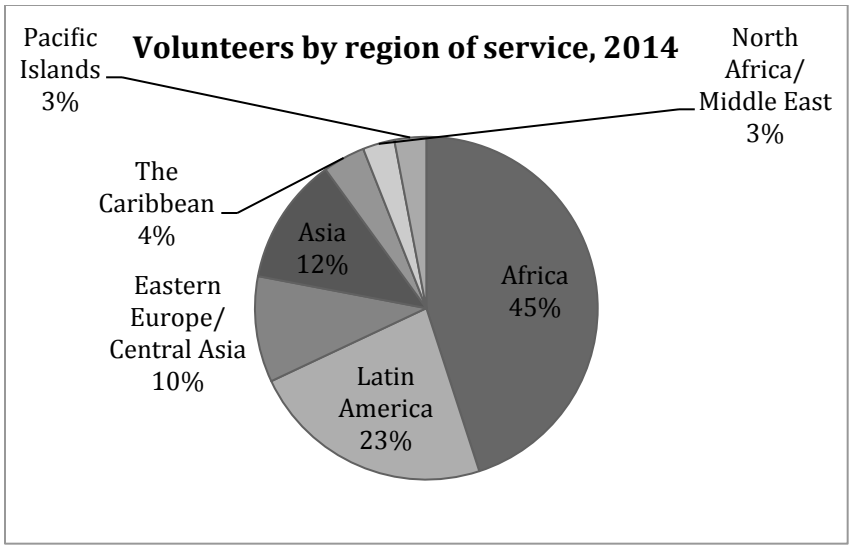
The Organization

The Peace Corps, a national voluntary service program of the United States government, sends volunteers to the developing world for service tours of two years. Established in 1961, the organization's work is typically related to social or economic development, and it has three concurrent goals: "1) Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; 2) Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, [and] 3) Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of

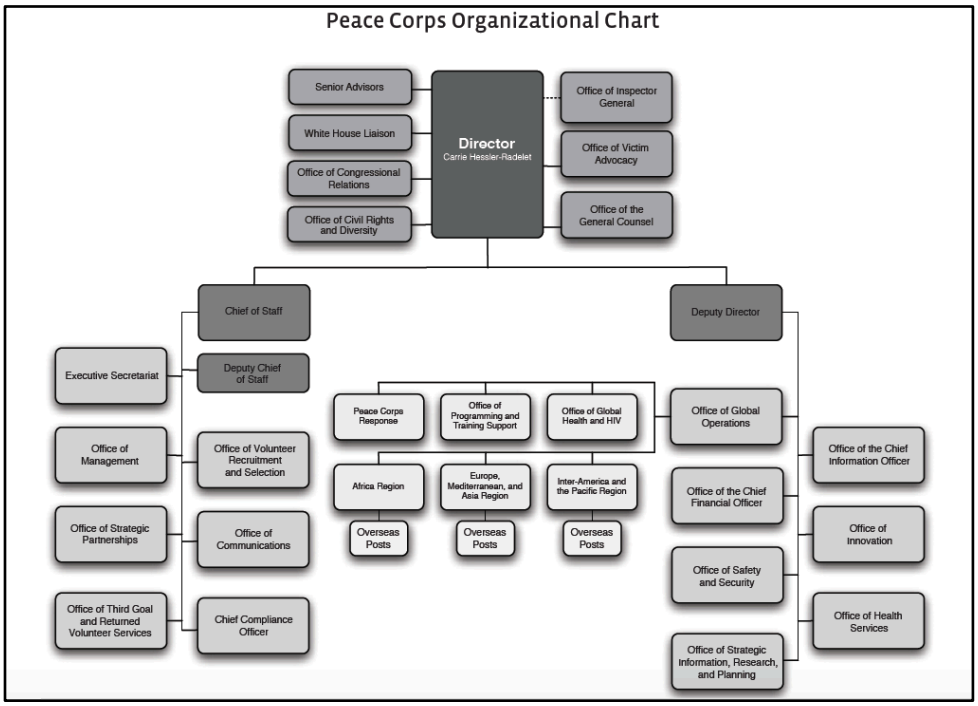
Americans" (Peace Corps, 2012). Volunteers—all American citizens—are usually in their early twenties, are paid a minimal stipend consistent with the standard of living in their local communities, and are given a modest readjustment allowance upon successful completion of service. Though there are several loan forgiveness programs associated with the program, and volunteers receive full medical benefits, the financial incentives for participation are few. In 2014, volunteers worked in 64 countries in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Asia, the Caribbean, North Africa and the Middle East, and in the Pacific Islands.

Domestically, the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington DC is dedicated to "supporting and providing strategic guidance to overseas posts, recruiting and selecting future Volunteers, promoting programs to encourage returned Volunteers to continue contributing to the Peace Corps mission, and performing central oversight functions" (Peace Corps, 2014, p. 3). The headquarters is a sleek concrete building in a wealthy part of the District of Columbia, virtually indistinguishable from the other buildings in the area. The main entrance is somewhat imposing—there are a series of metal detectors, uniformed security officers, and large framed pictures of President Obama, Vice-President Biden, and Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet. Employees go in and out, swiping their security badges to be permitted through the gates. A series of elevators lines the hallway beyond the checkpoint, dispatching people to other places throughout the building.

Peace Corps posts worldwide are divided into three regions, 1. Africa; 2. Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia, and; 3. Inter-America and the Pacific, and managed under the Office of Global Operations. In 2014 the Peace Corps had active programs in 64 countries, which were administered by 61 overseas posts. An American country director leads each overseas post, and is supported, in turn, by safety and security, medical, programming, financial, training, and administrative staff. Of those support staff, 2-3 is typically American, and the remainder is what I refer to in this book as "local staff"—host country nationals who are employed by the Peace Corps. The American staff in field sites are technically limited to 5 years within a position.



The organization is a relatively standard modern bureaucracy: hierarchical and specialized, with specific staff attending to volunteer programs, safety, global and financial operations, innovations, and the like. The Peace Corps Director is an appointed position; Hessler-Radelet is the 19th person to assume the job. Directors typically have either been Peace Corps volunteers themselves, or have experience in international development. The organizational layout from 2014 is reflected in the chart below.



Source: from the Peace Corps Performance And Accountability Report (Peace Corps, 2014, p. 3)

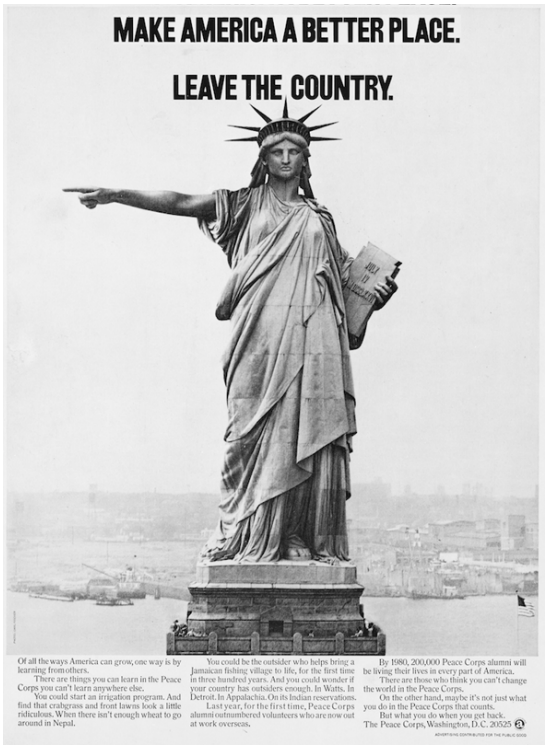
The agency receives funding from Congress through the national budget (and staffs a full-time Office of Congressional Relations to maintain that relationship); in 2014, its budget was $379 million.

Recruitment

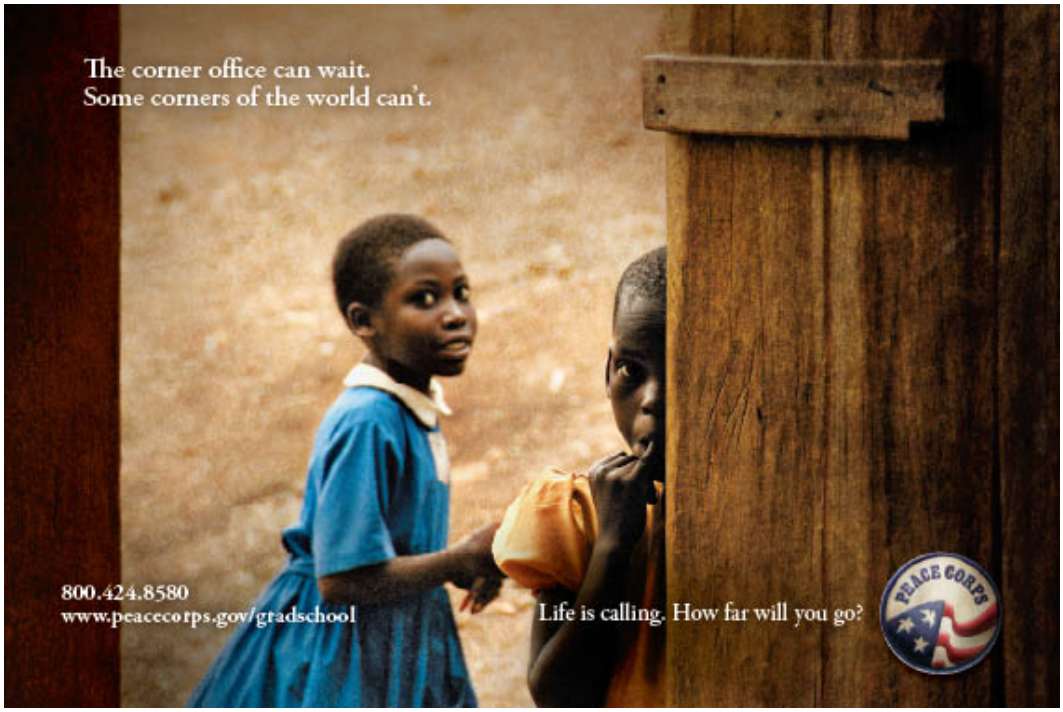
The Peace Corps recruits its overseas volunteers primarily using a language of service, exchange, and altruism. This has been the case since the organization's inception. For instance, a recruiting poster from 1961 reads:

US Peace Corps, (1961)

Other themes in recruitment trade on ideas of patriotism and national contribution: for instance, this recruiting ad from the 1970s:



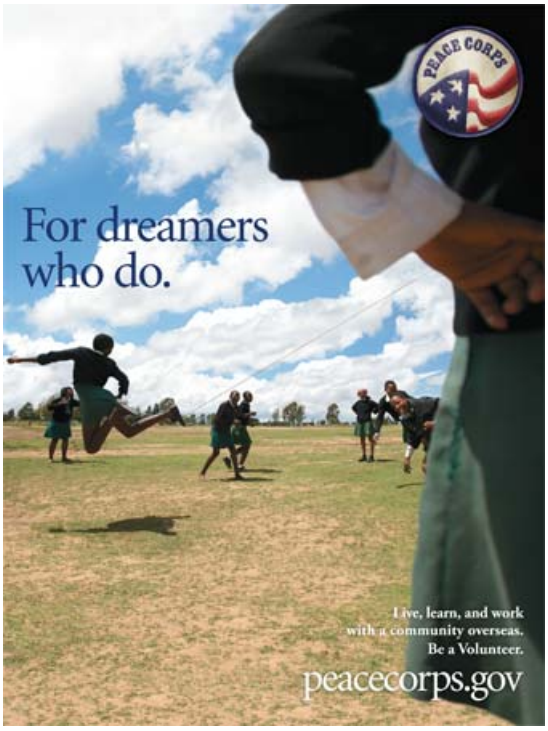
Contemporarily, the ads heavily emphasize service and contribution, particularly the sense that an individual volunteer has the power to reshape lives:



Peace Corps PSA, 2015 (US Peace Corps, 2015c)

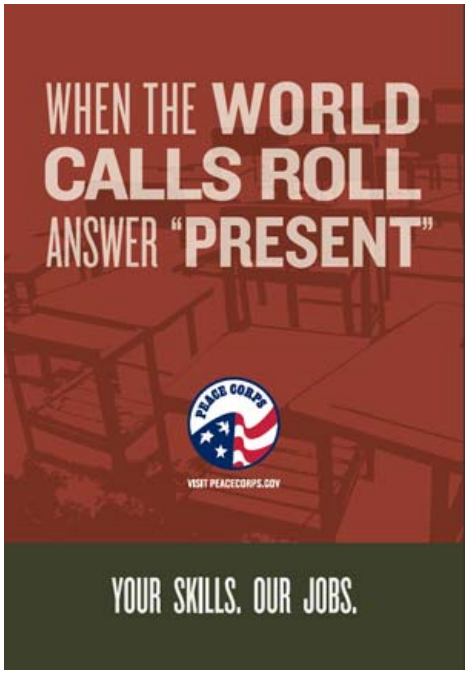
Peace Corps PSA, 2015 (US Peace Corps, 2015c)

They draw heavily on ideas of autonomy:



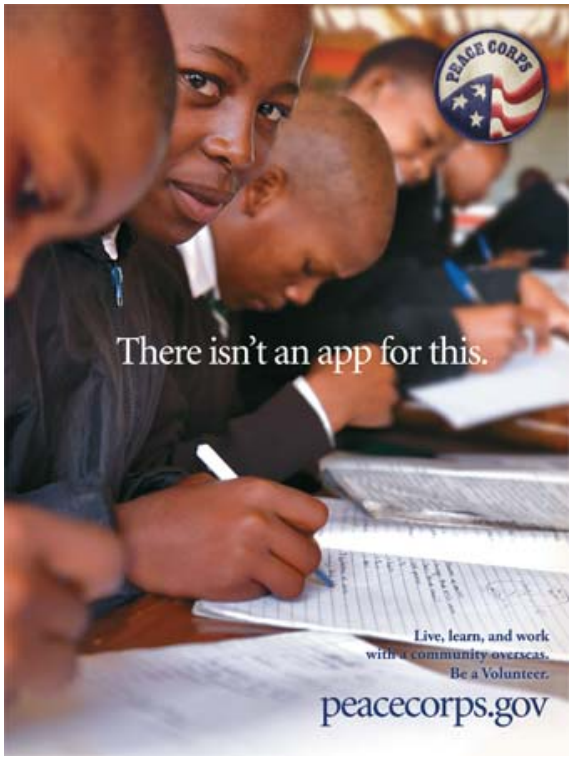
Peace Corps PSA, 2015 (US Peace Corps, 2015c)

And a back-to-basics sense of idealism:



Peace Corps "Out of Home" PSA series, 2015 (US Peace Corps, 2015b)

With a dose of promise of self-realization and promise of adventure:



Peace Corps PSA, 2015 (US Peace Corps, 2015c)

And none-too-subtle messaging distinguishing between “career” and “purpose”, which clearly places the Peace Corps in the latter category:

Peace Corps 2015 “Out of Home” PSA series (US Peace Corps, 2015b)

These ads also very much emphasize individual agency in their recruiting. They use a language that prioritizes both the individual volunteer’s needs (for personal enrichment), with the individual’s agency (the perceived ability to help).

Once volunteers arrive in their placements, however, the Peace Corps’ discourse, training materials, advancement programs, and the like, become highly professional, and attempt to channel PCV’s into professional outlets. In other words, the focus moves from “purpose” to “career” with astounding speed. This shifting discourse still emphasizes personal enrichment, just in a different way:

The Peace Corps recruits heavily for Master's programs in international development, through a collaborative program in which students earn credits towards Master's degrees in a number of different universities, using Peace Corps as a practicum:

The discourse changes quite dramatically, shifting from an emphasis on service (never start a sentence with "I should've) to professional ("the job market is global"). This shift is part of the context for understanding the experience of volunteers that I describe in this book.

Volunteer Work Areas

Peace Corps volunteers make up the bulk of the agency's work, and the organization is focused around their contributions. The areas in which volunteers work have shifted over the course of the Peace Corps' history, reflecting both the changing needs of the host countries and the changing skill sets of the volunteers themselves. At the Peace Corps' inception, there was a good deal more focus on agriculture and infrastructure than there has been since the turn of the century. The table below is from four years after the Peace Corps' founding:

Number of Volunteers by Region and Work Area, 1965					
	Latin America	**Near East / South Asia**	**Africa**	**Far East**	**% of Total**
Agriculture	437	424	136		7
Rural Community Action	1600	369	396	190	20
Urban Community Action	903	60	34	8	8
Elementary Education	53		665	265	8
Secondary Education	461	970	2673	199	33
University Education	292	4	64	45	3
Adult Education	16		33	22	1
Health	754	101	162	338	11
Public Works	56	99	176		3
Public Administration	33	48	58		1
Vocational Education	95	72	130	19	2
Physical Education	204		24		2
Multipurpose		1			1>
Lawyers			15		1
Total	4904	2148	4566	1086	100

Source: Compiled from Peace Corps (1965)

Fifty years later the work areas are framed differently, becoming both more centralized, and more focused on economic development and the teaching of English. Consistent has been a relatively heavy emphasis on education, but public administration and public works in particular have been largely phased out. In 2014, the global distribution of volunteers looked like this:

Volunteers by Work Area Globally, 2014	
Work Area	**% Volunteers**
Education	38
Health	24
Environment	12
Community Economic Development	9
Youth in Development	9
Agriculture	5
Peace Corps Response	3

Source: Author's compilations from Peace Corps (2014)

Volunteer positions vary widely, and a great number of them change throughout the course of service. This is due—as we will see later—in large part to the complications inherent in central planning for extremely disperse projects in disparate parts of the world. 16% of volunteers

in my survey reported that their primary Peace Corps project changed from the one that they were initially assigned, while 63% reported that they took on other projects besides the ones that they were initially assigned. One volunteer remembers:

> I was in community health and aids prevention. So my work was […] helping to build networks of community health workers who would train two men and two women of each [nearby] village in preventative health, nutrition, diarrhea, HIV/AIDs, those topics. […I was] working with them, teaching them some of the basics, but then also working with the nurses and helping to organize them […] during the rest of the week, riding my bike out to those villages and seeing how they did their meetings. And making *sure* they did their meetings. Because if I was there, they would put on the show.
>
> And then there were other, side things that weren't part of the regular job but that were added on. Like, I would be in a village, and talking to a chief, and […] someone would come and say that a French organization was willing to come and build a school, but you had to make a proposal. So I would sit with the village and help them develop the proposal […] we were successful in doing that.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Togo

Another volunteer, working twenty years later in Bolivia, recounts:

> I was supposed to do was very different than what I ended up doing […] I was supposed to work with these chili pepper and peanut farmers to use the building that was designed to be a processing center—to use the center and help them take their association to the next level of a business. […] And that fell apart for a couple reasons. […] And I kept offering—like, business classes, working on products, marketing skills, etc. And they just weren't interested in any of that—they only wanted a building […]
>
> So I went around town and said 'here's what I know, is any of that useful?' And I found at first a girl's school, a sort of an alternative to high school for girls who are aged 14 to 21. It taught them technical skills. And there were two teachers running the school who were also supposed to be teaching things like reading and math and health and nutrition and business, and felt like they really had no idea how to teach any of this […] A young women's continuing ed[ucation] program approached me about also getting me to work with them. They were doing a culinary program, so I would guest lecture there once or twice a week, about, you know, 'how would you think about pricing your product? How would you think about advertising it? How would you think about the nutrition in your product, and how would you actually cook meals for vegetarians?' […] I ended up doing tons of that, and all kinds of random little projects on the side—worm composting, etc.—but that's sort of how my service morphed from the farmer's to lots of women's development. All centered around health, in the end, health and business.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Bolivia

Volunteers are assigned their initial placements and work based loosely on some relevant experience, though they receive training in their expected work area. The table below, from my survey, outlines RPCVs' relevant backgrounds.

Volunteer Background in Work Area	
Undergraduate or certificate training in relevant area	42%
Professional experience in relevant area	35%
Ongoing personal interest in relevant area	41%
No training in relevant area	25%
I do not remember	1%

One former volunteer recounts how he got his post:

> In college, I was a math major because I thought it was fun. I had no intentions of doing anything with it. Since 7th grade, the only thing I had wanted to do after college was be a Peace Corps volunteer […] it didn't even occur to me that math was useful. I applied to Peace Corps and said, "I'll do anything, go anywhere", and they […] had me teach high school math in French, in the Congo because I'd had French in high school, not [because of] the math major.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Congo

Volunteer experiences vary dramatically—some people work in posts that resemble 9-5 jobs in the United States, but many of them have much more flexible daily schedules, based on the content and nature of their work. While volunteers who teach English full time may be assigned to schools and have their own classrooms, youth or community development volunteers may be largely self-directed. One RPCV who served in Morocco remembers:

> I was a youth development volunteer, which I think it was sort of explained to me as an afterschool programming director, like a YMCA or Boys and Girls Club sort of thing. And I was the first volunteer my village had. […] But the first day of work I went to my building, and it was literally three empty rooms. And it was like, ok: "Create afterschool programming!"
>
> My first yeas was a lot of English teaching, because all high schoolers have to pass a national exam, and it's incredibly difficult, and English is one part of that. […In] my second year […] I tried to create programming that sort of supplemented their academic work. One thing I noticed that in science, they don't actually go to lab until they reach college. So I started a science lab kind of thing. We build mousetrap cars, we made trebuchets, anything that you can do that was hands-on with science. And then one of the biggest programs I did—one of the biggest problems in my village because it's so spread out—is that a lot of girls after the age of eight or ten are pulled out of school. So a lot of them are either functionally illiterate or completely illiterate, either in French or Arabic. And so I started a literacy program […] So it was a group of about twenty girls, from girls to middle-aged women. And they would go to the mosque every day, and learn Arabic, and it was taught by a volunteer of mine.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Morocco

Another volunteer compared his experience to that of his colleagues in other areas:

> The education program [was] more strictly defined […] I guess the nature of being a business or health or agriculture volunteer is far more fluid. The stereotype amongst was: "if you're ed, you're working; if you're not ed, you're working a couple of days a month". […] To be honest, I came to Peace Corps thinking I would work maybe two to three days a week. I'd have one of those stereotypical find-yourself experiences. I wanted to be a business volunteer initially. They told me, "Your resume's more tailored towards education". I eventually complied. […] I was teaching five days a week, maybe working 50 hours a week or so. My experience was akin to a busy American job.
>
> --RPCV 2010s, Cameroon

Volunteers typically do service tours of two years, which are occasionally (and voluntarily) extended into a third year. Those who elect to stay on for a third year are often promoted to the role of Peace Corps Volunteer Leader (or PCVL), because they are given some additional institutional responsibility on top of their regular volunteer job. At the end of service, RPCVs are given a modest readjustment allowance, and information on how they qualify for noncompetitive eligibility (a type of preferential treatment) in hiring status for federal jobs.

The agency itself retains records of all volunteers, but that information is protected through the Privacy Act. It refers all outgoing volunteers to the National Peace Corps Association, a nongovernmental organization connecting returned Peace Corps Volunteers with the Peace Corps community, and working on advocacy issues related to the Peace Corps. Volunteers are encouraged to connect with each other through the Association's site, meetings, and services. Beyond the end of service, however, there are no formal requirements.

The Volunteers

An important part of understanding the Peace Corps and its institutional trajectory is, of course, to understand the people who constitute it. Those who join the Peace Corps are a particular group, and this section provides a profile of that individual. The interest in and ability to commit two years of one's life to a volunteer project abroad is determined in large part by social dynamics at play in the United States; Peace Corps volunteers are a specific demographic,

and a brief discussion of their contours will be important for understanding the social processes described throughout the rest of this book.

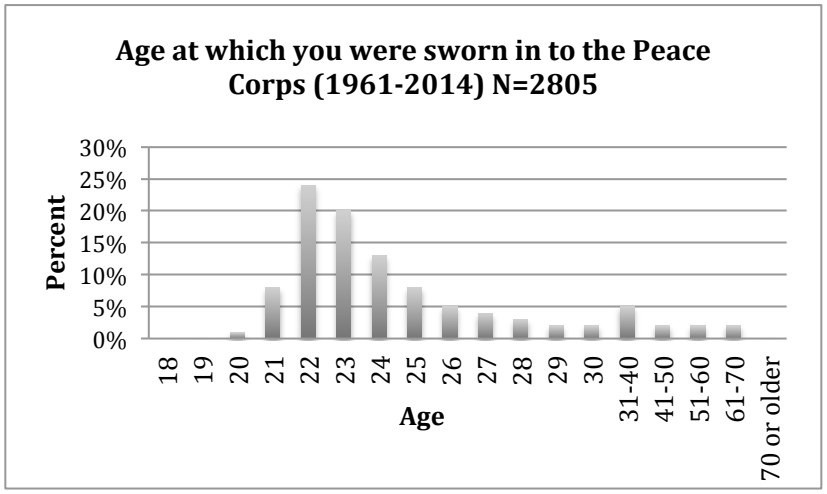
Throughout the agency's history, Peace Corps volunteers have been primarily young, well educated, and white. Nearly two-thirds of all volunteers in the 1960s (at the Peace Corps' inception) were men. 63% were men in the 1970s. But the gender trend has since reversed; 62% of all volunteers were women in the 1990s and two-thirds of volunteers were women in 2013. On average, 74% of the volunteers in my survey had obtained a bachelor's degree prior to joining. In the 1960s, on average 71% of Peace Corps volunteers had received a bachelor's degree prior to their service (compared to 16.4% of the general population in 1970 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015)). In my survey, 18% had obtained a master's degree (compared to 7.4% of the general population in 2013), and 6% in my survey had a graduate or professional degree. Despite the fact that levels of education have been rising in the United States over the past fifty years, Peace Corps volunteers are still disproportionately highly educated.

What's more, these volunteers overwhelmingly come from privileged and educated families. Within my sample of RPCVs spanning a 54-year period, 63% of them had fathers with at least bachelor's degrees, and 57% of them had mothers with at least a bachelor's degree. On an individual level education is, of course, correlated with a number of other characteristics, including political liberalism (Brint, 1985), higher incomes, fewer children, and the like. Higher levels of education also suggest a certain intentionality on the part of the volunteers—it is unlikely, contemporarily at least, that anyone will just "land" in the Peace Corps, having had access to higher levels of training and presumably in most cases, some degree of job advising or career support at the university level.

RPCVs throughout time have also been more politically liberal than the average American: 66% of my survey respondents self-identified as democrats before service; 6% identified as Republicans; 13% were Independents, 9% had no political affiliation, and the remaining 6% were affiliated with smaller parties such as the Libertarian or Constitution parties.

The tendency towards liberal politics may be partly a function of their higher education levels. It may also be a selection effect: those who choose to join the Peace Corps are influenced in their decision to do so by liberal political views. I treat the questions of political affiliation in depth in later chapters.

Second, Peace Corps volunteers are mostly young; they are in their twenties, if not their early twenties. There are, of course, a few structural reasons for this: young people tend to have fewer family responsibilities, fewer financial responsibilities, and typically have or perceive more flexibility as they begin careers, particularly if they are well-educated. However, as Table 1 suggests, there is a small spike in the number of Peace Corps volunteers in their thirties—often mid-career professionals who are attempting to break into international development or change their occupational courses. A small but significant number of people join upon retirement.



Finally, Peace Corps volunteers are largely white; over the past fifty years, minority volunteers increased only from a 9% representation in the 1960s, to a 14% representation in the 2000s. 17% of currently serving volunteers as of September 2010 (the most recent data available from the agency) were people of minority backgrounds, and of those, 7% were African-American (Bridgeland, Wofford, Quigley, & Milano, 2011). Again, there are several factors that potentially contribute to this: African-American household incomes are lower than those of white households, affording less financial flexibility to spend time abroad, and lower levels of

education among African-Americans could preclude a program of which an informal requirement is having a bachelor's degree. For instance, in 2000, 20.5% of African Americans had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 40.4% of Whites, and compared to a 33.6% national average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). An RPCV of color eloquently summed up the structural disincentives towards service: "When I talked to my friends and family, Peace Corps was not always on their radar. And when the topic of Peace Corps did come up, the immediate needs of our domestic community and barriers to service, such as familial obligations and college debt, trumped the perceived benefits of engaging in international service" (Wureta, 2015). This overwhelming whiteness of Peace Corps volunteer is important for several reasons.

Growing up white in the United States confers a number of important social privileges, and the experience of living with such privilege can potentially exacerbate the periods of adjustment that white volunteers undergo when they arrive at their site and find themselves, often for the first time, in the minority (racially, ethnically, religiously, culturally, or otherwise). White Americans live, by and large, in a society in which their race is the "default" setting—white people are the majority on television, in ads, and in political and civic life. Volunteers' feelings of strangeness in their field sites, which I will describe in subsequent chapters, may also be exacerbated by the experience of always or frequently having understood themselves as "average" or normal at home. Being suddenly a minority where you have always been the majority can be a disconcerting experience.

Second, sending primarily white volunteers into the world as representations of "America" reinforces the notion that America is a white country. An African-American RPCV who served in Mongolia and now works as a Diversity Specialist at Peace Corps headquarters, writes: "I also think back to when I learned that my host family in Mongolia, although we grew and continue to love each other, wanted to "return me" and trade me for a "real American" – a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, white American" (Wureta, 2015). Throughout my research, the volunteers of color with whom I spoke shared strikingly similar stories, which all suggest that the

composition of the Peace Corps abroad does not do a great deal to challenge the politics of race in the United States or its representation abroad.

Related, Peace Corps volunteers are often at least third or fourth generation Americans. Volunteers who are immigrants, or who are born to immigrant parents, frequently experience a great deal more pushback from their families and social networks than do volunteers whose families have been in the United States for longer periods of time. My respondents described this dynamic as hesitation on their families' parts—parents have typically sacrificed a great deal to bring their children to the US and give them an education, and are skeptical of the desire to move "back" and work for little money in a country "like the one that they just left".

In addition to their basic demographic characteristics, PCVs largely resemble each other in *why* they become volunteers. My results, consistent with other studies of international volunteering (Georgeou, 2012) indicate that more than three quarters of Peace Corps volunteers join the organization primarily for reasons of social commitment. When asked about their motivations for volunteering, a striking number of my respondents recalled their desire to, in their words, "save the world"—a quasi tongue-in-cheek description of their motivations that resonates with several prominent cultural tropes about service, idealism, and their own agency. In the survey, 87 % of respondents said that contributing positively to international development was either "very important" or "important", and 90% of respondents ranked volunteering and service as either "very important" or "important" to their decision to join the Peace Corps. This social commitment is mixed, in all cases and to varying degrees, with other motivations, but is nonetheless strongly present across all decades and countries of service. Volunteers recount:

> I didn't want to proselytize like an evangelical and go out and spread the Word. I just wanted to help people.
>
> -RPCV 2010s, Dominican Republic

> I grew up very much in my Church and decided I wanted to be like a nun. But I was a Methodist, so I went to college […] I was very serious about helping other people and saving those poor Africans […] I'd been a girl scout, a forest leader; I belonged to 26 organizations in high school and a number in college. I had done my domestic service but

> I really had a calling to help those poor people overseas.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Nigeria

> The late '70s and the early '80s was the time when liberation theology was happening, and I went to Paraguay thinking that I was going to bring liberation theology to the masses and foment profound and fundamental social change.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Paraguay

> I was in 7th grade when Kennedy was shot […] they talked about Peace Corps and that's really the first time I heard about it […] I remember even before then, I had thought, "Oh, maybe I'll be a missionary when I grow up." […] I was wanting to serve and being a long way from home thing, but it d[idn't] need the religious overtones. My father was an Eagle Scout […] One of the things that I learned through my father about scouting was, it was service, you were supposed to provide and helping other people.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Congo

> I went to give back because I'd always been given. At 21 you'd been given everything, your house, your food, your college, tuition, everything. I thought it was time to give back.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Ghana

These respondents—who vary by both timeframe and country of service—articulate surprisingly similar motivations for joining the Peace Corps, most having to do with a sense of wanting to "give back" or contribute. My survey data looking at motivations by decade points to very similar patterns. 54% of respondents either strongly identified or identified as idealists prior to their service, and an additional 35% of respondents somewhat or slightly identified as idealists prior to their service. Only 10% report that they did not self-identify as idealists at all.

Did you consider yourself an idealist prior to your service? (N=2479)

	I strongly identified as an idealist (%)	I identified as an idealist (%)	I somewhat identified as an idealist (%)	I slightly identified as an idealist (%)	I did not identify as an idealist (%)	I don't remember (%)	Total (%)
1960s	21	35	24	8	10	2	100
1970s	20	40	22	8	9	1	100
1980s	25	32	24	7	10	2	100
1990s	21	32	29	6	11	1	100
2000s	20	35	25	9	10	1	100
2010s	18	31	30	11	10	0	100
5 decade Average	20	34	26	9	10	1	

The data presented here is very consistent, suggesting that the Peace Corps has recruited a group of people that strongly resemble each other, even across time and space. It further suggests that the transformations that idealism undergoes throughout the course of service are meaningfully independent of the historical and political context that circumscribes it.

That volunteers' motivations are social is theoretically important to this project, and implies that PCVs should be understood as primarily as intrinsically motivated workers whose incentive systems are different from those of other types of workers. It further implies that we might look to some of the scholarship on activism (rather than, for example, writing on organizations or public administration) to explain their behavior and attitudes. Like other types of activists, identification with the values of the movement (in this case the organization) predisposes them to join (McAdam, 1986), and they are encircled by an organization that promises to nurture this ideological and professional purity, at least discursively.

In traditional kinds of political activism, participants work out the complications of work and visions in groups, negotiating both meaning and identity relationally. In the Peace Corps, by contrast, the focus is largely on the individual volunteer and her *own* efficacy, in a climate that emphasizes professionalism, technical knowledge, and best practices. Whereas leaders in classic

social movements actively work to capitalize on and reframe emotions (both positive and negative) into something productive for the movement, the Peace Corps, understanding emotions as largely within the purview of mental health, leave volunteers alone with their emotions, letting them reframe themselves (typically into cynicism). In brief: activist identities are sustained by cultural processes that turn on group bonding, a sense of meaning and identity, and collective processing. The Peace Corps deals in professional and organizational processes that turn primarily on individual responsibility.

Though most volunteers talk about social commitment as their motivations for joining the Peace Corps, there is a small but significant population of RPCVs who join primarily for professional reasons. At the Peace Corps' inception, very few volunteers considered professional development an important part of their experience, but this number has been growing recently, perhaps in light of a contracting job market and more competition for entry-level positions. Although few volunteers point to professional development as the *primary* reason for joining the Peace Corps, its significance has been growing since the end of the Cold War and the Peace Corps' rebranding as an aid and development rather than political organization:

Motivations for joining the Peace Corps, by decade of service

	To gain technical skills					
	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Neutral (%)	Not very important (%)	Not at all important (%)	I don't remember (%)
1960s	1	12	30	21	35	1
1970s	2	21	30	17	30	0
1980s	10	24	31	16	18	1
1990s	10	26	31	16	17	0
2000s	13	35	25	14	12	1
2010s	19	35	24	12	10	0
	To understand more about technical international development					
	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Neutral (%)	Not very important (%)	Not at all important (%)	I don't remember (%)
1960s	3	15	30	19	33	2
1970s	6	20	28	18	28	0
1980s	10	22	31	19	19	0
1990s	11	26	25	19	19	0
2000s	18	30	25	15	12	0
2010s	22	35	21	14	7	1
	To build my resume					
	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Neutral (%)	Not very important (%)	Not at all important (%)	I don't remember (%)
1960s	0	10	22	21	46	1
1970s	3	18	25	16	36	2
1980s	8	20	23	24	23	2
1990s	9	28	24	16	23	0
2000s	16	31	25	13	15	0
2010s	21	39	17	11	12	0

On all three measures, professional concerns did not figure prominently into volunteers' motivations for joining the Peace Corps in the 1960s-1980s—and the motivation has been growing steadily in the last three decades, concurrent with the rise of neoliberal economic and social policies and values. One volunteer shares his reasoning:

> I didn't go in for any altruistic reasons. [The recruiter] told me purely from a professional standpoint what it would do for me […] I guess I wouldn't say I was *un-altruistic*, but I […] when I applied I said I would go anywhere in the world but I would only do fisheries work. […] The two years of the Peace Corps put me maybe five years or more ahead in terms of job qualifications when I came back to the States.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Sierra Leone

A small number of volunteers also join the Peace Corps for political reasons. In the 1960s and 1970s, a number joined in order to obtain deferment from the US draft for the Vietnam War. One remembers:

> I applied when I was a senior in college and I went in after a year of graduate school and a year of work to avoid the draft. I had a teaching deferment and then I activated the Peace Corps to go before my draft board and escape Vietnam, because I had just been cleared to go there. I was absolutely against the war. It was a sham, just like all wars since then.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Turkey

Another respondent sees the Peace Corps as an acceptable compromise among different types of public service:

> When I was in college and the Cold War was ending and a lot of my courses in Political Science were just not my cup of tea—they were, to me, very masculine, very driven by nuclear war politics. I got turned off to the idea of Foreign Service. And that's when I switched to international development, and really liked the softer side of international relations, but in the process I think I still wanted to be involved in public service and giving back to the US government.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Thailand

Interestingly, most respondents—despite their commitment to service and giving back—did not consider domestic service programs (such as AmeriCorps VISTA, Teach for America, City Year, and the like) when considering joining the Peace Corps. Many of them indicated a wish to be abroad. A volunteer who served in the 1960s in Nigeria recounts:

> The idea of Africa was mysterious, even in '69, and I was just—I was just beyond myself [when I was offered a post], and accepted right away. I sent it back in the same day, saying yes […] It was just the idea of spending two years, learning a new culture, being somewhere where not everything is the same and not everybody eats this Sunday dinner. Those things were in my mind, but I never once thought of VISTA.

Another, serving thirty years later and echoing an interest in the international that the previous respondent articulated, says:

> I think I was always fascinated with other cultures on a micro-level, and just this idea of going somewhere else to live and get to know the people there, and maybe be a part of this idea of peace and world peace.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Turkestan

> I was an undergrad at the University of Rhode Island. I'd lived in Cranston, Rhode Island, my whole life. I had been to the Canadian side and Niagara Falls. That was my international travel up to that time. I've never been further south than Washington, D.C. or further west than Buffalo, New York. […] I was in a community that was all white. I've never met a black person till I went to the URI. […] I wasn't brought up thinking internationally, globally or travel-wise. Travel was expensive. My family was modest income.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Dominican Republic

Similarly, the Peace Corps has transformed over fifty years from something in which the opportunity for travel figured prominently, to something in which the opportunity for travel figures *exceptionally* prominently. This pattern surprised me somewhat, as travel has become relatively more affordable in recent decades. However, more recent volunteers rank travel among the more important reasons to join the Peace Corps:

Motivation for joining the Peace Corps, by decade of service

	For the opportunity for travel and/or adventure					
	Very important (%)	**Important (%)**	**Neutral (%)**	**Not very important (%)**	**Not at all important (%)**	**I don't remember (%)**
1960s	38	50	6	3	3	0
1970s	44	45	6	4	1	0
1980s	54	39	4	2	1	0
1990s	65	29	4	1	1	0
2000s	64	31	3	1	1	0
2010s	61	32	5	1	1	0

The fact that most applicants don't even consider a domestic service project suggests that, although volunteers talk about the Peace Corps as a principally altruistically or ideologically-motivated experience, there is likely a good deal of intrigue along other dimensions, including the

opportunity to travel. For a primarily middle-class pool of applicants (many of whom, at least from the 1990s on, had travel opportunities through families and school), this desire for a long-term cultural immersion experience may indicate a desire to depart from the standard professional trajectory (college, graduate school, and then career), and that the Peace Corps provides a relatively more legitimate way to do so.

It also suggests that, for volunteers, the idea of a "different culture" is something to be necessarily obtained internationally, pointing to a rather one-dimensional understanding of the United States and its culture. This tendency could perhaps be attributed to the overwhelming whiteness and privileged status of most volunteers, whose version of reality is frequently reflected in mainstream America's depictions of race, life, and culture. When a volunteer is young, white, educated, and comes from a family that occupies at least middle-class status, the world "beyond" their own tends be conflated with the world "abroad". By contrast, this type of Orientalism (Said, 1979) among volunteers of color is not noticeably present, though they do frequently articulate the same impulse towards helping and career that White volunteers express:

> I come from immigrant family. We had a lot of experience abroad. I also, on the other side, wanted to do something to give back, as corny as that sounds, so I think since I was maybe 15, 16, I thought about Peace Corps. I had this kind of weird idea of what the Peace Corps was and that started to be refined more as I went through college.
>
> --RPCV 2010s, Cameroon

> I went in to get my master's degree in public health and specifically maternal and child health with an international focus. When I started looking at jobs that I would be interested in, most all of them required at least five years of on-the-ground experience living and working in developing countries.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Guyana

Even though they are perhaps less prone to exoticizing foreign countries, RPCVs of color (including the two quoted above) express two of the same common motivations for joining the Peace Corps as white RPCVs do: the idea of service or helping, and the concern with professional development or training.

The greatest identifiable differences among generations of Peace Corps volunteers are the dimensions of service that have to do with the US political context. While earlier volunteers report being inspired by JFK himself, or by his vision, the specific nature of Americanness figures differently into decisionmaking by later volunteers:

Motivation for joining the Peace Corps, by decade of service

	I was inspired by a public figure					
	Very important (%)	**Important (%)**	**Neutral (%)**	**Not very important (%)**	**Not at all important (%)**	**I don't remember (%)**
1960s	40	34	10	4	11	1
1970s	18	32	22	5	22	1
1980s	9	21	20	10	39	2
1990s	5	13	19	9	50	4
2000s	3	9	14	14	56	3
2010s	3	9	18	14	53	3

While the first two decades of volunteers were inspired by public figures—presumably Kennedy, Shriver, and others—the number of volunteers who cite this as a "very important" factor in deciding to join the Peace Corps falls off precipitously during the 1980s and is vanishingly small by the 2010s. The narratives of national service are gradually displaced by the concerns of the neoliberal order, including career development, and these changes are reflected in the motivations of people who decide to join the Peace Corps.

In general however, the striking thing about Peace Corps volunteers is how little they—and their motivations—have changed over the fifty years of the organization's history. They remain primarily young, white, and well educated, though the shift in gender composition will bear more careful analysis. Volunteers are still intrigued by the same things in 2015 as they were in 1961: notions of helping, the opportunity for travel and "adventure", the exoticism of a different country. And indeed, their trajectories bear striking similarities across time and space, with the exception of volunteers who served in the 1980s. Those volunteers were slightly more conservative than their counterparts from other decades, and speak with less conviction about

social issues—on whatever dimension—in interviews. As the first generation to come of age under neoliberal politics, they are generationally distinct. A number of potential dynamics may play into this.

In the 1980s, the Peace Corps was fundamentally out of alignment with the zeitgeist; the Cold War felt threatening still, and the type of social order that the Peace Corps represented did not seem likely to persist. The social activism of the 1960s and 1970s had dissipated; Peace Corps volunteers serving in the 1980s had grown up during a recession. Additionally, the agency was compromised ideologically by its association with the US government, widely perceived as warmongering in the types of liberal circles from which Peace Corps typically drew participants. While Peace Corps volunteers from the 1980s share demographic characteristics with volunteers from other decades, their attitudes and trajectories set them apart from the rest of the RPCVs.

And even given this somewhat anomalous decade, Peace Corps volunteers ideologically resemble each other in important ways: they are both curious about the outside world, and committed to service. They are naively but authentically political in their motivations to join the organization, and their world has been shaped by the overwhelming privilege of their educational, class, and frequently racial, backgrounds. These biographies and life experiences are part of what fashion the outcome for volunteers serving abroad.

CHAPTER 2: Background and Theory

The Peace Corps

I have selected the Peace Corps as a site to observe the tensions between organizational mandates and individual social commitment for a number of reasons. The Peace Corps is, like many other social organizations, a necessary compromise between participants' ideals and the mundane and sometimes problematic realities of being a sustainable bureaucracy. It is interesting for that reason.

However, the agency is a vivid example of many and sometimes conflicting institutional dynamics: it is comprised of people who join because of particular sense of social commitment. They are mostly young, and mostly privileged; the agency is thus "typical" in the sense that its volunteers are similar to early-career workers at nonprofit and social change organizations throughout the country. These volunteers are circumscribed by an organization with its own pressures, incentives, and identity, and such pressures are likewise common to social organizations (and in fact, to almost any organization). However, the Peace Corps is a state organization with an explicitly social mission, meaning that it is subject to many of the unique pressures that affect the government in the United States, particularly as regards the legitimacy of its endeavor. As an agency, the Peace Corps ultimately answers to the American voters, by way of Congress and the President—and it is certainly atypical among voluntary organizations in this sense. It also must remain well within the contours of the foreign policy agenda of the United States, requirements that are uncommon among other volunteer groups working abroad. Combining state and third-sector pressures, the Peace Corps is thus a stylized version of many other processes at play in social change work and organizational life.

Second, the Peace Corps is a relevant case study because of the dramatic timeframe in in which it takes effect on its volunteers—the changes that occur among this group happen very rapidly. Volunteering with the Peace Corps is a two-year undertaking, extending occasionally into a third year. The experience compresses maturation; it functions like stop-motion photography,

condensing a life-course experience. By virtue of that compression, the Peace Corps vividly demonstrates a transition that occurs for many people who have counterhegemonic leanings in their youth and who, later on, become professionalized players within a hegemonic system. In other words, the processes I describe within this project are likely quite common, both in organizations and among socially committed individuals, but in the Peace Corps these processes are condensed, and thus more visible. The Peace Corps is a site in which to see the dilemma of socially committed individuals wrangling with competing priorities. It is particularly interesting in how it facilitates the transformation of its volunteers.

I argue in this project that the process of professionalization, particularly a type of professionalization that I describe as "procedural", is responsible for the institutional cynicism of returned Peace Corps volunteers, and I trace the mechanism by which this occurs at the macro, the meso, and the micro levels of analysis. I thus employ distinct but related theory based primarily in the organizational sociology, social movement, and civil society literatures. First, I describe professionalization in new theoretical terms, contrasting it not with amateurism, but with activism. Then I argue that, at the macro level, concerns with organizational legitimacy have fostered a hyper-professionalization within the organization that, to an extent, may also be affecting the apparatus of international development generally. At the meso and micro levels, this professionalization and professional emphasis represent a substantial mismatch with the motivations of the volunteers, and the consequences of this mismatch can act negatively on people's social commitment.

My argument thus has two major theoretical components. The first is one of how professionalization emerged within the Peace Corps; I take up the question of state legitimacy in the context of the US and its weak central government. I use this body of theory to explain why the Peace Corps operates as it does—namely, why it professionalized. Because of the manner in which the Peace Corps disseminates knowledge through its returned volunteers, the dynamics described here have qualitatively altered the profession of development as a whole.

Second, and more specifically, I use social movements and civil society literature in order to develop a clear theory of the relationship between social commitment and formal bureaucracy. In general, sociology lacks a coherent analytic framework for understanding the relationship of individual intrinsic motivation, and emotions, to formal organizations. The organizational sociology literature knows a good deal about what social dynamics sustain workers in profitmaking organizations; it has developed nuanced analyses of how meaning is constructed (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), how ideas are diffused (Fiss & Zajac, 2004), and how unethical behavior spreads (Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998) in such spaces. But that literature is primarily, though not exclusively, focused on private organizations in profitmaking situations. The employees of those organizations are mostly paid; though idealism may be present for some actors, the incentive structure for wage-earning workers (as opposed to volunteers) is meaningfully different. Given the vast number of organizations that are at least partly socially oriented and at least partly volunteer-run both in the United States and around the world, a more formal theory of the between social commitment and formal organization is warranted.

Institutional Cynicism: a Theoretical Approach

There is a substantial body of somewhat older literature suggesting that organizational membership is linked to individual participation (McAdam, 1986; Walsh & Warland, 1983), and, at least at some point in US history, that organizational participation was also linked to increased feelings of efficacy (Neal & Seeman, 1964). This research makes the current findings all the more puzzling and paradoxical—if theories of participation suggest that volunteers should be feeling fulfilled by their work, and if theories of organizational participation and resource mobilization also suggest that organizational affiliations can increase feelings of efficacy, to what is the high degree of dissatisfaction among volunteers owed?

There are, of course, benefits and drawbacks to either activism or professionalism as a mechanism of social change, as the literatures on both clearly demonstrate, and this book attempts

to treat each as a set of analytic distinctions and elective affinities. However, the concern driving the initial theoretical question was: what accounts for the high levels of institutional cynicism in volunteer development work? In answering that question, I trace the transition from activism/idealism to professionalization, documenting what effects such a transition produces. The answer, in brief, is that it produces "institutional cynicism", a term that I use to describe the outcome of interest in this study—a persistent, sometimes low-level dissatisfaction with the mechanisms of social change.

Beyond a persistent, low-level dissatisfaction with the mechanisms of social change, institutional cynicism has several other components. The first is a lack of macro-level critique: Peace Corps volunteers tend to understand problems at the micro- or meso- level (for instance, their criticisms often target the practice of development or USAID policies, rather than globalization, land redistribution, and the like). Their analysis of social problems tends to stop at mid-size dynamics, organizations, and processes. They become, in this sense, organizationalists.

A second component of institutional cynicism is that volunteers emerge from their experience seeing formal organizations as the only plausible way to affect change in the world (and this, it should be noted, is another symptom of organizationalism). This occurs alongside a corresponding lack of recognition of other types of power; participants see themselves as powerful *only* in the context of their professions, rather in the contexts of their characters, their faith practices, their collective identities, or anything else. In a surprising twist—given how the Peace Corps recruits its volunteers—the prevailing attitude among returned volunteers *rejects* the idea that individuals can make a difference (in that sense, it is something of a cynical rejection of true liberalism). However, the only group that participants see as viable is a formal and frustrating bureaucracy. Their attitudes are something of a neoliberal critique of government: they embrace groups, but the groups must be systematic—even if the system is inherently problematic.

It follows from this organizationalist perspective that participants feel comparatively powerless as individual people; the third component of this institutional cynicism is a somewhat

forlorn sense of powerlessness and of lost connection with a certain set of ideals. This dimension is similar to burnout, which has been documented extensively among volunteers and in helping professions (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Burnout is characterized by "chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy" (Arches, 1991; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Fourth, volunteers are deeply critical of international development, and these opinions range from a sense that the practice is flawed, to a conviction that it is downright wrong, unethical, and useless. Even those who continue to work in the field are not without such critiques.

The fifth and final component of institutional cynicism is mixed formal political opinions. In some ways and on most domestic social issues, ex-volunteers stay liberal or even become slightly more liberal, while on issues pertaining to international development, foreign policy, and military policy, they become more conservative. The experience produces an effect that makes them more conservative in the areas with which they have had the most interaction during their volunteer experience.

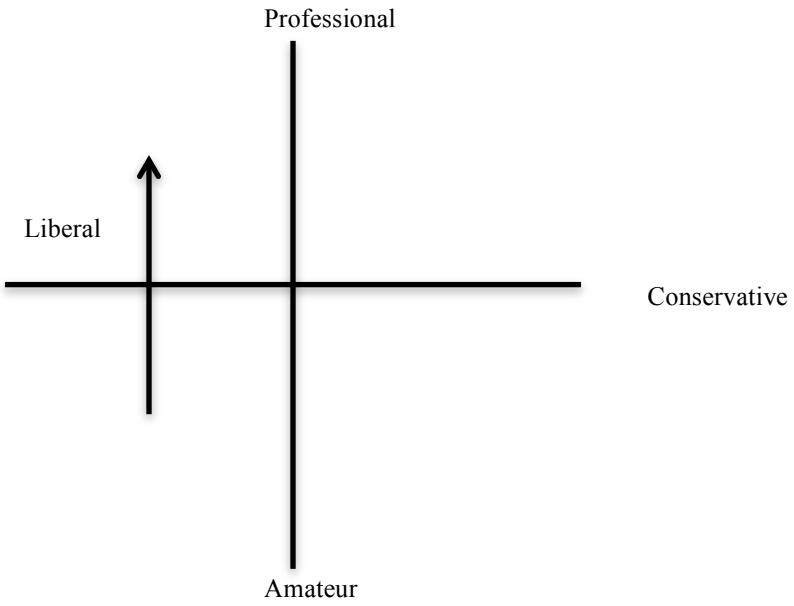
Institutional cynicism, as I will demonstrate, emerges in the space between professionalization and social commitment. I argue in this book that professionalization is an inherently conformist dynamic in that it operates within established systems and rules that its participants seek to enforce and strengthen, and I trace its development in Peace Corps volunteers across time and space. An alternative—but, as I will argue, incorrect—interpretation of the trend towards institutional cynicism that I describe would be that it is part of a life course trajectory. An apparent explanation for the high levels of professionalization in the Peace Corps and some of the pieces of institutional cynicism might turn on classic life course arguments. Such arguments would go something like this: professional social change work offers people a more stable way to contribute to the wellbeing of their worlds than any nebulous alternative they may have

considered in their youth. People's feelings on social policy shift as they age, and they become protective of the material wealth that they have acquired and their preferences for social spending come to mirror the needs of their age cohort (Busemeyer, Goerres, & Weschle, 2009).

The problem with this interpretation is that (in addition empirical evidence demonstrating that aging does not necessarily predict conservatism or inflexibility of views—cf. Danigelis, Hardy, & Cutler (2007)) Peace Corps volunteers do not become more conservative or institutionally cynical as they age; *they become more institutionally cynical as they volunteer.* In other words, the experience of being in the Peace Corps produces some effects similar to that what people may undergo in a much longer life course trajectory. Further, institutional cynicism is much broader than trends in voting patterns; it has also to do with people's understandings of themselves and their own efficacy, and their convictions about many issues. I propose an explanation for this that is fundamentally rooted in the structure of professional organizational life.

One of the ways that modern society acts on idealists is to create virtually no role for the "responsible" adult activist—that is, an adult with responsibilities (perhaps towards children, towards a mortgage, or towards any other entity or community). Activist roles in contemporary America are all precarious in one way or another; they are underpaid, or unpaid, or temporally unstable, or legally risky, among other things. Therefore, the most common trajectory for understanding how people progress through the life course and professional development looks something like the graphic below: a grid comprised of an x-axis that ranges from liberal to conservative, and a y-axis that ranges from amateur to professional (note that the "liberal" and "conservative" labels here are rough, but should do for the purposes of illustration). Most Peace Corps volunteers understand themselves as always to the left of center, politically and philosophically. In their own formulations, they are simply moving from an activist to a more professional perspective on social change, *while sill remaining liberal.* In the graphic below, the

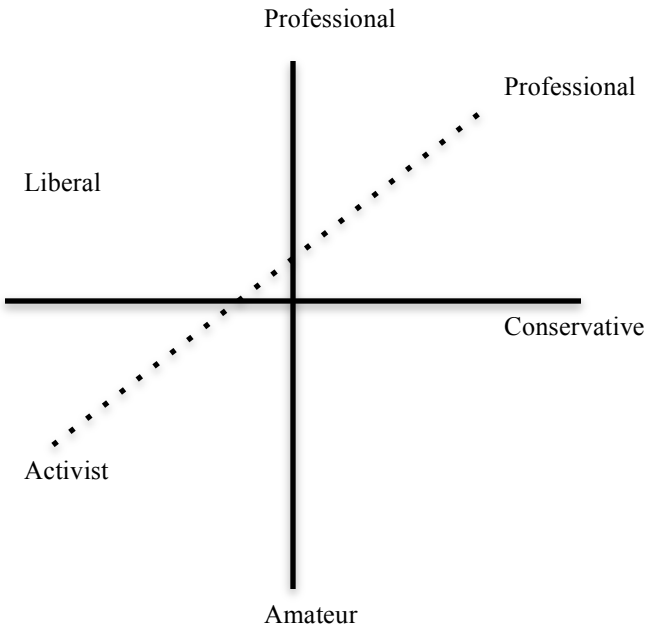
volunteer would move from the bottom left quadrant to the top left quadrant as a consequence of their service.



However, a more sociological understanding of social change—indeed, the one that emerges out of this project—would explicitly contrast *activism* and professionalization, rather than *amaterusim* and professionalization. Professionalization is an explicit rejection of "working outside the system" and an embracing of "working inside the system". The contrast is analytically useful because it bears on the principal differences between activist and professional approaches to social change and development: the means of change. The means of change, in turn, have implications for the identities of those engaged in that change. While it may be the case that once-activists choose professionalized roles as they acquire other social responsibilities (because such jobs enable them enough stability to manage the responsibilities of their lives, while also affording them the opportunity to feel that they are doing something with their time that supports their values), the utility of this comparison is that it examines the specific pressures that emerge for people within each category, of "activist" and "professional".

In a society such as ours, organizations can powerfully restructure social convictions, as has been well documented (Eliasoph 1998, 2009; McQuarrie 2013; Minkoff 1999; Piven and Cloward 1978; Rucht 1999). They can incentivize conformism, or meaningfully transform incentives and practices among those who populate them (Aksartova, 2003; Clemens, 2006b; Jenkins, 1998; Roelofs, 2003). Because they are concerned with their own survival they very frequently hold conservative attitudes towards change, and such caution manifests in many ways. These organizational tendencies have, in turn, implications for people who work in organizations, affecting their identities (Lok, 2010).

In other words, the choices for living one's social commitment in modern American life are: either to engage in full-time activism, in all its precariousness, or to engage in organizational life, with its various tendencies towards homogenization, caution, and reformulation. Professionalization, I argue, is inherently a more risk-averse dynamic than activism, precisely because of its necessary organizational affiliations. Therefore, the mere fact of being an organizational actor within a social industry moves actors to the right, into a more conservative place. The graph, according to this interpretation, should look more like this:



Whereas activists understand themselves as moving from "activist" to "professional"—but all within the liberal side of the graphic, this interpretation (using organizational sociological theory) would see them as moving to the right because of the inherently conformist tendencies of most organizations. The dotted arrow indicates their trajectory under this formulation; they end up in the top right quadrant of the graph because the qualities of organizational life place them in an inherently more conservative category than they (and analysts) might themselves recognize.

These actors, in turn, resolve the cognitive tension of this change by justifying organizational life under the rubric of professionalism; in doing so, they create a cognitively "comfortable" place to sit. This reformulation is part of what I have termed "institutional cynicism"—a professional position that is more or less in keeping with one's ideological goals, but which also represents a unique set of feelings about organizations and individual and collective power.

Having defined the concept of institutional cynicism, I now turn to several bodies of theory in order to situate my analysis.

Macro-level: Professionalization and the Political Economy of State Legitimacy

Volunteers, I will argue, become institutionally cynical as they are being heavily professionalized, and so at the macro level of analysis, my focus is on how this professionalization emerged in the first place. I will argue in the next chapter that, in the Peace Corps, professionalization is an organizational response to political concerns about legitimacy. I turn to the literature on professionalization, statehood, and legitimacy to engage this argument.

Compromised legitimacy is not a new problem for US government organizations. The US has been a famously "weak" and fragmented state since its inception; Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) noted how the lack of an aristocracy in the colonies fostered the emergence of a township model of governance that diffused authority throughout the country. This diffuse governance structure has been accompanied by a great degree of skepticism towards central government since

colonial times, and the US government constructed itself by borrowing organizational capacity from existing civic groups. For instance, as early as 1904, some 80% of private charitable organizations in places like California received some public funding (between 38 and 55% of these organizations' funding) to undertake public work. A full fourth of government payments went to "other institutions" (referring to independent civic and social service groups) in 1915, increasing to just past 50% in 1930 (Clemens, 2006a, p. 197). This history of contracting out state responsibilities to private organizations generated durable habits of indirect governance in the US. Even researchers that problematize the weak state theory (cf. Dobbin & Sutton, 1998) acknowledge the powerful effects of indirect governance and borrowed organizational capacity.

Following from this practice of indirect governance, organizations that acted as mechanisms by which government might function *became ends unto themselves*; in the United States, "public administration" organizations became separate from substantive governmental concerns during the Progressive era. Thinkers needed to justify interventionist policies to a public skeptical of centralized collaboration—they therefore looked to "organizations" rather than to "government" in order to do so. The public administration movement, as well as the education and justice reform movements in the early part of the 20th century were "built on a firm distinction between administration and the substantive task at hand, and in both movements the administrative side was quickly professionalized" (Hamilton & Sutton, 1989, p. 14). In other words, organizations and their work were intentionally built as separate things; organizational and administrative autonomy have been the means by which interventionists have sought legitimacy for American state organizations for well over 100 years. Authority became organizational rather than specifically "governmental", as it both became subsumed in, and a function of, organizations. "In the revision that occurred in American thought at the turn of the century," Hamilton and Sutton conclude, "the act of organization was intrinsically an ethical act, vital to human nature and to society" (15). If the government is inherently "bad", organizations, in the United States, are seen as inherently "good".

Related, the US' weak state was, until the 1970s, treated as a closed system by organizational theorists, meaning that it was not perceived to interact a great deal with surrounding environments, or to be deeply affected by them. With the advent of institutionalism in organizational analysis, scholars started to understand that weak US state as powerful even in its fragmentation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), and scholars began to document the consequences of the US' so-called "weakness" (Dobbin & Sutton, 1998; Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985). This body of work has found that even "weak" states can have powerful social effects. In this case, the characteristics of the weak American state—including its compromised legitimacy—fomented the rapid professionalization of the Peace Corps, a process that I document in the next chapter.

Professionalization is a unique response to concerns about legitimacy, and a multi-layered social dynamic. Within organizational sociology, the idea of "professionalization" denotes a process by which a heterogeneous group of people comes to be recognized by themselves and society as a distinct occupational group. One goal is to control the "production of producers" (Larson, 1977, pp. 49–52) of the given occupational content; other goals are to command respect and legitimacy for that new occupation (Abbott, 1988) or to substantiate the idea that social and technical change is a result of generalizable policy ideas (Mosse, 2011, p. 3). Professionalization typically occurs among occupational groups that have at least some ability to control their own work (Friedson, 2001); line cooks, for instance, unlike university professors or nurses, have little autonomy within their working hours and thus little opportunity for these dynamics to emerge.

The process is driven by economic aspirations, demographic shifts, political reconfigurations, and changing incentives; within the last fifty years, sociology has laid out a relatively clear "trait-based" account of how it occurs, an account that rapidly became canonized. Any occupation that wants professional authority, the story goes, must 1. occupy itself full-time, 2. Identify a technical basis for its occupation, 3. claim an exclusive jurisdiction over it by

policing its borders in some way, 4. link the skill and the jurisdiction to a specific training program, 5. find a way to expel the deviants, the unskilled, and the dishonest, 5. and convince the public that its actions are valuable and trustworthy (Abbott, 1988; Caplow, 1954; Miller, 1967; Wilensky, 1964). The job must be technical (based on a systematic knowledge through the training program), and it must adhere to a set of professional norms.

In early work in sociology (cf. Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933) this trait-based professionalization was regarded as a desirable process, not only for the reasons cited above, but for its ability to produce professional relationships that were collegial, cooperative, and mutually supportive. Professionalization was also understood as an efficient means to a given occupational end, permitting sufficient discretion and autonomy in problem solving. Further, professionalization was perceived to facilitate occupational identity and cooperation, and had an important meaning-making component for the professionals themselves. Early work by Parsons (1939) linked the notion of professions with the modern state, showing how the capitalist economy, the Weberian rational-legal social order, and the modern professions were interrelated. He argued that the authority of both the professions and of bureaucratic hierarchical organizations rested on the same principles (specificity, specialization, restriction of power domain, the application of impersonal standards, and the like). The resonance between the two, he argued, helped bolster a normative social order—in other words, professions were used to substantiate rational-legal life and organizations. The difference was that the professions, because of shared identity, sense of purpose, and collegiality, were able to escape stifling bureaucratization and instead work towards a shared normative end.

In the 1970s, however, analysis of professionalization shifted; in seminal pieces Larson (1977) and Larkin (1983) took more critical approaches. Using neo-Marxist and Foucaultian frameworks, this new strand of writing criticized traditional functionalist perspectives on professionalization that it perceived to be insensitive to issues of power and domination. Professionalization and professionalism was, from this new vantage point, “the institutionalized

form of the control of occupations" (Johnson, 1972, p. 38). Fournier (1999) understands professionalization as control—a process that works to inculcate participants with appropriate work identities and conduct. For her, professionalization is a "disciplinary logic which inscribes "autonomous" professional practice within a network of accountability and governs professional conduct at a distance" (280). In general, the new approach attempts to be sensitive to the relationships between professions/professionalization and an ecology of capitalist institutions (including the state, the market, and the like) (Hodgson, 2002).

Even given this analytic shift, some will undoubtedly argue that international development is not a profession. And certainly, by "trait-based" standards, based on an inductive compilation of a list of features development has neither a centralized educational requirement nor a rigid policing of professional boundaries, and has not attained the ideal-type level of professionalization that, for instance, medicine enjoys. However, I take the approach that professionalization is best understood in context (cf. Ozga, 2013), and contemporary approaches to professionalization have emphasized a more nuanced perspective that has attempted to temper the atheoretical nature of a classic trait-based analysis. The perspective that I follow in this book distinguishes professions from other occupations based on importance of the expertise they possess relative to the functioning of society (cf. Barber, 1963) or to those in power. Within this framework, social and economic rewards that professions seek are justified by the social value of their specialized expertise (Hodgson, 2002).

And from this perspective, development workers are a nascent professional group attempting to stake a claim on specialized expertise, largely within a network of state professionals. Development's direct link to the state helps with this claim: state professionals initially emerged in the 19th century, and were incorporated into the organized framework of agencies financially dependent on the state. As the public service bureaucracy increased, bureaucratization as a route to social mobility presented the possibility of professionalization to many occupations (Ozga, 2013, p. 22). Using the legitimacy of the public service bureaucracy,

development has been attempting since the 1960s to present itself as indispensible to the functioning of the modern state, and to build a claim to professional legitimacy around it.

In international development, as in many public service scenarios, professionalization largely occurs from above. The discourse of "dedicated service" and autonomous decisionaking is part of a professional ideology, and when this discourse is imposed from above, it is frequently in order to justify rationalization. It becomes a "disciplinary mechanism of autonomous subjects exercising appropriate conduct. This discourse of professionalism is grasped and welcomed by the occupational group since it is perceived to be a way of improving the occupation's status and rewards, collectively and individually" (Evetts, 2009, pp. 22–23). Professionalization, in other words, is welcomed (at least to some degree) by the workers being professionalized because of the rewards it promises.

Within professionalizing development work, as in other professions, there is a persistent and ongoing tension between bureaucratization and autonomy—a tension that has been documented since organizational studies started to seriously engage the idea of professionalization. Modern, rational organizations have a tendency towards bureaucratization, and US government organizations are no exception to this. Montagna (1968) produced early research on this tension, using CPAs as a case study. He found that organizational tendencies towards bureaucratization were checked by personal autonomy—that is, CPAs' professional autonomy was able to stave off the bureaucratizing tendencies that were internal to the organization. However, pressures that were *external* to the organization drove bureaucratization within it, which by nature attempted to limit the CPAs' professional judgment. In Montagna's study, CPAs expanded their scope of work and sought new avenues to professionalize (where they would be less restricted by advancing bureaucratization). My point here is simply that such a tension between professional autonomy and bureaucratization is not new.

Because international development is a nascent profession, spanning organizations, some of the critical consequences of professionalization within it have been most thoroughly

documented in the literature on third sector organizations. Given professionalization's intellectual ancestry and its focus on institutional mechanisms, it is odd that the nonprofit literature tends to argue that professionalization is the most efficient solution to a set of technical problems (Hvenmark, 2013). Though recent analyses of professionalization and professional practices do denaturalize them somewhat (Ebrahim, 2005; Hwang & Powell, 2009), in much of the volunteering, social movement, and organizations literature, professionalization functions as a taken-for-granted process that is understood to lead to an improved technical end (DeHoog & Salamon, 2002; Frumkin, 2005). My analysis is different—in the case of the Peace Corps, I understand professionalization as a fundamentally institutional process.

I am not the first to identify this pattern, and the Peace Corps is not the first organization in which it has occurred. Khurana (2010) showed that institutionalization of managerial control (the professionalization of management) was a political process reflecting the relative power of the organized interest and social actors. Similarly, Perrow (2009) documented the rise of managerial professionalism in the textile industry, work that also helps disprove the efficiency hypothesis. The idea here is that struggles for economic, social, and/or political power, rather than simply greater efficiency, spur professionalization (Khurana, 2010, p. 31).

Though the Peace Corps is state-led, patterns that scholars identify in other nonprofit and development organizations as consequences of professionalization are nonetheless relevant here. Chief among them is a persistent tension between substance and managerialism (Hwang & Powell, 2009). This tension occurs in organizations with a social mandate that is inherently difficult to measure, and that must nonetheless abide by a host of transparency structures (cf. Ebrahim 2003, 2005) that may be somewhat ill-suited to them. For instance, in studies of grant and contract relationships—relationships that are as common, if not more common in state agencies as in nonprofits—Heideman (2013) finds that the grant funding structure routinely creates a number of pathologies in grantee organizations, including novelty-seeking, project mismatch, and claiming success. She argues that these problems (always seeking "new"

interventions for the sake of newness, applying structures to projects that are ill-suited to them, counting outcomes as successful in order to satisfy funders) are consequence of the professionalized funding structure itself. Professionalization within international development is seen as necessary to garner the necessary political support; as Mosse puts it "the more technical (or managerial) the policy model is, the more it can mobilize political support, but the less that is actually managed; and the less that is managed, the more necessary is a managerial (or technical) model in order to retain support and legitimacy" (Mosse, 2011, p. 7).

Related, the questions of accountability that are inherent in state funding for social programs have fostered whole industries devoted to monitoring, compliance, and program evaluation (Boström & Garsten, 2008; Ostrander, 2007). Ostensibly transparent meritocratic structures, clear programmatic goals and designations, progress indicators, evaluative terms, and a philanthropic infrastructure are understood as providing common standards against which to measure organizational behavior (Ebrahim, 2003, 2005). While accountability is certainly not intrinsically bad, it signals a loss of political control within an organization. Such a loss of control has social consequences, and consequences for the organizational participants both in terms of their understandings of their work, and their long-term opinions and goals.

The point here is simply that professionalization of social change work—particularly in complex, co-evolving fields where measuring outcomes is not straightforward, and especially where work is dependent on a system of grant funding or other conditional allocations—regularly generates a set of social consequences, including tensions around measurability and accountability, and following those, managerialism. The Peace Corps, though it is a state organization, deals in social change work and is subject to some of the same dynamics that the third sector is.

Taken together, my macro-level argument will go something like this: because of the particular nature of the US' weak state, the Peace Corps encountered resistance to the idea that it, as an agency, could provide value to the American public. It countered this threat by

professionalizing its work, a process that brings with it both the consequences of extensive formal organization in general, and of professionalization in particular.

Meso-Level: Adaptation, Institutionalism, and Performativity

At the meso level of analysis, I seek to explain how professionalization, adopted in order to manage macro-level political dynamics in US culture and politics, become institutionalized and taken-for-granted within the Peace Corps. I ground this portion of my inquiry in organizational sociology.

As Selznick (1966) argued so forcefully many years ago, for organizations in the pursuit of unity and survival, the special needs of one subunit are frequently extended to the organization as a whole, producing many unintended consequences. In other words, a solution developed to solve a problem in one arm of an organization may get applied to the whole of that organization, causing side effects. In the case of the Peace Corps, its survival tactics (primarily in terms of justifying itself and its expenditures to a skeptical American public) have produced practices that appear throughout the organizational structure. In order to survive, the Peace Corps has made various deals and compromises with its surroundings—adopting the identity of an international development organization rather than, for instance, an international exchange or volunteer organization. This identity has required high degrees of professional practice, which have come to be institutionalized and (sometimes) valued beyond the organizational ends themselves.

Selznick's work—within the "old" institutionalist tradition—sees organizations as operating in an environment consisting of other institutions, in a climate of what might be called institutional peer pressure. In such an environment the main goal of organizations is to survive, but to do so they not only need to remain financially solvent, but also establish legitimacy within that world. This "old" institutionalism held that institutions influence individuals to act in one of two ways: either to maximize benefits, or to act out of duty or an awareness of what one is "supposed" to do. An important contribution of "new" institutionalism, which emerged in force in

the 1980s (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) was to note the role of cognitive influence instead of acting under rules or based on obligation, individuals act because of *conceptions*; routines are followed because they are "taken for granted as 'the way we do these things'" (Scott, 2001). The cognitive element of new institutionalism suggests that individuals make certain choices not because they fear punishment, but because they can conceive of no alternative; institutions suggest what to do or think in given circumstances (Alford & Friedland, 1985; Dequech, 2009).

Institutionalization of any practice at the organizational level happens in conversation with changes at the environmental level, reflecting what are called "institutional logics" (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The idea here is that broader belief systems shape both organizations' and individuals' behavior in the field—this strain of analysis originally tended to focus more on organizational conformity that on conflict and variation (cf. Kraatz and Zajac 2001), but more recent work has probed ways in which overlapping or conflicting institutional logics can lead to innovation or change (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Jay, 2013). Institutional logics (Alford & Friedland, 1985; Fligstein, 1987) illustrate how socially constructed belief systems shape people's cognition and behavior in a given environment. Battilana and Dorado (2010:1421) define them as "taken-for-granted social prescriptions that represent shared understandings of what constitutes legitimate goals and how they may be pursued". These logics are important drivers of organizational behavior, defining the "desirable", setting up norms and values, and mediating meaning. Multiple institutional logics can and often do exist simultaneously in organizational fields and social worlds (cf. Ewick and Silbey 1998); these different institutional logics can help explain variation in organizational practices and outcomes (Battilana & Dorado, 2010, p. 1420; Tracey, Phillips, & Jarvis, 2011).

The various types of legitimacy that organizations attain by behaving like other organizations and in keeping with a field-wide institutional logic are important for their survival. Institutional literature has spent a great deal of time documenting how certain organizational

behaviors can increase an organization's survival prospects in the context of a dominant institutional logic (Jepperson & Meyer, 1991)—how organizations can give the impression that they are adhering to a system of values and how such an impression helps their survival prospects. The basic argument is that organizational actors conform to centralized "rational" myth and adopt practices to make themselves look consistent and rational, while their practices may differ from those myths. As a consequence, organizations will often *decouple* their structure from their work, activities, or production when the demands of the institutional environment conflict with the tasks at hand (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008).

But, as some scholars rightly point out, neo-institutional accounts of organizational behavior "bypass[s] the central issue of the social construction of rationalization", which it tends to treat as a question of diffusion (Hasselbladh & Kallinikos, 2000, p. 700). In other words, a critic might say, a story about isomorphism is all well and good, but neoinstitutionalism does not have an account of how rationalization came to be valued so highly in the first place. I attempt to answer this question, in part, in my description of how professionalization emerged within international development. I contend that it was developed, codified, and stabilized as a durable social artifact; I document how this came about in Chapter 4. I do so by attending to the specific institutions and discourses that define reality, sustained by subtle and yet important techniques of power (Foucault, 1980).

Rationalization is an important process unto itself, and is at the root of a distinction I shall make between two types of professionalization. In 1968, an organizational scholar named Montagna (1968) documented a case in which accountants attempted to deal with the limitations on their professional judgment. He found that organizational tendencies towards rigidity and over-conformity were checked by personal autonomy—that is, professionalization permitted CPAs to act with autonomy in their work, which kept the routinizing tendencies of their company at bay. However, these professionals also faced a set of pressures and rules *external* to the organization, in the form of accountability and legal requirements, that pressured them to become

more rationalized and limited their professional judgment, and in turn drove rationalization within the organization. As a consequence, these CPAs expanded their scope of work, seeking new territory to professionalize where they would not be so restricted by the advancing wave of rationalization. In other words, he develops a theory of why new occupations continue to be professionalized, as professionals attempt to regain their autonomy.

And any new practices within an organization, whether it is professionalization or decoupling, can have broad-reaching consequences, as Selznick showed. For his example of the TVA, and for mine of the Peace Corps, organizations trying to survive in a competitive environment will extend special needs of one subunit to the whole organization, with unanticipated side effects.

Such unanticipated side effects are the thrust of my findings in this book. I interrogate the institutional logic of professionalization, and contribute to the literature by distinguishing between professionalization as an *ethos*, and professionalization a managerialistic style. In the literature, referring to a worker as a "professional" occasionally refers to someone with a sense of an occupational calling (Markow & Klenke, 2005); the term is also often used to refer to the rigor of the occupational technique (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Wilensky, 1964). Organizational studies, as well as sociology, have typically behaved as though those dimensions are the same thing. However, and especially in a domain of technical uncertainty, the institutional literature would suggest that what workers *really* master is not technique, but rather display or ceremonial conformity. Display—what I call *procedural* professionalization—is effectively the opposite of the internal commitment, what I refer to as *ethical* professionalization.

This distinction is the crux of some of the disconnect I document. In most prior work on institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008), a professional logic is treated as centering on collegiality and shared normative commitment to a calling, and the "ethical" component of the logic is assumed to be driving organizational behavior. The theoretical puzzle that I undertake here is to consider how "ethical" professionalization can be transformed into proceduralism.

Proceduralism plays a tremendous role in much professional practice, but its role (and its emergence) has been under-theorized.

Specifically, and at the organizational level of analysis in this book, my findings differ from Selznick's considerably; they could almost be understood as standing him on his head. Whereas Selznick—and indeed, much of the old institutionalist tradition (cf. Meyer & Rowan, 1977)—documents processes wherein organizational practices become infused with value *beyond* the requirements of the specific tasks at hand, my findings are nearly the reverse. I find that decoupling actually *strips* organizational processes of their political or ethical value in order to pursue the requirements of the task at hand. In other words, in the case of the Peace Corps, the actual work of the organization becomes decoupled from a normative commitment (the emotional and values-based commitment that people bring to their work), and coupled with a logic of professionalization. Professionalization functions more as display and ceremony than it does as a driving ethic of international development. Or, in Montagna's framework, we might say that procedural professionalization attempts to paint a picture of like professional autonomy while in fact limiting the scope of that professional judgment. The process trades ethical professionalization for procedural professionalization. It is consequential in part because it reduces the plausibility of the logic of professionalization.

It is relevant here that the Peace Corps is a government organization—first, because of its compromised legitimacy (by virtue of being what it is), and second, because other scholars have found that public sector organizations are more susceptible to institutional isomorphism than either private profitmaking or private nonprofit organizations are (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). That is, the particular nature of a state organization has played a dramatic role in fostering some of the processes that I identify in this book.

The strength of the institutional argument for professionalization is visible particularly as it might relate to critiques from either agency theorists, or cultural theorists of organizations. Agency theorists would, of course, argue that professionalization is the most efficient way to

manage the goals, transaction costs, and environmental demands of the Peace Corps—that by adopting a highly professionalized structure (and moreover, one that is shared throughout the rest of the federal government), the organization can most effectively do its work. Similarly, cultural theorists might suggest that a core set of values (a strong organizational culture) is responsible for the movement towards professionalization in the organization generally, or that a weak organizational culture is responsible for the pervasive disillusionment of volunteers.

To these critiques I would offer two rebuttals. An agency theory approach cannot account for the rise of professionalization in the Peace Corps, specifically because the organization's goals are unclear, not only externally, but internally as well. Here I not only refer to the fact that the organization has a three-pronged mission, but to its deeper political struggle, and the persistent lack of clarity over whether it is "really" a development organization, "really" a foreign policy organization, or something else altogether. While some theorists working in the agency theory traditions (Zajac & Westphal, 2004) do deal generously with institutional forces, the tradition as a whole lacks a well-rounded concept of legitimacy that permits us to see logic in an otherwise "illogical" social process. Certainly trying to professionalize an young, unruly, unskilled cadre of young volunteers might seem "illogical".

Scholars of organizational culture, on the other hand, have much in common with institutional theorists, including a concern for norms and values. Particularly, work on identity examining that which is central, enduring, and distinctive about an organization's character (Albert & Whetten, 1985) would seem to parallel institutionalism's preoccupation with belief systems. However one value of an institutional analysis, relative to a cultural one, is that it also permits us to understand how organizational behavior is patterned by broader social discourses, and macro-level logics that stretch across organizational fields. The Peace Corps' preoccupation with professionalization did not emerge in a vacuum, nor was it a cultural enigma that developed in a unique and unpredictable way. Professionalization as a rational myth (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977) resonates with prominent social tropes and taken-for-granted ways of understanding

organizational life. Most importantly however, institutionalism's concern for legitimacy as a driving animator of behavior shows us patterns in how culture is developed across time and space.

Micro-Level: Social Movement Theory and Cultural Work

The final instantiation of my research question is a micro-level one: how does institutional cynicism articulate in the lives of the Peace Corps volunteers? What are its consequences? My micro-level contribution to theory is to make the link between the institutional logic of professionalization, volunteers' emotions and identities, and institutional cynicism. I do so by using a social movement lens to analyze Peace Corps' organizational life.

Though there is some excellent civil society and political sociology that provides clues about an organization's potential role in depoliticizing its individual participants or reshaping their political convictions (cf. Eliasoph 1998, 2009; McQuarrie 2013), there is little work that makes an explicitly organizational analysis of this. The story I will be telling is one of professionalization within an organization. Most of the literature in this vein focuses on either the normative aspects of professionalization (how can we make organizations more professional?) or uses it to explain discrete organizational outcomes (such as organizational survival—see Minkoff, (1999)).

These, I believe, are somewhat misdirected approaches when asking about the social or political consequences of professionalization. My work and others' has found that the vast majority of volunteers do what they do for idealistic commitments or reasons of altruism (Georgeou, 2012), rather than in response to monetary or symbolic incentives. However, the standard organizational approaches typically involved in studying volunteer settings fail to recognize the intrinsic and/or ideological context in which volunteer behavior is embedded (Hager & Brudney, 2004; Smith, 1994; Speckbacher, 2012). In other words, these analyses do not typically account for the emotions that volunteers bring to their work, or for how emotions might

shape their experiences. Nonprofit organizations increasingly apply management techniques and practices that were originally developed for the business sector (such as strategic planning, budgeting, market analysis, incentive schemes, and analysis of performance) (Speckbacher, 2012), and scholars will frequently analyze volunteer experiences in relation to these techniques and practices. While such research is not without value, volunteers' social commitment fundamentally differentiates them from most workers in private organizations. Their emotions matter greatly.

Specifically, being of service is often a deeply important part of a volunteer's identity, and volunteer work is a way that they make construct meaning in their lives. Baumeister (1992) found that work is one of the ways through which people construct meaning generally, but very few organizational leaders actively cultivate this dimension for their subordinates (Markow & Klenke, 2005). Scholars gone so far as to claim that this lack of meaning is responsible for a host of organizational ills: "What's missing at work […]" Mitroff and Denton write, "is meaning, purpose beyond one's self, wholeness, integration […] The underlying cause of organizational dysfunctions, ineffectiveness, and all manner of human stress is the lack of a spiritual foundation in the work place" (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 84). While this project does not intend to specifically engage the literature on spirituality in the workplace, the value and insights that such research has produced are important, and suggest that finding meaning (or not) in one's working life can predict satisfaction with organizations. For instance, ideas of organizational calling harken back to Weber's notions of "morally responsible" work, but in recent times have broadened to include understandings of callings as work or occupations that emerge from a sense of inner focus, direction, or spiritual clarity (Weiss, Shelley, Haughey, & Hall, 2004). Specifically, Markow and Klenke found that found that feeling a sense of personal calling was positively related to organizational commitment.

More broadly, emotions—as has been extensively documented—are necessary to social mobilizations; they are important factors in recruiting and retaining activists (Flam & King, 2007;

Jasper, 1997, 1998; Rodgers, 2010). We know from the social movement literature that emotions engage people and keep them engaged. But in an age wherein activism increasingly overlaps with professionalization and careers, there is little conversation about the role of emotions in social change work in a professional or organizational context, particularly as regards the incentive or requirement to suppress or "manage" emotions in the workplace (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cropanzano, Weiss, Suckow, & Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983).

In particular, research has found that the need to manage emotions (in distressing situations or when confronted by uncomfortable realities in the workplace) can be accompanied by burnout, withdrawal, and negative attitudes towards one's occupations. Emotions "play an important role in allowing bureaucratic employees to retain a sense of activism" (Rodgers, 2010, p. 279). The content and strain of emotionally loaded work is also typically burdensome, and requires workers or volunteers to create strategies for dealing with it. Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2008: 422) find that there can be negative consequences to giving insufficient space to emotions within social change organizations, and explicitly cautioning against "creat[ing] an environment of neutral professionalism" for people who care about their work. In organizational studies, this lack of attention to the role of emotion and emotive content—in spite of the turn towards institutionalism—has been attributed to the field's emphasis on rationality (Domagalski, 1999).

Given this, I argue that we need a new way of thinking about volunteering that combines the insights from the sociology of organizations and volunteering with a nuanced appreciation for the motives of these volunteers, and the meaning that they expect to find within their work. Though volunteer organizations increasingly use performance-based compensation to align the behavior of participants with the organization's goals (Speckbacher, 2012), perspectives that use an incentive structure approach to study volunteering seem misplaced in that they emphasize the *rewards of volunteering* over the emotional and/or collective identification components of it. In other words, the conventional wisdom on volunteering tends towards the managerial (for

instance, emphasizing small, achievable goals rather than broader political debate about social ills—cf. Eliasoph (1998)); the analytic literature on volunteering, while it is much more nuanced, still falls short of recognizing the truly intrinsic and emotional nature of volunteer commitments.

I therefore use a social movements perspective to analyze Peace Corps volunteers' experience, to try to understand why volunteers in my study become less socially committed and more institutionally cynical over the course of their service. This social movements literature has clear insights on what sustains activists, and includes important writing on collective identity (Polletta & Jasper, 2001), cultural work within social movement groups (Alvarez, Dagnino, & Escobar, 1998), how movements swell and decline (Taylor, 1989), and how they influence each other (Meyer & Whittier, 1994). Applying a social movements perspective to volunteering would suggest that knowing what sustains activists might provide insights into what sustains similar idealists or altruists (Peace Corps volunteers).

From several decades of social movement scholarship, we know that cultural processes—primarily emotions, empowerment, and collective identities, all of which can be sustained by ritual and *group* experience (Hunt & Benford, 2007; Polletta & Jasper, 2001)—play a critical role in sustaining activist identities. For instance, Jasper's (1998) insightful study demonstrates that emotions are primary in creating that sort of sustenance for activists. Emotions (such as commitment, joy, sorrow, and faith) are important in spurring individuals to action, both in classic activism and among volunteers (Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004). This is true for activists and, as my data demonstrates, for PCVs as well.

But in classic types of political activism, participants gather and work out the complications of their moral visions, and a language for describing and dealing with them, in group processes. Such practices aid in the construction of collective identity. In the social movements literature generally (cf. Downton and Wehr 1998; Goodwin et al. 2008; Jasper 1997, 1998), scholars have found that activists' commitment is sustained when people can:

- Maintain their activist identity and a strong sense of personal responsibility

- Engage in deliberation and group processes that sustain feelings of justice in activist identities
- Cultivate and sustain a collective identity or a sense of "we-ness"
- Perceived the urgency and effectiveness of action
- Were able to manage support and criticism from inside and outside the movement

In a study of peace activists, Downton and Wehr found that social commitment is sustained among activists when individuals bond to their organization and its leaders, but also importantly, to the community of other activists through friendships, colleague relationships, and social networks. Those who were able to manage burnout balanced their action with reflection, by diversifying their activities, and by developing long-term visions of change that enabled them to sustain their motivations. Similarly, working in groups has been shown to reduce the likelihood of feelings like inauthenticity (Erickson & Wharton, 1997).

And when these conditions are not met we see interesting consequences. For instance, there is a basis for understanding how feelings of powerlessness in activism and volunteering may resolve themselves into depoliticization, or a practice of "avoiding politics". The work of Nina Eliasoph particularly has shown that dedicated volunteers actually attempt to *protect* their beliefs in democracy and democratic ideals by reframing their actions as individually gratifying (rather than politically important) in order to "feel effective within a small circle of concern" (Eliasoph, 1997, p. 607). Eliasoph's fieldwork, which spans nearly a decade, finds that volunteers focus on smaller, logistical concerns of organizing in order to "reassure themselves and their fellow citizens, through their own actions, that the world makes sense because regular people really can make a difference on issues that matter to them" (614). Castells (1983) is blunter: "When people find themselves unable to control the world," he writes, "they simply shrink the world to the size of their community" (331). These feelings of powerlessness within a large political system are

summarily dealt with by what Eliasoph calls "avoiding politics"—focusing on smaller, nonpolitical, "personal" issues as a way to feel relevant and meaningful.

We might expect (or hope) that an organization—particularly one devoted to social change of some kind—would be protection against this type of disengagement. This is not always the case. There are many reasons why organizations—especially large organizations with powerful reputations—would shy away from overtly "politics", deep deliberation, or "big" questions. Those reasons have largely have to do with perceived threats to legitimacy and success (like the perception that one might lose one's funding or important partnerships), and perceived risks of disillusionment (like the perception that "the structure" is too big to change, and that organizational participants are best served focusing on small, achievable goals).

For instance, in her study of community volunteering in the United States, Eliasoph (1998) found that volunteers shared faith in the idea of civic participation as a remedy for community ills, but in practice, organizations led to curtailed political discussion. Volunteers assumed that talking politically would take energy from the jobs that these groups set for themselves, or that they would be off-putting for new members. The groups in her study did not draw connections between their everyday charitable work and public or political issues; her book demonstrated how the interaction rules in most organizational contexts de-incentivized political conversations and/or brought it "closer to home". Importantly, political conversation only broadened when groups were able to create relationships *between* groups, rather than within-groups. "What was missing," Eliasoph writes, "was respect for discussion itself, willingness to debate about troubling issues that might not be resolved immediately; willingness to risk discouragement" (1998, p. 28), in volunteer groups working to reduce drug use. Subsequent work by Eliasoph also looks at the ways that volunteers "do" politics narrowly, through emphasis on logistic and procedural, rather than political, conversation (2014).

Part of this may be, simply, that certain emotions are not "allowed" in hierarchical organizations (Hoffmann, 2016), and deep discussion and debate may generate such disallowed

feelings. In a representative study of community-based NGOs, scholars found fears that deliberation—which may lead to disagreement and/or dissent within the organization's boundaries—would jeopardize their legitimacy vis-à-vis other stakeholders. These organizations face "a profound and airtight gestalt of inwardness, planning, and professionalism" (Harwood & Creighton, 2009, p. 2), such as defining themselves in terms of their funders' agendas. Deliberation, if it yields a result that differs from established best practices, is understood to jeopardize an organization's work. The incentive is thus to bypass deliberation if there is a risk that it could yield a result that organizations perceive to be in tension with a community's best interests (Harwood & Creighton, 2009, p. 13).

This in spite of data suggesting that deliberation (or its cousin, "expressed humility") can have a positive influence on workers' satisfaction within formal organizations. Owens, Johnson, and Mitchell (2013) find that this sort of organizational introspection can foster a more objective understanding of a program's strengths and weaknesses, and that permitting people to acknowledge their limits can actually create more desirable organizational results. Nielsen, Marrone, and Slay (2010) suggested that organizational actors with "humility are actively engaged in utilizing information gathered in interactions with others, not only to make sense of, but also, when necessary, to modify the self. That is, their self-views are focused on their interdependence with others rather than their independence from others" (p. 34–35). In other words, introspection in organizations acts as a mirror through which both participants and organizations engage in reflection on their behaviors. The social movements literature has shown that this kind of introspection can sustain idealistic or socially motivated people within such organizations.

And if emotions and deliberations within organizations are tightly regulated, so are participants' behaviors—organizational contexts can dramatically reshape participants' convictions and practices. In social change organizations particularly, scholars have pointed to organizational processes that incentivize conformity and stratification, and de-incentivize

confrontation, both in the organization itself and among its participants. Michels (1915) famously argued that the mere process of formally organizing implied stratifying leaders and participants, an increased inward-lookingness and self-interest on the organization's part. Ultimately, he suggested, the characteristics of a social movement would recede so far as to no longer be meaningful. Minkoff (1999) found that at the organizational level, processes of isomorphism privilege the older and more established organizations that focus primarily on reform rather than radical change. That is, the organizations that survive tend to be centrist and heavily institutionalized. In an examination of German New Social Movement groups, Rucht also finds that informal groups are more radical than formal organizations, and that new social movements that are less formalized and centralized tend to be more radical in their protest actions than "old movements". Within the new social movements themselves, those that are less formalized and centralized tend to be more radical (Rucht, 1999). In a representative study of community-based NGOs, Harwood and Creighton found that these social organizations face "a profound and airtight gestalt of inwardness, planning, and professionalism" (2009, p.2), such as defining themselves in terms of their funders' agendas. They found, among other things, that stability (rather than, for example, community engagement) overwhelmingly defines success for organizational leaders, and that a deliberative process that engages community but may ignore best practices is understood as antithetical to the organization's goal (Harwood & Creighton, 2009, p. 13).

Together, these findings suggest that something about the organization context may act as a damper on participants' visions, creating incentives that favor procedural professionalization at the expense of contention, deliberation, or vision. Eliasoph elaborates: "If institutions do not live up to values, then "values" are not directly in operation most days of the week. What is in operation is a practical sense of *where* to talk about 'values'; of which 'values' are supposed to be relevant where; and of where 'values' are basically irrelevant" (1998, p.17). In this project, I show how this occurs, tracing its roots from legitimacy concerns, to the micro- articulations of

professionalization. That is, giving primacy to the role the organization, I refocus our analytic attention on the mechanisms discussed above as a way to explain the changing levels of social commitment among Peace Corps volunteers. And these processes, I believe, have implications for how organizations affect their participants—they speak to the heart of the way that Americans understand our capacity for changing the structures of our social lives in this historical moment.

A counterfactual that could operate as an illustration would be useful here. The US military, for instance (and importantly for our purposes, another state-run agency) taps into the same feelings of voluntarism, service, and identity that the Peace Corps does in order to recruit participants; it might even be called the same institutional logic of activism. A recruiting video from 2011 exemplifies this: as magnificent classical music plays in the background, and over images of US military members in different scenarios, superimposed text reads: "It's a key. An acceptance letter. A passport. A pair of wings. A breakthrough. A diploma. A secret handshake. And the jersey of the greatest team on earth" (US Army, 2011). The viewer is left with a sense of potential, of greatness, of respect, similar to the feelings that Peace Corps recruiting images suggest.

However, the military instills participants with a sense of shared purpose from the first day of boot camp. The sense of brotherhood and collective identity—within commands, squadrons, battalions—is intentionally cultivated and largely extremely successful, and it carries people through incredibly difficult and violent experiences. Importantly here too, the military is hierarchical: it attains this dramatic buy-in *despite the fact* that its foot soldiers have very little autonomy. The military is critiqued for many things, but what Eliasoph would term "values"—particularly in terms of collective identity, engagement, commitment, and a sense of purpose—are usually quite successfully mobilized in that instance.

This section was intended to acquaint us with thinking on both emotions and values within organizations. The social movements literature has provided a number of clear insights

about how values and emotions operate for activists, insights that I shall attempt to transpose to my analysis of international development volunteers.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

In a project like this, a variety of data sources permits a much more nuanced analysis than a study relying on a single type, because of the complicated institutional field that circumscribes the research question. Institutional theory in sociology is all about perception; I needed ways to measure both people's perceptions as well as their actual behaviors. Therefore, this mixed-method study included semi-structured interviews, field observations of Peace Corps offices in three countries, and a large online survey; I also collected documents produced by the Peace Corps itself, non-governmental organizations, and research institutions working on relevant projects either with or about the Peace Corps. These different forms of evidence, containing different information and produced for different purposes, were used to parse the different dynamics at play.

This book draws on 142 in-depth interviews with current and returned Peace Corps volunteers (RPCVs), Peace Corps staff members, and government officials. It also draws on qualitative field observations of approximately four weeks each, (including interviews and observations) of the Peace Corps offices in three countries. In interviews, I have sampled RPCVs from five cohorts (in ten-year increments from 1961-2014), in order to gain an understanding of how the role of the organization has changed, and how the motivating principles and priorities of its participants may also have shifted during different time periods.

The Brown University Institutional Review Board approved the project; I was not required to keep names or affiliations confidential, because technically respondents spoke to me as representatives of their organization. However, because of the potentially sensitive nature of some of the topics, I nonetheless stripped interview data of names, dates, locations, and other identifying characteristics, and I fictionalized field sites to further prevent respondents from being identifiable. This permitted respondents to speak freely about their experiences; I also accommodated requests for "off the record" remarks that I used as contextual information. The degree of detail, and the breadth of positive and negative opinions that I obtained in my data,

suggests that respondents did indeed speak freely. This approach permitted a much higher degree of validity than would have been obtained had I used respondents' actual names and positions.

Survey Respondent Identification

In most cases, standard sampling and estimation techniques, developed through several decades of sociological and statistical research, can provide information about groups of people. Most research requires that researchers select sample members from a sampling frame; however, there are some populations for which these techniques cannot be applied, because no such sampling frame exists. This is often because of the sensitive nature of behaviors within a group (for example, drug users) or simply because members of the target population are difficult to distinguish from members of the general population (like folk singers). These special populations are called "hidden populations" (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004, p. 195). Because Peace Corps volunteers are government employees, their information is confidential and no sampling frame exists. Similarly, the National Peace Corps association, which houses the second-largest but still incomplete repository of contact information for RPCVs, refused to share that data with me, citing confidentiality concerns. Therefore, for purposes of this project, Peace Corps volunteers were understood as a hidden population[3].

To address this, I designed a sampling approach using a targeted snowball sample in a web-based survey distributed via interest groups and listservs. I used a carefully seeded snowball sample (Atkinson & Flint, 2001) in order to gain access to my respondents. Snowball sampling, as a procedure, assumes that those best able to access members of a hidden population are the

[3] I initially attempted to manage this challenge using a process called Respondent-Driven Sampling (or RDS), originally pioneered by Heckathorn and colleagues (Heckathorn, 1997; Heckathorn, Semaan, Broadhead, & Hughes, 2002; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). RDS relies on a system of incentives and referrals in order to produce a sampling frame that is wholly independent of the sample's seeds. RDS has, however, typically been used among vulnerable populations, and monetary incentives have been employed to encourage referrals. Among PCVs however—most of whom were middle class—I found that there was no incentive that would induce PCVs to refer each other via the relatively complicated process that RDS requires.

peers of that population. I therefore turned to the National Peace Corps Association to provide seeds for this sample.

The Peace Corps refers all of its outgoing volunteers to the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), an independent nonprofit dedicated to maintaining connections and communication among those volunteers. The NPCA maintains online groups of RPCVs, organized both by country of service, and by current state of residence (in other words, there is a group for RPCVs of Ghana, and a group of RPCVs of Pennsylvania). In order to seed as broadly as I could, I distributed the call for participation to every active country-of-service RPCV group, as well as every active state-of-residence RPCV group[4]. I distributed these calls initially via the online listservs of each RPCV group, and via the Facebook pages of each of these groups as well. Because I did not have the exact numbers of group participants—and the Peace Corps' data on this is not centralized, or even entirely available—much less the addresses of participants, I had no way of calculating response rates.

In order to get the broadest response rate possible, I mapped theoretically where this research was to be conducted (Watters & Biernacki, 1989), meaning that I considered the best ways to identify and categorize where I was likely to find potential respondents (RPCVs). I mapped my universe of responses into three categories, including: country of service (such as RPCVs of Ghana), geographical location at home in the US (such as RPCVs of Georgia), and interest/identity group (such as RPCVs of color, RPCVs at the State Department, RPCVs who are LGBTQ, etc.). Within each category I sought out as many virtual sources as possible, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and NPCA-managed listserves (Choe et al., 2009; Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). The NPCA manages formal RPCV groups for every country of service and most states; I emphasized contact with these groups, as well as with social networking sites (primarily Facebook and LinkedIn groups). I then sent an invitation to the owners or managers of these

[4] A complete list of the groups contacted can be found in Appendix A.

groups—between 1 and 5 people per group in most cases—describing the project briefly, and asking them to disseminate the survey among their groups and to take it themselves. Emails only bounced from six of the 76 countries of service, and from four of the fifty-one US-state groups. A complete list of groups contacted is included in the appendix.

Theoretically, one of the strongest recommendations for my approach emerges from the distinction between descending and ascending sampling strategies (van Meter, 1990). Traditional descending strategies (including random samples) often encounter problems with lack of responses from particular groups (such as RPCVs of color). Ascending methodologies, such as snowball techniques that are applied both in person (in my case, during interviews), and online, can "work upward", locating those who are needed to fill out understandings in our knowledge, and can enable more comprehensive data on a specific issue or question (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Further, I was able to partially address the issue of selection bias by the replication and triangulation of results (via the qualitative, observational, and documentary components of my analysis) to strengthen my findings (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

This survey had an N of 2,833, and a gender, race, income, and age distribution that is very similar to Peace Corps' numbers, suggesting that my sample is, demographically at least, representative of the general population of RPCVs.

Characteristic	**My Data (2013-2014)**	**Official Peace Corps Numbers (2011)***
% Female	63	66
% Male	37	34
% volunteers with at least a 4-year college degree	98	98
% volunteers of a minority background	13	17

*(Bridgeland et al., 2011).

Because of the snowball sampling, my survey did yield slightly more clustered representations of countries of service[5].

[5] See appendix B

Interview Respondent Identification

Respondents for the interviews were identified both through seeds and through the survey. I initially sought interviewees through the same listservs and resources that I used to distribute the survey, and asked for those seeds' recommendations on further people to interview. This approach yielded approximately 50 interviews; I therefore included a note at the end of the survey itself that invited interested participants to sit for interviews. This approach yielded approximately 50 more. The respondents whom I interviewed before finalizing the survey received it later (in other words, all interviewees also took the survey).

Interview Questions

The interview questions[6] for volunteers were straightforward and were tested extensively in preliminary fieldwork. The logic of the interview protocol was to identify four general themes: motivations, understanding of work (including professional development), feelings about the organization, and political orientations, including feelings about international development and aid. Therefore, I asked returned Peace Corps volunteers why and how they came to apply for the Peace Corps, about their job placements, and about the work they did, the particular challenges of their placements, and what they perceived to be both difficult and valuable about their experiences. I asked them to describe their feelings about the project of development in general, and to explain if and how their political views changed in any way (a full list of questions can be found in Appendix B). These open-ended questions produced consistencies in the perceptions of Peace Corps volunteers themselves. The goal was to find out how this particular institution and opportunity affected, directed, or politicized volunteers, and the ways in which it has done so. In all qualitative interviews, I did not take respondents' statements as evidence of truth necessarily,

[6] For a list of interview questions, see Appendix C.

but rather was looking at the language they used to describe different dynamics may have belied their orientations.

The semi-structured interview format had two principal benefits. First, the format ensured that I asked all respondents the same questions, which permitted comparison of data across both time and space. For instance, I heard from all respondents what motivated them to join the Peace Corps or find a paid position within the agency. I heard from all respondents how their views on international development evolved (or didn't). However, open-ended questions have the benefit of permitting respondents to free-associate to a degree, and to follow their recollections and thoughts as they emerge, and they permit me to somewhat account for potential recall problems by asking follow-up questions. I was thus able to identify new issues (about which I hadn't initially asked), and to permit the respondents, to some extent, to focus on the issues that *they* deemed relevant. This approach also permitted me to integrate questions that emerged organically into my subsequent interview schedule. When necessary, I conducted brief follow-up interviews or conversations, either by phone or email, with respondents.

As a professional with comparable educational background to most RPCVs, and experience living and working abroad myself, interview respondents seemed to view me as "one of their own", and talked freely, to a degree that I initially found surprising. The benefit of this rapport was the rich data I was able to obtain, being perceived as a sympathetic listener.

Limitations to Survey and Interview Data, and Possible Sources of Bias

Apart from being a non-probability sample, the most likely form of bias that my data encounters is simply that those who responded to the survey and the request for interviews were slightly more likely to have had good experiences with Peace Corps and thus to remain connected to the various affinity groups. RPCVs are in general a highly educated population; it is thus unlikely that large numbers of them are non-internet users, though the sample may also be somewhat biased in favor of younger respondents who remain more connected to modern

organizing mechanisms such as listservs and Facebook groups. Because this was a snowball sample, there may also be a source of bias as regards homophily with my seeds. More recent volunteers are more likely to be in close contact with their cohort than volunteers who served a long time ago, and the close relationships of these young RPCVs may also be reflected in the data. The survey took less than 20 minutes to complete, and therefore free time may have had a small effect on who took the survey; however, the interviews required between 1-3 hours, and therefore free time may have affected those who agreed to sit for interviews.

Interview data, like any other type, has limitations. My transcripts were not suitable for statistical significance testing for two reasons: interviews were conducted in multiple languages, and the language itself used to describe international development projects (as well as the actual programs of the Peace Corps) have changed dramatically in fifty years. For instance, the acronym FITU (which stands for "Focus In/Train Up") has been in existence for only a handful of years. Also because of these changes, it is difficult to compare the evolution of specific Peace Corps programs over time (for instance, a program entitled "small business development" only emerged out of a recent restructuring).

Unlike survey responses, interview responses permit for "in between" answers that are not always explicitly comparable to the answers given by other respondents. Interviews favor depth over breadth, and are not typically considered generalizable, even when the sample is random.

Qualitative Field Observations

I collected data via interviews with staff from the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, DC, and on-site interviews with staff in the Peace Corps country offices in three countries that I shall call Europea, Caribbenea, and Africanea.

My theoretical approach suggests that, in order to look at the ways that different dynamics of professionalization and socialization emerge in different contexts, country selection should take place by selecting along the lines of prevalent institutional logics, rather than by

geography. The presence or absence of such a logic, in harmony or conflict with other logics, can powerfully mediate an individual's experience of an organization, and institutional logics operate as the backdrop to most organizational dynamics. I have therefore selected one country whose Peace Corps program establishment was motivated primarily by a logic of geopolitics, a second whose program was motivated primarily by a logic of development, and a third site that may be said to be conflicted—containing within it both logics of development and logics of geopolitics in roughly equal proportions. The idea was to see if Peace Corps volunteers' experiences of the organization varied according to the type of institutional logic at play.

The establishment of Peace Corps Europea occurred shortly after the dissolution of the USSR, and is considered under this formulation to be a site primarily motivated by a logic of geopolitics. Europea is a country of "medium human development" according to the World Development Index, well above the levels of low human development elsewhere that might suggest more pressing needs for development interventions. This further suggests that the Peace Corps' continued political presence in the country is a product more of geopolitics than of a critical need for development work. The Peace Corps Europea is headquartered in the capitol city, and includes one US Country Director, and seven local program managers and language trainers.

Caribbenea's close relationship with the United States, and the status of its current trade and political relationships with it, coupled with its relatively small landmass and correspondingly small military force, suggest that the country is considered politically pliant by the US government, and does not represent a meaningful geopolitical threat. On average, adults receive approximately 7 years of schooling in Caribbenea, suggesting that, though the country's economy is growing, Caribbenea still requires technical assistance. Peace Corps Caribbenea, established in 1962, is therefore considered in this study to be a site animated primarily by a logic of development. The Peace Corps office is located in the capitol city, and includes a fairly typical staff breakdown of a US Country Director, and two US program managers, 6 support and training staff, as well as office maintenance and healthcare staff. Interestingly in this case however, a

number of Americans who had become naturalized Caribbenea citizens or permanent residents (who had previously served in the Peace Corps and married local partners) were in program positions as "local hires", permitting them to serve for longer than the standard five years that Peace Corps Washington imposes on its US staff working abroad.

The 2011 Human Development Report classifies Africanea as a country of "medium human development", though it ranks lower than Europea. It is an emerging market and its GNI per capita was approximately $5,000 in 2011. There are powerful arguments to be made for Africanea as a site of assistance appropriate to Peace Corps programming, given its socioeconomic status and its uneven in-country development. Africanea is one of the US' strongest relationships in the Middle East/North African region, and as a consequence of these two things, represents a site of geopolitical interest. I thus designate Africanea as a site in which two institutional logics operate in roughly equal proportion. The Peace Corps office is similarly located in the capitol city. Like Caribbenea, it includes a US Country Director and two other US Program Directors, and 7 local support staff, who both run programs and conduct language training. I also had the opportunity to speak to two international Peace Corps officials, who were regional trainers and happened to be in-country at the time of my visit.

In each site I conducted approximately 4 weeks of qualitative field observations, adhering (to the extent possible, given the short timeframe) to the norms of ethnography. After obtaining permission to visit the office, I went every day for at least part of the day. I attended as many staff meetings as I was permitted to, and observed both the meetings and the office environment in general. I also conducted formal interviews with all the office staff in all three country offices.

Additionally, I was able to observe a different Peace Corps program in each country. In Caribbenea, I traveled a short distance outside the capital to observe at a remedial language training (targeting the group of volunteers that had been in country for ten months and who were struggling with language acquisition). In Europea, I was permitted to attend a mid-service training that took the most committed volunteers for a 5-day period of language refreshers

(widely considered a treat among current PCVs, for its retreat-like feel). In Africanea, I traveled to a summer camp held by volunteers in the southern part of the country, to observe five days of activities at a boy's camp.

I took notes throughout the day at all fieldsites, and in the evening transferred them to electronic format. In all places, because I was a relatively young white woman and appeared to "blend in" with the volunteers and the American office staff, people treated me with a modest amount of respectful curiosity (that is, I did not garner much attention; indeed some people seemed only to notice me when I was introduced). Both staff and volunteers in the field, however, were almost uniformly eager to talk when they understood my project and why I was there; this is perhaps responsible for the nearly 100% staff response rate.

Limitations to Qualitative Field Observations

The comparatively short nature of each of my field site visits prevents them from forming a multi-site ethnography. As relatively short-term visits, these observations provided me with important context for the study, and critical organizational observations regarding the functioning of the Peace Corps itself.

Field observations have limitations, like other types of data; specifically, the shortness of these visits prohibited the type of in-depth ethnographic work that would have been desirable had time and resources permitted. Observation is not, of course, a probability or a representative undertaking, though it does provide meaningful grounding and ethnographic insights that can triangulate other types of data.

Document Analysis

Finally, I conducted document analysis of Peace Corps organizational documents (including training materials, letters and correspondence, policy manuals, and the like), as well as historical documents pertaining to the organization's founding (including official correspondence,

legislation, and the like). Making use of digital archives, and the archives at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library & Museum in Boston, MA, I was able to understand some of the historical context and framing that the organization and its interlocutors made use of. In a study of a complex, multi-institutional field, organizational documents provide insight into how the organization itself is framing its behavior—in other words, such documents permit me to understand the "Peace Corps' version of events".

Qualitative Data Collection, Coding and Analysis

Data collection was undertaken by myself, primarily but not exclusively in English. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. I transcribed approximately one-fifth of the interviews, and professional transcription services transcribed the remainder. I have included only English translations of conversations that occurred in other languages.

My analysis has attempted to both identify the underlying dynamics of the Peace Corps, and to understand how those dynamics act on the individual RPVC experience. In a qualitative study, some parts of the data analysis are carried out in the field, simultaneously with data collection (for instance, I wrote regular analytic memos in the field that helped me both contextualize what I was seeing, and add things to the interview schedule, if necessary). An ongoing constant analysis of data allowed me to adjust my interview questions as appropriate and gather new data as needed, to explore emerging puzzles or new hypotheses in an iterative (Small, 2009) approach to interviewing.

Coding qualitative data, as others have found (Weston et al., 2001) is an integral part of analysis itself. This project was analyzed using grounded coding, which differs primarily from other qualitative research in its emphasis on theory development that occurs alongside data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 274). For instance, as insights around the critical question of professionalization emerged within interviews, I adjusted my questions to subsequent respondents more fully probe this issue, asking about professionalization dynamics, office

culture, and feelings around development, creating both more information about, and a conceptual code to describe, those relationships. I thereby both *generated* the theory from the dataset, and *elaborated* it in relation to the data itself (Vaughan, 1992).

An initial reading of the data permitted me to identify broad themes; both across countries and decades of service, and dynamics that were nearly universal to all Peace Corps volunteers. Though these themes are quite general, they did permit me to home in on what later proved to be sociologically more important. For instance, volunteers universally talked about the types of dramatic personal transformations they had undergone as volunteers, and their increased feelings of self-confidence. Also, Peace Corps volunteers almost universally expressed some sort of disappointment with the project of international development upon completion of their service. This broad code of "disappointment" eventually yielded more precise sub-codes.

Secondary readings of the data then helped me refine those broad themes into more precise codes and categories. In other words, the first analysis identified professionalization and altruism as a relevant dynamics, and subsequent re-readings, in conversation with the institutional and social movements literature, helped me construct a suitable analytic framework that drew from and remained tightly linked to case study data (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Though my quantitative data set represents the best available information on the hidden population of RPCVs, its potential issues with representativeness suggest that its best use is to treat it similarly to qualitative data—by using it to flesh out the full range of possible outcomes within a population. In that sense, and because of the data limitations, I did not do regression analysis, but rather used simple descriptive statistics to describe the range of experiences within the respondent pool.

These four data sources were intended to permit triangulation, both by supplementing and contextualizing findings, and by compensating for each other's limitations. Qualitative interviews

provide an exceedingly rich dataset, which is appropriate for theory-building and can suggest mechanism in a way that quantitative data sometimes cannot. Quantitative data, in turn, can exhibit patterns much more clearly. It allows one to explore relationships among variables with more formality, and also to control for certain characteristics. Qualitative field observation permits me, as a researcher, to look at what is happening on the ground, and see how it compares to participants' accounts of it. Field observations offer many of the benefits of ethnographies in the sense that they permit me to attend to interpersonal dynamics that interview respondents do not think to comment on; they also puts me up close to organizational dynamics. Finally, document analysis permits me to look closely at the formal position of the Peace Corps itself—reading its archives helps me understand how the organization framed its actions, and what stories it has told about itself.

CHAPTER 4: Professionalization and International Development

It is a sweltering hot afternoon in Caribbeanea and I am at the Peace Corps offices in the capital city. It has rained, and is fiercely humid. I have left my passport with the guard at the gate, a bored-looking young man who barely glances in my direction and whose gun leans casually against the wall of his cabin. The office is a large old building with a spacious patio and lush gardens; the inside is similarly elegant and graceful, tiled prettily. Two floor fans drone in the central part of the upstairs office space, barely moving the heavy air. In the conference room there is an air conditioner, which is controlled by a grimy-looking white remote.

Sitting around the table are about twelve people, all in casual office attire, all looking relieved to be somewhere cool. The staff composition in this country is unique, as the agency employs several Americans as "local hires"; there are thus five Americans on the country staff, two more than is typically the case. This has occurred because two former volunteers stayed in-country after their own Peace Corps service, married, and are now residents of Caribbeanea. They thus technically qualify as "local" staff, though the intention of those staffing quotas was presumably to prevent the office from being run overmuch by American expatriates. Of those American staff, four are women and one is a man. They are all white.

The Peace Corps staff is debating how they ought to respond to a group of volunteers that is finding fault with the organization's policy on living allowances. Apparently the prices of some things (food and the like) have gone up, and volunteers have been asking for a corresponding increase to their stipends. The general feeling in the room is that no such increase will be forthcoming—staff seems to be of the opinion that the request is unreasonable, laughable even, advanced by young people who do not understand what their experience is supposed to be about. This feeling is reflected in staff members' conversation about how the "point" of being in the Peace Corps is to live on a very tight budget. In any case, stipend increases would be undertaken on a regional basis, and not across the board.

One program manager reflects that, "at their age" (referring to the volunteers), she as well took some pleasure in challenging authority, and says that she's supportive of the volunteers voicing their opinions. The remark seems strangely condescending, particularly in the context of what the Country Director will say to me later, that staff should view younger volunteers as coworkers that they mentor, rather than students who they instruct.

There are three PCVs present at the meeting. The volunteers are quiet during the conversation about living allowance increases. Shortly thereafter, a shout comes up from the guard on the ground floor that the bread vendor has arrived. The staff buys bread from him, and the volunteers protest that they do not have money with which to do so. The socialization in the room is very professional—and the quality and character of the office banter suggests gives no indication that we are not in the United States—but it is contoured by a shortage of funds that one would not expect to see in a typical US office environment.

* * *

It is January in Europea, a bitter cold winter day, when I approach the Peace Corps offices. To get here, I have had to go through a scabby alleyway off a reasonably sized thoroughfare that runs through a well-to-do part of the city. A handful of women, all in furs (who I later will learn are Peace Corps staff), are outside smoking as I approach. I leave my documents at the checkpoint by the door, go through the metal detector in the austere looking building, and wait in the hallway until someone comes down to collect me.

When she appears—a middle-aged woman, smartly dressed—the guard says something in the local language that I do not understand, and my escort laughs. It is later translated for me as "the goods have arrived". There is obviously nuance here that resonates with two people in a post-Soviet country, and for a moment I feel much less like an adult researcher with a prestigious fellowship, and much more like a small child being teased. I am led up the stairs and through the hallway; the building is old, but clean and modernized. The office itself has tall ceilings and is painted in light, cheerful colors.

The office comprises four floors, and is well maintained. It looks much more like a well-to-do US nonprofit and much less like the type of far-flung outpost that Peace Corps advertises to potential volunteers. People's desks are littered with recognition awards and pictures of their family, but things look tidy, almost austere. The environment is clearly less socially liberal—whereas Peace Corps Caribbeanea's office was full of posters of rainbows, edicts of acceptance of the LGBTQ community, and proclamations of tolerance, here when I see a rainbow sticker that says "safe space", it stands out. The dress code in this office is more formal than it was in Caribbeanea, and people's clothes are clearly more expensive. The conference room has books on teaching, volumes of icebreakers and group games, and an array of technically oriented training manuals, all in English. There's a small round table with three chairs, a window with a plant in it, and the walls are painted pale yellow.

Several days later, when I attend a grants programming meeting for volunteers in the same building, I am struck again by the professional feeling with which the office operates. The meeting consists of nine women and two men. Everyone—including the volunteers—has laptops before them, and the staff themselves remark on that, commenting on how things have changed. The female volunteers wear dressy long sweaters, leggings, and high boots, like those I have seen on the street here in the capital, and elsewhere in the country. Their attire is not extravagant, but nor does it read as modest.

The banter as I enter the room is about the content of the grants and the grant proposals. One PCV had recently received a telephone call from a higher-up at USAID, who was checking in on her organization to make sure it was legitimate. The conversations are all occurring in English—local staff is as well speaking English to the volunteers.

* * *

In this chapter, I trace the emergence of international development as a profession, showing how professionalization became a taken-for-granted mental structure and value within the broad schema of rationalization. I argue that the Peace Corps is not the *result* of the

development field, but rather that actively constitutes the development field as the field, both because of its history and because of how it disseminates knowledge through the careers of its former volunteers. The organization emerged in tandem with the profession of international development and cannot be distinguished from it; 50% of USAID staff is veterans of the Peace Corps, and further, the transnational class of experts that comprises professional aid workers is unprecedentedly centralized (Woods, 2006, pp. 66–68).

It is this linkage of Peace Corps to the profession of development that helps explain how and why professionalization and institutional cynicism is not unique to the agency, but rather a part of the profession of development generally (Pritchett et al., 2013). Thus, this chapter will do three things. It will: a) analyze the history of state-led development as a field; b) it will analyze the history of the Peace Corps, and 3) use these joint histories to suggest that there are exogenous forces acting on the structure of the Peace Corps that create the dynamic of professionalization and institutional cynicism that are the outcomes of interest in this study.

There have historically been conflicting imperatives within development between foreign policy, economic, and social/humanitarian orientations in the United States—beginning with the US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 that set a precedent for combining conceptually dissimilar missions in rather elegant language. For both USAID and the Peace Corps the 1960s (and the emergence of both organizations in 1961) represented post-Marshall plan momentum and Cold War fears, awkwardly coupled with the social animation and positivity that the Great Society implied domestically. During this period, and for the first time in the United States, "development" was conceived as something independent from military intervention, or from foreign aid specifically. A conceptual emphasis on humanitarianism emerged as well in the 1970s, further clarifying the division between military and non-military aid and attempting to restore legitimacy to the field through a concept that was intended to be "above" or "beyond" politics. During the 1980s, development shifted to reflect more deeply entrenched neoliberal ideologies, economists found a voice as the aid professionals, and that dynamic persisted into the

1990s. During the 2000s, rights-based democracy and peace concerns took over, still with a heavy market orientation and still theoretically "apolitical", and these foci persist today.

I demonstrate in this chapter that professionalization of the occupation of international development emerged in response to diffuse threats to legitimacy from the US political left, previously the organization's bastion of support. Development, trading on ideas of humanitarianism and human rights, has attempted to establish itself as apolitical since the 1970s. In doing so it acts as an "anti-politics machine": a way by which political interventions are achieved through apparently disconnected or apolitical processes (Page, 2002) that turn on administrative capacity. Professionalization—occupational standards, practices, and rationales—present themselves as reasonable justifications for much of USAID and the Peace Corps' ambiguous work (not to mention that of the World Bank and others). In other words, professionalization functions to resolve the tension between foreign policy and humanitarian/developmental imperatives, and mitigates the legitimacy concerns projected onto social projects as well. However, because its very principles turn on technical and procedural concerns, the dynamic contributes to the depoliticization o the field (Lupton & Mather, 1997).

In the Beginning: International Development Before International Development

The profession of international development—in so many words—is relatively young. Though charity, military, and political intervention have combined in what might be loosely termed "development" for centuries, contemporary iterations of development, and their attendant professions, began to emerge in earnest between the 1944 and 1961, with the establishment of the IMF and the World Bank, and USAID respectively. "Development" typically refers to an historical process in which states' economies become more productive and expand, political systems come to more or less represent aggregated citizen preferences, rights and opportunities are extended to all social groups, and "organizations function according to meritocratic standards

and professional norms" (Pritchett et al., 2013, p. 2). This process is now understood, explicitly or implicitly, to denote professional intervention at some level.

The professional basis of development in the United States had its roots in an intellectual movement from the individual to the group: the idea that politics should replace individual moral responsibility as the site of reform. From 1890-1920, Progressive and Social Democratic movements in the United States pursued gradual, democratic, expert-guided change through reforms that were meant to correct the worst ills of industrialization. This period oversaw the development of an "implicit model of social control, based on rational principles" of administrative justice in the United States, characterized by a developing understanding of organizations as ends unto themselves (Hamilton & Sutton, 1989, p. 18). Civil servants—envoys of this type of new order—embraced rational philosophy, which complemented their own professional training; these professionals were more likely to have university degrees and/or state certifications, as well as educations that were grounded in rationality and new scientific methods. The professionalization of economics some decades earlier had contributed to this process: Alfred Marshall, part of the Economics department at Cambridge from 1884-1908, embodied both the scientific and ethical dimensions of the new profession and influenced a great number within it, including John Maynard Keynes. Marshall had convinced Cambridge to create an economics curriculum separate from history and moral science, believing that economists should meet the "objective, apolitical, and impartial standards of the physical sciences" (Sayward, 2006, p. 9). Hoover promoted rationalization of contentious issues in his governance (such as in the case of Allied war debts).

In the United States, the first law dealing with foreign assistance came quite late, with the adoption of the Marshall Plan in 1948. In his inaugural speech on 20 January 1949, Harry Truman advanced, for the first time, the idea that aid to poor nations was an important component of US foreign policy, remarking that a goal of his administration would be "to foster 'growth of underdeveloped areas'" (Edwards, 2014, unpaginated).

But Truman's move did not emerge from a vacuum; the international context that circumscribed the development of development in the United States was marked by post-WWII concerns, and the use of economic policies to try to counter its effects. The war had left Europe in shambles, and the first reconstruction entities—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (hence IMF), both created at the Bretton Woods meetings in New Hampshire in 1944—were devoted to economic recovery, primarily through lending programs. They were heavily focused on reconstructing Europe and combatting Communism, and not overly concerned with "developing" countries (many of whom were colonies at the time; the prevailing wisdom was that colonies would catch up or surpass colonizers quickly (Edwards, 2014)) when they were founded. The World Bank, first known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, initially focused on making loans to governments to support the reconstruction of infrastructure—railroads, highways, bridges, and the like. The IMF was established in order to manage exchange rates so that countries facing shortage could continue trading, thus smoothing out world commerce and benefiting trading nations. Both entities were designed to be responsive to the demands of their largest donors, chief among them the United States (Babb, 2009, p. 26).

These new agencies were run by economic professionals who believed that cross-national trade, convertible currency, and stabilizing institutions could create peace and prosperity. The economists were undergirded in their endeavor by a nascent sense of professionalism, born of the discipline's evolution in the previous half-century; for instance, US treasury undersecretary Harry D. White and John Keynes of the British Treasury were both central to drafting the legislation. White was born to Jewish immigrants and Keynes to British aristocrats; however, their approach to the accords was more marked by their professional similarities than their individual identities; "as part of this common professional ideology, they shared a progressive faith in the ability of experts to act objectively on behalf of the common good" (Sayward, 2006, p. 9). When the Marshall Plan (formally known as the European Recovery Program) went into effect in 1947,

European countries began to receive development assistance from other sources and the World Bank began to shift its focus to the developing world.

The Marshall Plan was a US initiative, a piece of temporary legislation that was intended as an emergency tool of assistance with a discrete goal: to stabilize Europe. Widely considered a success, it ended on June 30, 1951, and both its success and the new international institutions informed the emergence of development in the US as a political practice. Building on its legacy, President Truman proposed the Point Four Program, which focused simultaneously on "creating markets for the United States by reducing poverty and increasing production in developing countries; [and] diminishing the threat of communism by helping countries prosper under capitalism" (USAID, 2014). The new package was designed to combine economic and military programs with technical assistance while also spreading capitalism and fighting communism; the Mutual Security Agency was born later that year. For the next nine years, various programs supporting both technical and capital assistance began to emerge as an important component of US foreign policy. The Mutual Security Act of 1954 introduced the formal concepts of development assistance, security assistance, a discretionary contingency fund, and guarantees for private investments (USAID, 2014), departing significantly from the military and economic focus of other types of aid that had preceded it.

In 1958, economist Albert Hirschman offered a "census" of the field of development, writing that it was "in danger of becoming stale"; economists were overly concerned with taxonomies and definitions, but the field needed a "dominating analytical structure, of some 'General Theory' of development which could provide a focal point for theoretical discussion and empirical verification" (Adelman, 2013, pp. 354–355). By 1960, and reflecting his criticisms, support from the American public and Congress for the existing foreign assistance programs had dwindled. The growing dissatisfaction with foreign assistance was highlighted by several influential books at the time, including "The Ugly American", by William Lederer, published in

1958. “The Ugly American” painted a portrait of US diplomats who were distant, arrogant, and ultimately a liability to their country:

> The American Ambassador is a jewel. He keeps his people tied up with meetings, social events, greetings and briefing the scores of Senators, Congressmen, generals, admirals. Undersecretaries of state and Defense, and so on, who come pouring through here 'to look for themselves.' he forbids his people to go 'into the hills,' and still annoys the people of Sarkhan with his bad manners (p. 40).

Frustration with foreign assistance was in part, of course, deeply linked to fears about the spread of Communism. Whereas American diplomats were “jewels”, Communists organizations like Khrushchev’s Russian missionary programs were taking the opposite approach of “going into the hills”. The popular disaffection prompted Congress and the Eisenhower Administration to redirect attention and assistance to developing nations, attempting to remedy the US’ image and to infuse international aid with a sense of people-to-people optimism.

The 1960s: John F. Kennedy and the Development of Development

Under President Kennedy, the US Congress pursued initiatives begun in the Eisenhower administration to reimagine and institutionalize foreign assistance. Kennedy, bent on invigorating the state’s flagging reputation both at home and abroad, leveled a general critique of Eisenhower administration foreign policy, lamenting that it was “being starved on a diet of negatives” (Mahoney, 1983, p. 19) and set about attempting to energize development and aid.

In 1961 Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act, which reorganized U.S. foreign assistance programs and drew, for the first time, a clear separation between military and non-military aid. The bill’s purpose was to “give vigor, purpose, and new direction to the foreign aid program” (Fulbright, 1961, p. 1). It also attempted to separate long-range from immediate problems, articulating an explicit focus on long-term social development projects, expressing clear preferences for “orderly economic growth and g[iving] continuity to the programs that will

encourage and sustain much of this growth" (Fulbright, 1961, p. 1). Its intended emphasis on self-help was reflected in the shift for long-term financing, rather than on direct support programs.

The legislation reflected prevalent concerns about Communism, and linked a number of its strategies explicitly to efforts to deter its spread. For instance, Latin America was considered particularly susceptible to Communist infiltration; the legislation designated $300 million to the region in economic aid in 1962, but an additional $350 million for social aid (Fulbright, 1961), pointing to a political preoccupation with political and social institutions. Similarly, the Foreign Assistance Act clearly demonstrated the tensions between the dual imperatives of foreign policy and humanitarianism that persist in development nearly 60 years later. Its text reads that: "foreign aid is both an unavoidable responsibility and a central instrument of our foreign policy. It is dictated by the hard logic of the Cold War and by a moral responsibility resulting from poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, feudalism, strife, revolution, instability, and life without hope" (Fulbright, 1961, p. 4). The legislation also spoke indirectly to the animating principles of soft power throughout, and in so doing, began to make space within the new profession for skills other than those of economists:

> The creation of viable political, economic, and social institutions is the work of many years. The cost of such activities is low when compared with the cost of financing a multiyear economic growth program. But the cost in time and patience is high, and the potential benefits cannot be measured in dollars. Cultivating these institutions is somewhat like growing delicate species of plants. They are sensitive and fragile, and they frequently defy all of the wisdom of the experts (Fulbright, 1961, p. 14).

This legislation, which paved the way for other types of expertise within the profession of development, also mandated the creation of an agency to oversee technical and economic aid under these new auspices. In November 1961, President Kennedy established USAID, the first US foreign assistance operation whose principal emphasis was on long-term, non-military social and development assistance (US National Archives, 2014). The agency combined extant aid efforts, including the International Cooperation Agency, the loan activities of the Development Loan Fund, the local currency functions of the Export-Import Bank, as well as the Food for Peace

program of the Department of Agriculture. The unification of these functions represented an effort to refocus the project of international development.

The Peace Corps and Development

Though the most common accounts tell of the Peace Corps' beginnings as a service organization animated by the activist orientation of the 1960s, the agency appeared at the same time as the new focus on "development" and as such is, as I will demonstrate, inextricably linked to it. The Peace Corps came to embody this dual emphasis on foreign policy and humanitarianism, though a great deal of its initial success was related to its original framing: as an opportunity to live idealism and patriotism, in service of peace.

John F. Kennedy, in a presidential campaign speech at the University of Michigan Union at 2 am on October 14, 1960, publicly proposed a Peace Corps for the first time to an enthusiastic crowd of students. At his subsequent inaugural address Kennedy again referred to the Peace Corps, encouraging young people to "join a grand and global alliance to fight tyranny, poverty, disease, and war […] To these people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass and misery," he stated proudly, "we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves" (Kennedy, 1961a). A student present at Kennedy's speech remembered that "Kennedy's words […] seemed to present to students on our campus a way to live our idealism, an opportunity to commit ourselves to the service of others" (Searles, 1997, p. 3).

The original Peace Corps bill was sponsored by Hubert Humphrey and James Fulbright; Fulbright was also the original sponsor of the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act (Humphrey et al., 1961; Kennedy, 1961b; Public Law 87-293, 1961). It was approved by President Kennedy in March of that year, and written into law in September. Even at its birth, the Peace Corps represented a tension between two imperatives: humanitarianism and social aid on the one hand, and foreign policy concerns on the other. Kennedy was known for his ostensible opposition to imperialism and his commitment to social development, beginning with his denunciation for the

French war in Algeria in 1957 (Cobbs Hoffman, 1996, p. 124), and yet the perceived threats of Communism and the ongoing Cold War created an environment in Congress in which the Peace Corps was understood as a tool of the conflict.

The Peace Corps was not the only nation to begin such a program, and actively encouraged as many countries as possible in the Western Bloc to do something similar. Between 1958 and 1965 Britain, Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Canada, New Zealand, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden all started volunteer programs with dual missions of spreading economic development an international goodwill (Cobbs Hoffman, 1996, p. 125). The program was well received at home, and seemed to carry with it the glamour and promise of Kennedy himself and the Peace Corps' first director, Kennedy's charismatic brother-in-law Sargent Robert Shriver. Though it engendered the anticipated criticisms from conservatives for being "an unnecessary extension of the flabby doctrines of the 'welfare state'" (Chicago Tribune, 1963), in general the Peace Corps publicly symbolized much that was hopeful about the Great Society. Those powerful ideologies included democracy, anti-communist impulses, voluntarism, and technical skills. The popular liberal hero, "who in the 1930s had been the angry young workman, in the 1940s the GI, and in the 1950s the youth misunderstood by his mother, had become […] the dedicated Peace Corpsman battling hunger, disease—and communism—with tools of peace" (Manchester, 1990, pp. 906–907).

But the Peace Corps remained tightly linked to, and constitutive of, the profession of development generally, even as it worked to cultivate its own image. At its inception, USAID even attempted to swallow the agency and integrate it into its own apparatus, and Shriver and the Peace Corps as a whole refused (Atemkeng Amin, 1988). Though this decision likely had more to do with branding and public image than actual concerns about efficacy, it does point to deep ties between the two agencies' development, and their heavily interlinked histories.

The Peace Corps' public image was seriously complicated for the first time during the Vietnam War, in which US foreign policy met with active resistance (as opposed to tepid support or indifference, as it had from conservatives prior). As opposition to the war grew, interest in and support of the Peace Corps fell (Loftuss, 1968).

During this time, the notion of being "above" or "beyond" politics began to take a stronger hold within the agency, which had from the first billed itself as "not political". Bruce Murray, a volunteer in Chile, was removed from the field in 1968 because he wrote a letter to the *New York Times* espousing anti-war views. A Chilean newspaper published the letter after the *Times* rejected it. The Peace Corps elected to make a retaliatory example of Murray; he was fired, quickly drafted by his local selective service board, and indicted when he refused induction. A year later however, a Rhode Island court found that the Peace Corps and the selective service board had acted improperly, and quashed the indictment (Searles, 1997, p. 14). Other Peace Corps volunteers abroad occasionally staged protests in their host countries. Those that did either had their contracts terminated, or resigned (Smith 1970).

The Vietnam era also saw heightened criticism of the Peace Corps from organizations such as the Committee of Returned Volunteers (CRV), which publicly denounced the agency as a tool of American imperialism. CRV was an organization of people who had worked in voluntary service programs, many in the Peace Corps. It was a New Left group, loosely linked to others such as the Gay Liberation Front and National Organization of Women (Lissner, 1970). The CRV criticized that which was "accepted as an article of faith; [the] the unending need for American volunteers who, by their very presence, would bring about beneficial change to the people among whom they lived" (Searles, 1997, p. 15). To demonstrate their displeasure with the Peace Corps, the CRV staged a 36-hour occupation of the Peace Corps headquarters in May 1970, on a weekend that coincided with the zenith of the antiwar protests. A volunteer serving in Malaysia detailed a visit from the CRV dated 23 July 1970, during her training:

> The Committee of Returned Volunteers, CRV, came to talk to us last night. Their thing in a nutshell is: if you don't like what's happening in Peace Corps, get out and don't support it. Stay home and help change the system there; because going to another country only helps the corrupted government and not really the people. You cannot help the people till you overhaul the government; the government doesn't really care to see the people improve. And it's our government, more than most, that needs an overhaul. So stay home and work (Held, 1970, unpaginated).

Similarly, the Vietnam War created a different set of incentives for joining the Peace Corps, which furthered the young organization's identity crises. Some people joined in order to avoid being drafted (the US draft law provided several ways to obtain deferment, and Peace Corps service was one of them). This did not go unnoticed in the public. The Vietnam era created, for the first time, images of the politically dubious "peacenik" and the draft dodger (as opposed to the patriotic aid worker) that became associated with the Peace Corps volunteer, imperiling its image and its legitimacy. The first waves of returning volunteers were critical about the poor quality of services offered to host countries, critiques that coincided with some of the criticisms of US imperialism that the anti-war movement had generated. As a consequence, towards the end of the Johnson administration the organization changed focus, starting to seek out more "specialist" volunteers, rather than the youthful, generalist population that had been the agency's bread-and-butter since its inception (Borders, 1970).

This move towards specialization prompted more professional development and training within the Peace Corps. In general, specialization (for instance, sending trained teachers to work in schools, or engineers to help build bridges) suggests something of an immunity from accusations of political intervention—it was understood that building bridges, or managing fish ponds, were apolitical development projects that benefited local communities were less susceptible to charges of political manipulation.

The 1960s oversaw the emergence of a formal profession in the establishment of full-time jobs in international development that were meaningfully distinct from practices of economic and military intervention that had preceded it. This transition—to a full-time

occupation—is widely considered to be the first step in creating a profession, and visibly began to solidify the nascent development professional. These new development jobs were visible both in USAID (the agency intended to oversee these jobs), and in the Peace Corps itself, which was engineered as both a feeder program for USAID and as an expression of US soft power abroad. During this decade international development did not yet, however, have a technical basis for its operation (both economic and military backgrounds had been considered permissible before, and the Peace Corps accepted candidates with a wide variety of experience), nor did it have exclusive jurisdiction over it; it shared authority with foreign policy forces, national economic priorities, and military incentives. The later-decade swing towards specialization aided in the professionalization of the occupation, but in a way that was intended to *specifically avoid politics.*

The 1970s: apolitical humanitarianism and development's crisis of legitimacy

Both USAID and the Peace Corps suffered crises of legitimacy in the 1970s. The new shine had worn off of the Peace Corps particularly; development was increasingly distinguished from military or foreign policy goals, and thus, ironically, harder to justify on its own terms (even to the political left) now that the immediate threat of Communism had receded.

By the 1970s foreign aid in general had fallen on legislative hard times; in 1971, the Senate even rejected a bill authorizing funds for 1972 and 1973. That stinging defeat, particularly from a Democratic-controlled Senate, was the first instance in which either chamber of Congress had rejected a foreign aid bill since the Marshall Plan. Several issues merged to create an environment that was highly suspicious of aid even from the political left, including opposition to the Vietnam War, concerns that aid had grown and remained too linked to foreign policy objectives, particularly military ones, and perhaps ironically, a concern that development aid was a "giveaway program producing few foreign policy results" for the US (USAID, 2014).

During this transformation, and perhaps because of it, USAID began to shift from its previous focus on capital projects to an interest in basic human needs, reflecting an evolving idea

of what development was and the emergence of humanitarianism as what (Fassin, 2007) calls a "politics of life" (Leebaw, 2007; McCleary, 2009). Instead of funds, the agency now began to emphasize nutrition, programs on population and planning, health, education, and human resources. An emphasis on humanitarianism, that addressed suffering "in the present tense" (Boltanski, 1999, p. 182), was characterized by USAID and the legions of other organizations working in the field as "apolitical". This emphasis on "saving lives"—rather than "risking them", as a military operation might—further distinguished development aid from military intervention, and continued to reinforce an analytical separation, at least, between victims and enemies. By doing so, it specifically attempted to set itself apart from notions of "politics"—in constructing itself as "humanitarian" rather than economic or military, the profession attempted to stake a claim to an apolitical ground in order to foster legitimacy. "From its inception," Schimmel observes, "humanitarianism has always insisted on its non-partisan - and thus non-political – nature" (Schimmel, 2006, p. 303). An ex-Peace Corps official's interview comments reflect this orientation:

> We try not to be political about where we put volunteers, and we try very hard not to become part of the diplomatic objectives. And indeed, the Secretary of State—every time a new one comes in—sends out to all the ambassadors the quote from Dean Rusk in 1961 that says "to make Peace Corps a part of your foreign policy objectives would be to damage its contribution to it", or something like that.

The widely accepted definition of humanitarianism at the time, "the impartial, independent, and neutral provision of relief to those in immediate danger of harm—emerged in opposition to a particular meaning of politics and helped to depoliticize relief-oriented activities" (M. Barnett, 2005, p. 724). This shift also permitted the opening of new types of expertise within the profession of development, making way for those whose training in anthropology, sociology, international relations, public health, and the like, to enter the field.

The tone of the Peace Corps during this time reflected these changes as well. After the Vietnam War voluntary service to the U.S. government fell off; the Peace Corps' budget was reduced, and the number of volunteers in the field dropped by two-thirds. Nixon cleaned the

agency of antiwar activists and Kennedy loyalists, trying to create a "quiet, inoffensive Peace Corps of 3,500 or fewer volunteers" (quoted in Smith 1977:9). The Nixon administration fired half the country directors overseas and 250 senior staff in Washington in 1972, replacing them with "card-carrying Republicans or Nixon loyalists" (ibid:9). Nixon then folded the Peace Corps into ACTION, a now-defunct federal domestic volunteer agency, in a move that was, according to Frances Luzzatto, ex-director of Special Programs for the Peace Corps, intended to "submerge the Peace Corps in a faceless bureaucratic conglomerate with the hope that it would quietly disappear" (quoted in Smith 1977:9). "New Directions," an agency plan to recruit older, more highly skilled volunteers in place of the liberal arts generalists, appeared in an attempt to make the Peace Corps more sophisticated and align it with the priorities of other development agencies within the federal government (Donovan, 1982), especially with humanitarianism. In the early 1970s volunteer numbers dwindled to 8000, barely half the number it boasted in the mid 1960s (New York Times, 1972). There were many attempts from the left to separate the Peace Corps from ACTION in the late 1970s, primarily to protect that bit of Kennedy's legacy (De Witt, 1979).

During the 1970s, legitimacy concerns surfaced in general across the US development apparatus. As increasingly distinguishable from military aid or foreign policy interventions, USAID lost one of its most important sources of public legitimacy (its military/political function). Similarly, popular sentiments around the Vietnam war were confusing; on the one hand they lessened support for development assistance because such programs could be seen as interventionist, but by the same token the Peace Corps was perceived to be a haven for draft-dodgers and thus undesirable because it permitted young citizens to avoid the draft. The political battles over both development and the role of the Peace Corps did little to cement development's legitimacy as a profession.

These criticisms provided an incentive for both USAID and the Peace Corps to focus in on "specific" things that were unambiguously, universally "good" (education, etc.).

Humanitarianism and human development constituted less easy fodder for criticism than, for instance, construction of infrastructure, and programs that delivered education and human services lent themselves to measurability and reporting, which in turn lent themselves to public justification, and largely absolved them from accusations of being "political".

International development under neoliberalism: the 1980s-2000s and the solidification of the professional

The era of neoliberalism cast the tensions between the dual imperatives of the US development apparatus into harsh light. Neoliberalism has generally privileged a specific kind of rationality. In responding to the multiple requirements of the state, a market logic, and the corresponding crisis of legitimacy, international development solidified a role of "program professional" that turned heavily on rationality, measurability, and accountability. It did so, however, in a process of procedural professionalization, in which the patterns or appearance of the professional were adopted but some of the ethical professional considerations ignored or bypassed.

The practice of international development has, of course, always reflected the political and economic focuses of the time. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the influences of neoliberalism became more visible in the practice and the profession. Though neoliberalism materializes differently in different places, its iterations align in privileging free markets, commodification, and individuals as agents of social change (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010; Castree 2008; McCarthy 2012, 2006). It is characterized by devolution of governance from federal to states, municipalities, or to civil society in the interest of "slimming down" the central state or state agencies (Castree, 2008; Harvey, 2007). By understanding individuals rather than states as agents of social action, and markets as ultimate social arbiters, neoliberalism reconfigures notions of social actors even as it shapes economic policy.

In the 1980s, development aid emphasized stabilizing currencies and financial systems by "promoting market-based principles to restructure developing countries policies and political institutions" (USAID, 2014). There was an important shift in ideas as this emerged across the field generally; World Bank research in the 1970s, for instance, had focused heavily on combatting poverty, while in the 1980s it emphasized "economic efficiency and the liberation of market forces" (Babb, 2009, p. 70), and correspondingly, a programmatic switch to policy-based lending practices that promoted market liberalization. The agency prioritized employment and income opportunities by focusing on agriculture and the expansion of domestic markets in the countries where it worked. Beginning around this time, and in keeping with governance trends elsewhere, development interventions were rescaled from state or agency level, and were increasingly channeled through private nonprofit, community, or voluntary organizations. Since the end of World War II, the number of private and nongovernmental groups working international development grew from under 3,000 in 1945 to over 13,000 by 1990. In 1980, the OECD listed 1,702 private development bodies, a figure which had reached 2,542 in 1990 (Lewis, 1991). This emphasis on autonomy persisted through the 1990s, and the focus on third-party agencies or community partners increased. The US' political work through USAID largely focused establishing market-oriented economic systems (such as in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989), and as party to the Washington Consensus, USAID actively supports structural adjustment programs on behalf of developing countries (Samuels, 2006, p. 765).

Similarly, discourses based on individual rights specifically have blossomed since the 1980s (Harvey, 2007; Jordan & van Tuijl, 2006), emerging out of prior discourses of humanitarianism, and this emphasis has been reflected in the development of development. Rights-based discourses privilege "the rights of the individual citizen' as opposed to 'the needs of the poor'" (Holston 2008:240; Plyushtava 2009). Neoliberal processes encourage organizations to focus on individualized, often economic rights (and violations of those rights), rather than collective social problems that are non-economic. Identity-, market-, and rights-based discourses

now have enormous political economic power (Harvey, 2006). This has made the human-rights based approach popular in development, social movements, and politics generally (Rao, 1995). These concerns—decentralization, human rights and humanitarianism, and market efficiency—combined in the comments of Andrew Natsios, assistant administrator of Food for Humanitarian Assistance, a branch of USAID, who argued that "voluntary organizations are the most efficient resource deliverers and their presence also discourages human rights violations" (Lewis, 1991).

There have been dramatic conceptual shifts during this time regarding what development means and what constitutes "good development"; those transformations, coupled with neoliberal ideologies, create a particular context for professionalization. For instance, a prevailing emphasis on partnership with local organizations has created a situation in which aid agencies claim they are not even actively making interventions anymore, but rather creating spaces in which development can happen. Growing demand for accountability suggests mistrust of expertise, while the same accountability procedures are employed further entrench that expertise (Boström & Garsten, 2008; Mosse, 2011).

As Mosse (2011) puts it, this new "expert consensus" mixes orthodox neoliberal political ideology with the idea that poverty and violence are the result of "bad governance". The remedy is thus that stronger institutions are necessary for the accountable delivery of services. These services, in turn, are not a question of state provision, but a matter of giving resources to governments to make markets function to reduce poverty, a process of decentralizing, disaggregating, and marketing the state (including breaking up existing forms of state rule that are understood as corrupt or patrimonial) and then "using markets to replace and reconstruct the institutions of governance" (Craig & Porter, 2006, p. 100). This turn in development expertise and practice is marked by what Craig and Porter call "vertical disaggregation", in which the rule making and policymaking of countries is delegated upwards to international bodies, including private organizations or companies, international agencies and NGOs on the one hand, and a

delegation downwards of the risks of development to "responsibilized" local communities, regions, and ultimately individuals.

This shift is relevant to our understanding of professional expertise for a few reasons. The combination of formalism and internationalization (delegation upwards) fosters technical, centralized policy developments and thus a unified class of experts and professionals (Woods, 2006, pp. 66–68). Linking formalism and downwards delegation, we see an emphasis on retrofitting institutions, rules, and incentives so as to reimagine social relations per the understandings of those expert conventions (reflected in ideas such as "behavior change"). Throughout this process, citizens themselves become experts at rationalizing elements of their own lives, and acquire a technical view of themselves. Mosse (2011, p. 5) calls these "compliant" citizens—those who are "empowered" by expert knowledge; their subjectivities are powerfully shaped by participation in formal institutions. Professionals are the carriers of this process.

The same legitimacy issues that had bedeviled development in previous decades persisted between the 1980s-2000s. Congress demonstrated its lack of faith in USAID by increasing the DOD's allocation of official development assistance funds from 3.5 percent in 1999 to 21.7 percent in 2005. During the same time period, USAID's official development assistance dropped from 65 percent to less than 40 percent. Frumin, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote in 1999 that "after decades of scrutiny and downsizing, USAID has become an anemic organization, with a fifth the number of staff it had in the 1960s and a fraction of the agility and autonomy it had when it was better funded" (Frumin, 2009, p. 173). The evident lack of faith both in USAID and in state-led intervention in general was visible in these budget reallocations.

USAID, like Peace Corps, has remained heavily focused on processes of professionalization and accountability, which are intended to act in service of the agency's legitimacy in the face of these challenges. Humanitarianism as a concept became heavily institutionalized during this time (Barnett, 2005), and as a consequence is more able to claim political neutrality; it is susceptible to increased requirements of accountability as well. A 2014

Government Accountability report to Congress on the agency reminded readers that "federal internal control standards highlight the importance of managers comparing actual performance to expected results […] USAID focused its efforts on areas such as improving contractor performance evaluations and risk management" (US GOA, 2014b, p. 1). The same Government Accountability Office regularly advocates for "uniform organizational assessments" (US GOA, 2008) and has critiqued USAID for it lack of clarity in reporting outcomes (US GOA, 2014a). These concerns all have a great deal to do with emphases on accountability, evaluation, and proving the organization's mettle.

The Peace Corps' evolution during this time followed similar political-philosophical patterns, particularly in its emphasis on individual rights and market orientation, and its persistent unwillingness to engage in things "political". In 1981 and as a result of the International Security and Development Act, the Peace Corps again became independent of ACTION (Donovan, 1982). Loret Miller Ruppe, appointed agency director by Reagan in 1981, was widely credited with restoring some of the agency's legitimacy, though budget cuts continued through the late 1980s and volunteer numbers remained low—only about 6000 volunteers in 1987 (Breed, 1987). As neoliberal economic policies began to take hold, there were several politically-insignificant calls to increase spending on Peace Corps, as a counter to investments in military and economic prowess (cf. Dufour and Dufour 1981). The Peace Corps generated a bit of unexpected support from the broader development community during the 1980s—Washington-based Worldwatch Institute proposed imitation of the Peace Corps on a worldwide scale funded by the World Bank. The proposal did not come to fruition. In 1985, in response to Africa's famine, Miller Ruppe appealed for 10,000 volunteers with farming skills. About 20,000 US citizens responded with applications, although only 5 percent had the requisite skills (Harden, 1987). During this time the public discourse of the Peace Corps was still very much one of technical contributions and aid, and its appeal to the public couched almost exclusively in these terms.

In the 2000s, with the US involved in two wars in the Middle East, USAID's focus shifted slightly towards emphasis on democratization. Funds were short; the agency looked to "getting the most bang out of its funding allocations" through "an aggressive campaign to reach out to new partner organizations – including the private sector and foundations – to extend the reach of foreign assistance" (USAID, 2014, p. unpaginated). The agency struggled with the legitimacy concerns that have plagued the entire social sector, and responded to them much as other organizations have: through an increased emphasis on professionalization. Ostensibly meritocratic structures, clear programmatic goals and designations, bureaucratic organizational structures, progress indicators, and evaluative terms were understood as providing common standards against which to measure organizational behavior.

These priorities were also reflected in the trajectory of the Peace Corps. In the 2000s, the agency became wrapped both in the politics both wars, as well as in different questions of development. Under the G.W. Bush administration, the Peace Corps met with support from conservatives as an inexpensive mechanism of a sort of goodwill ambassadorship, and the conservative government floated ideas of training the Peace Corps to enter more dangerous territories: "The Peace Corps, America's oldest overseas volunteer program, should equip itself to enter regions it now deems too dangerous. A force of trained and educated volunteers could improve its cooperation with the military and learn how to conduct itself in such settings" (Spiegel, 2003). Returned volunteers expressed hesitation about Bush's desire, articulated in a 2002 State of the Union speech, to send the Peace Corps back into Afghanistan due to their concerns about volunteer safety. President Obama was considered a supporter (Zeller, 2008), though the budget crises that characterized much of the Obama Administration's first term precluded any dramatic expansion of the agency or its undertakings. The dot-com bust also attracted a number of new recruits in the early 2000s (Tessler, 2002).

Concerns about the quality of services rendered also surfaced in the 2000's, and the agency attempted to address them by radically increasing the amount of professional training and

program materials for its recruits, and reorienting its training program to reflect more rationalized and best-practice orientations. An agency evaluation (Peace Corps, 2010) recommended increasing the amount of technical and professional training for its young volunteers as a way to increase the quality of its development program; a 2011 survey found that most RPCV's perceived the Peace Corps to be falling short on its development imperatives (Bridgeland et al., 2011). The Peace Corps responded with a new program, based on USAID models, called FITU ("Focus In, Train Up"), intended to impose a professional design on its work, and combined a number of its programs. A recent Peace Corps volunteer, sitting on the edge of a plastic-covered couch in the sweltering heat, describes FITU to me:

> We have new modern internal evaluation forms, and have women coming from the CDC to restructure our internal intake processes...so they're cutting down on projects, focusing in on certain goals, but also training people better in these areas.
>
> --RPCV, Caribbeanea, 2000s

The agency also undertook a collaborative project with USAID entitled SPA (Special Project Assistance), which provided small grants to volunteers working on specific projects. The SPA program is intended to both fund projects, but also to foment grantwriting abilities and technical skills both in volunteers and in host country collaborators.

Within this period of neoliberal social and economic reform, both USAID and the Peace Corps (in keeping with development trends more broadly) have internalized and deployed values of professionalization and decentralization. This is reflected in increased emphases on decentralization (in the forms of prioritizing partner and voluntary organizations as vehicles of service delivery), seeking funding from outside the agency, and increased emphasis on training, technical prowess, evaluation, and program management. These processes, in keeping with discourses of efficiency, transparency and the like, have helped solidify the development professional as an image.

The era of neoliberalism has overseen the expansion of discourses of professionalization, which resonate heavily with broader social-political discourses about rationality, individuality,

transparency, as well as individual rights. During this time professionalization has also an entrenched defense against accusations of politics and threats to legitimacy, and an equally entrenched justification for its own intervention: "the more technical (or managerial) the policy model is," Mosse observes, "the more it can mobilize political support, but the less that is actually managed; and the less that is managed, the more necessary is a managerial (or technical) model in order to retain support and legitimacy" (Mosse, 2011, p. 7).

Conclusion

Looking at the history of state-led development through USAID and the Peace Corps we can observe similar trajectories in both organizations. They both have suffered crises of legitimacy that are linked to the political philosophies of the time and to the international goals of the United States. Both organizations, in an attempt to combat these crises of legitimacy, have assumed higher levels of professionalization as mechanisms to combat charges of "politics" and to bolster their own legitimacy.

The institutional history of state-led development, coupled with the profiles of the volunteers who populate the program, set the stage for understanding the organizational consequences of the Peace Corps on social commitment.

CHAPTER 5: Organizational-Level Effects: Professionalization Among Peace Corps Staff

The first time a staff member cried while talking to me about his role in the Peace Corps, I was surprised. A fatherly man, and a ranking official in the agency, and fully thirty-five years older than I, he conducted himself with a combination of approachability and aplomb that both volunteers and I found quite disarming. We were sitting in his office in the capital city doing an interview—a tidy office, with photographs of family on the walls, and ornaments from all over the world displayed on the shelves. I had been taking notes, and when I looked up, he was wiping tears from his eyes.

The second time a staff member cried while talking to me about her role in the Peace Corps, we were sitting across from each other at a small round table in a staff room, at a different country office in a different capital city. She was relatively new to the organization, and it was initially unclear to me where her emotion came from; she had been describing difficulties adjusting to the highly professional dynamic of the Peace Corps office, having come from a local start-up that was run primarily by young people. And suddenly, she as well was wiping her eyes, and looking out the window in the way that people do when they are trying to compose themselves. I thought about that moment when I went back to my hotel at night, coming to understand that it was precisely her own social commitment that made her adjustment to the agency so difficult.

The third time a staff member cried, it was an elderly man who had been a recruiter for the Peace Corps for several years after he finished his service in the Dominican Republic in the early 1960s. We were sitting in an Au Bon Pain in US, over watery coffee that had been cooling in our paper cups, at the end of an interview that had lasted nearly three hours. The man wore overalls and was slightly gone to fat, and he cried with an abandon that was immediately recognizable as catharsis.

* * *

In the previous chapter I framed the puzzle of the Peace Corps, and situating it within a field-level history of professionalization. Like other organizations, the Peace Corps is an adaptive social structure facing challenges that are external to its own creation. Its adaptive practice (of professionalization) has become institutionalized. I now lay out the mechanisms by which the organization manages its complex environment, and the ways in which those procedurally professional practices become locked in.

As Selznick (1966) argued in seminal work, for organizations in the pursuit of unity and survival, the special needs of one subunit can be unconsciously extended to the organization as a whole, producing many unintended consequences. More recently (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999) have argued that international organizations are much more powerful than commonly acknowledged, and that the same characteristics of bureaucracy that make such organizations powerful can also make them prone to pathology or dysfunction. Organizations make rules, and, in so doing, they generate social knowledge, deploying such knowledge in ways that define and shape shared tasks. "However, the same normative valuation on impersonal rules that defines bureaucracies and makes them powerful in modern life can also make them unresponsive to their environments, obsessed with their own rules at the expense of primary missions, and ultimately produce inefficient and self-defeating behavior" they conclude (p. 699).

Environmental Demands

The Peace Corps exists in the complex environment of state organizations. Its policy is formally made by Headquarters, which are located in Washington, DC, and led by political appointees. The agency is funded through the US budget, and overseen by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Its annual budget is determined by the congressional budget and appropriations process, and in a typical year, the Peace Corps budget is about 1 percent of the foreign operations budget. Funding for the Peace Corps is included in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

As an agency, the Peace Corps faces four environmental demands that have consistently challenged it through the course of its organizational life. These are questions of:

- Foreign Policy
- Legitimacy and the role of government
- Funding
- International development

The first two issues are linked. The question of foreign policy refers to the United States' foreign policy goals on a general level. As I described in the previous chapter the Peace Corps has always existed, at least partly, in the foreign policy realm, and is accountable to the government's priorities there. The question of legitimacy is based on the general climate of anti-statism in the US, and the skepticism regarding whether the Peace Corps (or indeed, any government agency) is best suited to meet the country's foreign policy, economic, or development needs.

Respondents in my fieldwork indicated that the Peace Corps is expected to conform at some level to a "whole-of-government approach"—that is, an integrated understanding of what different US agencies are doing and how those separate entities are part of a single governance strategy. This notion of whole-of-government, while seemingly commonsense, appears to drive a good deal of the communication and coordination pressures on the Peace Corps itself from other parts of the US government. The agency therefore not only faces pressures to demonstrate that its work is normatively "good" and financially effective, but also that it is part of a coordinated political-economic theory of change that the US government writ large employs. The Obama administration pushed this approach aggressively during its first term, particularly with respect to international affairs. Then-Secretary of State Clinton touted the policy near the beginning of 2010, remarking publicly that "One of [the] goals coming into the administration was to begin to make the case that defense, diplomacy and development were not separate entities, either in substance or process, but that indeed they had to be viewed as part of an integrated whole and that the whole of government then had to be enlisted in their pursuit," (Garamone, 2010, unpaginated; Pincus, 2009).

It follows from a whole-of-government approach that the priorities of the government may change based on the outcomes of elections, election cycles, and public opinion. Conformity with the discourse of the rest of the government constitutes another facet of the Peace Corps' complex environment.

The Peace Corps faces accountability concerns both in general terms (is the agency doing a good job?), and with respect to specific financial matters (how was the money spent?). Oversight responsibilities, as one official says, ultimately lie with Congress because,

> They're ultimately the elected officials responsible for stewardship of taxpayer funds, so when they're writing this government budget, they want to see that government agencies are using taxpayer funds as effectively as possible.

Another staff member at Headquarters reflects:

> Though there are some requirements for reporting to some of our donors, USAID or other agencies, and though we respect and do our best to be responsive, our push is for posts to choose what they want to monitor and then why they're monitoring it. Not collecting information for information's sake, but in order to make programmatic decisions. We help in by creating a tool that will be responsive to that as well as be responsive to our donor needs.

In this comment we see that, though the staff person is attempting to develop mechanisms that appreciate the autonomy of specific country sites, an overwhelming concern is that of donor reporting and donor needs. Even a tool that is intended to aid in making programmatic decisions must be responsive to donor needs.

Third, the issue of funding and resources is linked both to the marco-economic climate, and to the values of US lawmakers responsible for apportioning funds in every budget cycle. The Peace Corps, despite its efforts to frame itself as invaluable to the international development effort, consistently meets with funding challenges and struggles against the perception that it is not essential to the functioning of the US government, particularly in times of shortage.

However, higher-level Peace Corps officials frame their greatest struggle as one of resources rather than one of ideology. There is little overt recognition from agency officials that party affiliation or political ideology may play a role in the Peace Corps' budget:

> It's a problem in a budget-cutting, deficit-educing environment […] because there's always the problem of "well, how can we increase your budget if we're reducing the budgets of our domestic social or educational health organizations" […] So while nobody is against the Peace Corps almost […] resistance to increasing what is really a very tiny budget is there.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Former Agency Official

Another concurs:

> During the post-911 focus on Iraq and Afghanistan, the Peace Corps is sort of off to one side. [That is due to] mostly budget. Mostly budget. I think at this point [2000s-2010s] that Peace Corps is sort of like the Red Cross […] sort of above reproach in some ways. […] The issue is more: "ok, we have so much money, what's our biggest bang for the buck, we have all these demands for more embassies, so this is what we have".
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Former Agency Official

The first three demands stand very much apart from a fourth and ongoing environmental complication: the complex and coevolving scenario that is international development. International development is not unproblematic, and the field's best practices are dynamic and in many cases inseparable from the political agendas of the actors (nation-states, supranational organizations, and large nonprofits) involved in funding them. Development assistance in all cases is bound up with faith, foreign policy, technology, imperialism, altruism, political economy and business interests, to name but a few. Bracketing even the political preoccupations, development organizations almost universally encounter challenges deciding on the "best" approach and the most suitable use of money and staff time.

Together, these complex environmental constraints and opportunities create a situation in which organizational adaptation is critical to the Peace Corps' survival.

Adaptation: Resolving Demands

Though the environment in which the Peace Corps is located is complex and multi-faceted, the agency's adaptations to outside demands have been relatively straightforward and comprehensible when taken individually. Specifically, it has resolved its foreign policy mandate by billing itself primarily as a development organization. That public identity of "development organization" has permitted it to address the question of legitimacy and, more broadly, the question of what the government's role should be, through professionalization and adherence to the norms of the development field. Additionally, the Peace Corps has made something of a "virtue of necessity" regarding its perpetual shortage of funds, intentionally billing itself as a low-level, person-to-person development agency that not only *can* operate on a tight budget, but that it *should.*

After the Cold War, the foreign policy mandate of the Peace Corps became less relevant than it had previously been. The agency had already faced closure threats (most directly from Nixon), but the urgency of sending young Americans abroad to win hearts and minds receded a great deal in the 1980s. The economy was growing, and globalization appeared to promise wealth and stability worldwide. As I argued in the last chapter, the Peace Corps resolved this tension by embracing the framing of a development organization, a change that had consequential effects for the organization over the long term.

The Peace Corps' identity as "development organization" has grown stronger, despite the concurrent understanding that predominantly young Peace Corps volunteers have limited skills, and despite the very common perception among both volunteers and staff that the Peace Corps' most beneficial outcome is *not* development, but rather intercultural understanding. One field staff member tells me that the framing goes back to issues of Congressional accountability:

> It's hard to justify an inter-cultural exchange program, but it's easier to justify development. They [headquarters] do need to justify [Peace Corps] to Congress […]. I think it's very hard to justify something so metaphysical, and say, "well, you know, we'll

> send fifty youngsters to Zimbabwe[7]. They will hold hands, sing Kumbaya, and we need three million dollars for that".

This employee articulated a recurring concern among field staff, most of whom seems to tolerate what they consider Headquarters' misguided attempts to manage programs as necessary to "justifying Peace Corps to Congress", understanding it as a part of the apparatus that keeps their program alive.

However, in order to make a plausible case for understanding the Peace Corps as a development organization, particularly to its skeptics in Congress and among the American public, the agency needed to rationalize two decisions that at first glance seem *im*plausible: the use of generally young, non-specialist development workers (the Peace Corps volunteers) rather than more skilled workers, and the low-budget approach to development projects.

The Peace Corps uses a people-to-people theory of development that emphasizes, in the words of a former agency official, a "bottom-up, village-level view" of development projects that is, correspondingly, a very "cost effective development agency". One person describes it as:

> We're very much a people-to-people program. We're not a program where you can measure success in terms of economic growth, or reduced fertility, or incidence of disease against a certain amount of money. We are out there working people-to-people.
>
> -- RPCV 1970s, Agency Official

Another staffmember observes that the Peace Corps is an efficient way to socialize would-be government officials:

> The value of the [Peace Corps] process, and the product that [volunteers] are bringing can hardly be overestimated. Because I think what you get back—at a very low cost by the way—is you get *a different quality of people*. […] That's why every embassy wants a returned Peace Corps volunteer. That's why they want people who are no longer islanders, people have a different view of the world.

This people-to-people theory of development helps promote the idea that development is an individual-level undertaking that can be accomplished by volunteers working alone, or mostly

[7] Names of countries have been changed

alone, in their field sites. What's more, that individual experience is expected to transform volunteers into a different class of human. By definition, sending individuals to field sites suggests a belief that a single American volunteer is a sufficient catalyst for development projects, and this notion is not couched to volunteers as a part of an ecosystem of developmental initiatives (though it may exist that way in the minds of staff). Applying a social movements framework to this organizational emphasis, we see that this focus on individual contributions works against the creation of a collective identity and helps explain the high levels of disillusionment. In this case, the single decision taken to justify the use of unskilled workers reinforces an entire theory of change that is based on the individual.

Further, this emphasis on individualism creates a dynamic in which the recipient countries are not asked for their opinions or feedback about the Peace Corps programming within their borders. Congressional reports (the Peace Corps' overall accountability measures) take the form of the annual All Volunteer Survey and the number of Early Terminations (volunteers leaving early) that the Peace Corps sustains annually. Both of these measures are directed at the individual volunteer's opinions and experiences, rather than those of the host country:

> [Host country feedback] is an area frankly, that needs further strengthening. We are focused heavily on the individual capacity and success of the volunteers. So we do have this very strong focus on a set of core expectations […]. And we expect them of all volunteers. And we do evaluate, or attempt to evaluate their performance around those expectations. And those are discussed at great length in their pre-service training, and gone over. The development impact of programs is much more difficult. And it's not something that we have yet done extremely well, or that's easy to do.
>
> -- RPCV 1970s, Agency Official

Peace Corps officials are skilled at defending this position of people-to-people development in the face of criticism from other arms of the development apparatus. Even billing itself as a development organization, the Peace Corps encounters resistance to the specific type of development interventions that it promotes. Officials are able to tactfully outline an argument for bottom-up development even in the face of critics:

> [In the Peace Corps], you get a very bottom-up, village level view, and you see some [other] development efforts that appear to you to be wasting a lot of money. And you get into the classic arguments about bottom-up versus top down, etc. […] It's a specious argument, in many respects, in my view. You've got to have both ends of those extremes, and everything in between, to address serious underdevelopment or the lack of development.
>
> -- RPCV 1970s, Agency Official

Despite publicly defending its position as a people-to-people organization, the Peace Corps works exceedingly hard to professionalize its young volunteers, particularly given the knowledge that most of them have very limited skill sets. This is the driving logic behind the highly standardized and professionalized approach that Peace Corps trainings employ. Teaching young volunteers to be professional development workers helps to mitigate some of the legitimacy problems surrounding state-based interventions abroad by linking them explicitly to the practices of the field as a whole. This is the case even as staff describes the Peace Corps as being "out there working people-to-people". One staff member observes:

> In the comprehensive agency assessment that was done [in 2011], there were some things that were raised that Peace Corps wanted to focus on. It was: why don't we do a limited number of things, do it well, choose things that we can train volunteers to do? The majority of our volunteers are straight out of college—limited experience, limited exposure—so what can you train somebody that's coming with a pretty clean slate (comparatively speaking) to do for two years?
>
> --Staff Member, Washington DC

This analysis was the driving impetus behind a new training program called "Focus In/Train Up".

Finally, for the agency to plausibly bill itself as a development organization (rather than a compromised state organization whose dubious mandate is to "hold hands and sing Kumbaya"), it must also adhere to the best practices of international development as a profession. It must therefore orient both its training and its administrative decisions towards this institutional logic of development. This orientation is apparent throughout the Peace Corps, as in this case of adopting standardized development indicators to assess countries' eligibility for Peace Corps volunteers:

> We have developed a new portfolio review where we use certain criteria to make decisions about targeting resources, volunteers, what countries to go into, what countries to close, what countries to increase, what countries to decrease. And those are based on things like security, medical and health conditions, the HDI (the Human Development Index), which is basically a measure of poverty, income, human development—[it's] an emphasis on that.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Agency Official

The Human Development Index, for instance, is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and income. The measure organizes countries into four categories of human development, and is used widely in professional international development worldwide. It was created by economists Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq in 1990 with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2015). Similarly, the Office of Programming and Training Support at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, designs the volunteer training programs in conversation with other actors in international development:

> We helped with defining—together with the field, defining what the focus in areas would be and also creating resources to help train our volunteers with some standards of learning, training standards.
>
> --RPCV 1990s; Staff member, Washington, DC

Adhering to best practices in international development helps the Peace Corps justify itself as a development organization, and in doing so, skirt some of the legitimacy issues that it encounters as a state organization with a legacy of idealism and community focus. These best practices, and the faithfulness to the norms of international development as a profession, are where the emphasis on professionalization—particularly procedural professionalization—begin to make themselves apparent.

Peace Corps in the field: professionalization abroad

The practices that emerged within headquarters to help the Peace Corps survive in a complex environment—being a development organization, extensive professionalization, and the

virtue-of-necessity of the person-to-person development scheme—all articulate in the field as well. They are transmitted by the field-level organizational officials.

However, Peace Corps field staff has a somewhat complicated relationship with these dynamics of professionalization and the values that they imply. Though staff members are purveyors of professionalized values from the top, they often struggle—both ideologically and practically—with it. Staff backgrounds, of both American and local staff, are important because they illustrate that, much like the volunteers themselves, most Peace Corps staff working abroad are socially committed at some level. Staff's interactions and behavior within the bureaucracy are also shaped by the conviction that their work with the organization is intentional and based, to some extent, on social commitment.

To be sure, and unlike volunteers, Peace Corps staff has a number of important material incentives for doing what they do. But even given these perks, Peace Corps staff members often face issues that are very similar to that which PCVs face, born of the tensions between mediating site demands and demands from Washington. Like volunteers, American staff tends to be deeply critical of the organization, while still retaining a deep love for it. However, the volunteers tend to love the Peace Corps for the experience it afforded them (one volunteer who served in Mali says "I think of it as a phase of my life and very much a pivotal one. It's also, of course, an organization but I tend not to think so much of the organization and I think more of the experience"). Staff, on the other hand, tends to love it as an organization, as more of an abstraction.

American Peace Corps staff abroad fall into two broad categories: the first, larger group is comprised of those who served in the Peace Corps and who express deep commitment to the organization's mission and/or ethos. (The staff members in both categories are typically limited to five years in the field because of the Peace Corps' personnel policy.) Those people frequently got other work in the field of international development before returning to the Peace Corps in administrative positions, and there is frequently something of a "revolving door" between USAID

and World Bank projects, and Peace Corps posts. When asked why he keeps coming back to the Peace Corps, after a varied career working in many facets of international development, one country director, for instance, responds that it is because:

> It's grassroots and it's people-oriented […] I keep coming back because I still believe in those three goals, and I believe in the direct contact at the local level.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Field Staff

The gist of his remark is quite common among staff in his position. Another sees the social goals of the organization as well aligned with her own:

> I'm an idealist, and I dream of trying to—I still have an idealistic front, even given all the realities that we know happen in Peace Corps. They're only a drop in the bucket, but anyway, that's the opportunity that I have as Program Manager.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Field Staff

The second, smaller category of American staff consists of people who are also RPCVs, but whose primary motivation for work with the agency is material. In addition to the pay and benefits schedules and comparatively good vacation time that come with full-time government employment, work with the Peace Corps provides a stable and credible way to live an ex-patriot lifestyle, and represents a shorter-term undertaking than, for instance, a career in Foreign Service. One staff member says:

> Of course, living abroad is a great lifestyle choice; we have a maid and my apartment's paid for. There are some things like that that are hard to walk away from, too. It's a comfortable lifestyle. That's not initially, I think, what attracted me to it, but I think that's definitely one of the pieces that is positive.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Field Staff

In something of a contrast to American staff, local staff members at Peace Corps field sites typically frame their jobs as vocations or callings. Like American staff, local staff earns a competitive wage by local standards, and frequently has access through Peace Corps to types of influential national decisionmakers that they might not attain otherwise. Local staff have occasional frustrations with the types of organizational hurdles that they encounter, but in general tend to be much more committed to the vision of the organization and less offended by the

demands of procedural professionalization that are placed on them than American staff are[8]. An RPCV who is currently Field Site staff observes that for local staff "this is not a job to them, it's a calling […]. And I think you find that in most countries. The staff feels very—I mean, obviously they like the work, but they feel like this is like developing their country. I think that that's very personal. It's very personal for them." One local staff member explicitly links work with the Peace Corps to feelings of patriotism for his own country:

> Then the idea turns out to be, like, helping these volunteers more. Helping them because they are helping us, helping [citizens of Africanea] in schools and youth centers. […] So, I found, like, by helping the volunteers I help […] my country. That is the end result of my job.

Most local staff in my field sites works for Peace Corps because of a compelling personal experience or civic convictions that brought them into contact with the organization. A staff member recalls:

> I'm originally from [the western part of the country], but I went to the University in the East […and] we had a Peace Corps volunteer there who was really active in some extracurricular activities. I became very active in this English Club […]. And this volunteer was teaching us to be just *active*.

Others report knowing counterparts in the field, or having had Peace Corps volunteers as colleagues in schools or nonprofit organizations. One staff member, who has worked for the Peace Corps for seventeen years, remembers that the interview for her job was itself particularly compelling:

> Before I was invited to the interview, I really did not know what to expect. And when I was at the interview with the country director at that time, [who was] really an amazing person—people of this caliber, you know, people are lucky if you meet them [once] in their lives. And he is a guy who worked with Nelson Mandela, […] you know, who has really encyclopedic knowledge of many areas and is, I would say, a true leader. So after talking with him for the initial ten or fifteen minutes, I just […] I was so inspired, and I did not care what I would be doing here.

[8] It may also be that local staff members are less explicit in their critique of the US government simply because they have limited work experience with American organizations and little basis for comparison with other US agencies.

These backgrounds, of both American and local staff, are meaningful because they illustrate that most Peace Corps staff in field sites (like volunteers themselves) are socially committed at some level.

The field site staff upholds the three central narratives coming from headquarters. They do not problematize the idea that Peace Corps, at least for public purposes, is a development program. Though they may privately articulate their convictions that the cultural exchange component of Peace Corps is its most effective prong, they overwhelmingly understand the politics of billing it as development. Second, they support the narrative that professionalization is the appropriate path to development. Third, they support the notion of development as an individual-level, people-to-people undertaking.

In spite of the staff's idealistic motivations, and because of the pervasive framing the Peace Corps as a development organization, procedural professionalization persists throughout the Peace Corps field offices, carried by staff members. Professionalization in the field in many ways is the least problematized of the adaptive measures taken by headquarters to ensure the agency's survival. One staff member, who returned to a Peace Corps job after a twelve-year hiatus, reflects on the increasing professionalization and structure coming from Headquarters:

> [Before], every post was different. As long as you had your budget and your justification, we didn't have a lot of oversight. […Now] we also have a lot more direction coming from Peace Corps Washington, making is more of an agency. We have more agency guidelines. Before, […] we had a support office, Office of Training and Support, which we still do have, and it's been called different things over the years. We had access to support, but we weren't told "this is the best practice, this is what you should be doing down there". Now it's like, "here's the best practice, here's the best practice, here's the best practice". You [used to] chose how you put your project together, and how you put your program together, and it was so much freedom, […] before when I was in this position, it's a little different from what it is right now. I like it much better now.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Field Site Staff

This person expresses the somewhat uncommon position of liking the structure emerging from Headquarters, perhaps because it both gives direction, and conceivably offers a window into

the ways that other development organizations are mediating the complicated issues associated with their work.

Consistent with trajectories of professionalization, the agency places a heavy emphasis on the roles of data, funding, and of monitoring and evaluation within their programs, both in field offices and in Washington. The pressures of accountability, monitoring, and data are extremely apparent among the Peace Corps staff, presumably because the staff is responsible for justifying the Peace Corps' expenditures and programmatic approach to Congress and the US public. The heavy reliance on data and documentation is, of course, characteristic of a state agency. It has the consequence, however, of driving isomorphic professionalization throughout the ranks of the organization.

This professionalization iterates in a number of ways: through reliance on statistical data and an adherence to the same culture of monitoring and evaluation, towards an emphasis on grant training programs, and in general in practices that encourage socialization towards the norms of the profession of development. Its quality and character transcends the characteristic frustrations with state bureaucracies; the particular contrast between the idealism that animates both its volunteers and staff, and the hyper-professionalization of an agency concerned with legitimacy creates an environment that can be toxic for both staff and volunteers. For the staff, who is compensated for their time, the consequences of this mismatch are frustrating but not grave; they are also more powerful actors within the bureaucracy. For the volunteers, however, who are frequently developing their political consciousness during their service, the consequences can be much more dramatic and persistent.

American staff abroad seem to feel relieved when they are able to point to statistical data sets, as though the onus were then off of them for providing justification for their decisions. Their professional discretion may be limited by such data, but their backs are covered by it as well. My conversations with them generally exposed a feeling that monitoring and data collection were things that field offices did in order to satisfy headquarters, not because they were the most

valuable form of reflection (one staff member referred to the 2012 all-volunteer survey as "very data driven and very happy", with more than a hint of sarcasm). A local staff member, looking down at the table as we speak, expresses her skepticism about the number of evaluations of volunteers that she is required to conduct:

> I don't know if the evaluations for PCVs are important. […It] depends on the type of the evaluation, how we evaluate, and why we evaluate, what exactly we need to evaluate. Maybe I [just] have my personal perspective about evaluation, because I did voluntary work for ten years […] If this is voluntary work under a big organization and big system, it's good to have creative evaluation, so that people, they don't feel that there is a "correct" or "wrong" in voluntary work.

A country director muses on these questions:

> How do you be an altruistic organization when you're part of this bureaucracy of the federal government? It's an age-old problem. The government has the money, but the non-profits are the ones that are nimble […] and so, with Peace Corps, we have a very modest budget for a government agency, but we have a lot of federal regulations. I like to say we're running a lemonade stand with federal regulations.

Peace Corps field site staff, especially American staff, do largely subscribe to the individual-level notion of development that the agency promotes. This seems to be less an explicit deconstruction of individual-level interventions as a theory of change (in other words, few of them would likely argue that individuals alone would be the optimal solution for a developing country's woes) and more a natural consequence of working within the confines of a limited budget and with unskilled volunteers. They *must* believe that individual projects undertaken at a local level work, or they risk cognitive dissonance, perceiving themselves as committing their lives to a flawed idea. One country director says firmly that, as a theory of development, "I believe in the direct contact at the local level. I believe that the local level *can* have more of an impact than anything else."

This perspective—that local level change can have more of an impact than other types—in some ways presumes a degree of participation in the host country (in other words, it presumes that eventually the aggregate preferences of the "local level" will be reflected in national or

international policy, leading to effective development strategies), and indicates a decidedly non-structural analysis of international development.

Despite their commitment to the Peace Corps and its theory of change, however, American staff members describe persistent problems with mediating between headquarters' positions and their own, and struggle to reconcile their tasks with their own critiques of those tasks. US staff abroad has substantial criticisms of Peace Corps Washington for what they perceive to be heavy-handed bureaucratization. One field official tells me:

> The hardest part of the job is the gap bridging. I feel like that's what really stretches us. We're bridging a lot of gaps. We're bridging the reality of the field with some of the ludicrousness of some of the things that come out of our headquarters. We're bridging the aspirations of our highly enthusiastic volunteer population with the realities of local culture and local customs and local capacities. […] I mean one of my biggest goals is to just filter out as much noise from what we get from above honestly, […] and let my staff do their jobs. […] And I've had to become really diplomatic about it, because […] everybody in a cubicle in our headquarters office thinks that they can make a post do something.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Field Site Staff

Another says:

> "I try to protect. Part of my job is trying to protect, certainly, the volunteers and the staff from this under belly, this sort of bureaucratic side."
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Field Site Staff

These critiques are not, of course, typically shared with volunteers. In most cases, that has to do with a commitment to what they perceive as good leadership on the part of staff. A country director says:

> When I have a bad day, I try to just shut myself in the office because I know it just sprinkles all out through the—it radiates through the place. […] It's true of any enterprise, but we're in the people business here in Peace Corps. This is a very people oriented business and people responding to different stimuli, whatever they are.

Because field site staff tend to understand their job as "filtering out noise" and tend to not share the complexities of their experience with those under their supervision, they are sometimes seen by volunteers as tight-lipped and occasionally narrow-minded. More broadly, these

behaviors—specifically, not sharing the complexities or their own doubts—tend to help lock in the professionalized impulses that emerge from Peace Corps headquarters. In other words, the lack of deliberation and lack of engagement with these questions makes the daily professional processes feel more procedural, rather than more ethical.

American overseas staff reported, to a surprising degree, that they did not feel adequately supported by headquarters, and that the constraints of the organization prevented them from being the best expressions of their professional selves. One illustrates:

> I had one time not too long ago when I had to get one of the lawyers involved in a case, and I felt like I wanted to quit. I understand it. We're a bureaucracy and we have to protect Peace Corps and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But I felt just angry and demoralized.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Field Site Staff

Another is more pointed in his critique, referencing the belief that a 5-year limitation within the agency is responsible for some of the problem:

> We [Peace Corps is] in a position where we can grind the hell out of our overseas—our American overseas staff—and not care. Because we don't have to care about their long-term stability with the agency. They're gonna go anyway, institutionally […] And so why go out and care? […] So why does the institution have to care about my health, my satisfaction as an employee, my whatever, my staff, my development as a staff member, anything? Why do they care about any of that when I'm gonna leave anyway? Probably about the time I'm gonna be burning out, they're gonna have burned me out, I'm gonna be on my way out.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Field Site Staff

The staff abroad—both American and local—seem on many occasions to be frustrated by the structures of the central bureaucracy themselves. Staff also reports feeling hamstrung by what one calls a "paradigm of safety and risk", related both to state legitimacy and to the general climate of litigiousness that characterizes public life in the United States. This official continues:

> I can remember going to—they had this OST, Overseas Staff Training, and the first day I went and I was filling out forms about being an employee. And I felt like I was a kid in elementary school. It was just awful. I just felt treated like a child. I signed up to be a Country Director! I feel like I'm being treated like a child by this bureaucracy. And I remember walking around the hotel thinking maybe I made a mistake, I shouldn't take this job. At this training they also bring in people from all around the different countries. They weren't there the first two days. The first two days it was just the Americans filling

> out these forms. So I walked around the hotel in this really kind of depressed mode and I went inside to where they were having a reception and all these people from all these different countries had arrived. It was like the United Nations' staff. […] And this is sort of the dichotomy of Peace Corps, on the one hand, we are a federal bureaucracy with lawyers, and bean counters, and rules, and all kinds of paper—so much paper to sign—and on the other hand we're this just amazing, human development, organism that's just so powerful and incredible.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Field Site Staff

Perhaps because they are initially so driven by social commitment, local staff at field sites can sometimes find the experience of working for the Peace Corps perplexing and dehumanizing, especially at first. While with one exception the local field staff I spoke to were highly committed to the idea of Peace Corps; however, they recognized the differences in professional structure between Peace Corps and other types of community organizations. The pressures of professionalization made themselves apparent to one staff member shortly after the job began:

> I was working in a local initiative, a local organization, so just the structure—the system is different; it's more professional in Peace Corps. […] it's very professional, policies are very clear. Even my job description is very clear. I don't do anything that I am not supposed to do. […] And very transparent, of sharing of information, and all this stuff. And very structural—the process from now to next year is very clear to us, we know where are we going. And everyone has like—even if it's not written or it's not communicated officially, but I know my work, my stuff, so I know I have to do this, this, this, to reach this. […] My old work was dependent on creativity and innovation. So even the office was very crazy. I mean, we had colors everywhere, beanbags […]. After work we couldn't stop working, and not thinking of this student or teacher. So this time because here it's more professional, it's work. There are no emotional things. It's work. It's a job.

This staff member went so far as to explicitly describe the lack of space for emotion in her new workplace, suggesting that it was hard to commit fully to it because "There are no emotional things. It's work. It's a job".

In sum, Peace Corps staff function as complicated purveyors of norms of professionalization, in part because they themselves are idealistically driven. While they do not problematize the notion that professionalization is inherently a "good" thing, they experience frustration implementing some of the practices that flow from that orientation. Because of their

location in the field they frequently resist standardization, sometimes by explicitly disagreeing with headquarters' policies, and sometimes by expressing frustration among themselves.

However—and frequently stemming from a desire to be good leaders—field site staff uphold the these three ideas very firmly to the volunteers: that the Peace Corps is a development organization, that professionalization is the appropriate path to development, and that small-scale people-to-people work is an effective way of undertaking this work.

Staff and Volunteers: Consequences of Professionalization

The experience of Peace Corps staff presents an interesting puzzle: though volunteers typically emerge from their service disillusioned, field staff remain much more committed—and particularly over the long term. What accounts for the difference?

There are two ways to understand Peace Corps staff abroad. The first is to treat them as relatively unproblematic purveyors of the norm of professionalization—they experience a slight decoupling and occasional frustration as they attempt to implement headquarter policy in different countries throughout the world, but are fundamentally articulations of Peace Corps Washington policy.

I opt for a different analysis here. The second way to understand Peace Corps field staff is to argue that—precisely *because* of their stated ideological commitment to the organization—they miss or misunderstand a critical component of both their own experience, and that of the volunteers. In doing so, they may exacerbate the problems that volunteers face.

In comparing the experience of Peace Corps volunteers and Peace Corps staff overseas, the data above show an interesting phenomenon: there is a tremendous difference in the amount of ideological support that each group receives. Both groups are overseas, working in the complex, co-evolving environment of international development. Both of them are, at least in large part, ideologically motivated. But one group—the volunteers—are placed in extremely remote areas without any social or organizational support, and the others are typically in cities

surrounded by others doing similar work. And here we see the important difference: that the office culture of Peace Corps field sites are important loci of both interpersonal and ideological affirmation that help encourage or preserve social commitment.

In other words, the organization gives its overseas staff some of the support that they need in part *simply by dint of being an organization*—by fostering communication between like-minded individuals (other staff) and creating a sense of collective identity among all of those in a field site, and a sustained sense of purpose.

These organizational dynamics interact, of course, with a number of other things, particularly demographic ones. The staff members typically have more developed political and professional convictions; they are usually older, have had some experience working in socially oriented domains, and are somewhat more familiar with the complexities of formal organizations. They are more fully formed political subjects. Though they profess a theory of change that turns heavily on individual contributions (which in turn proceeds from Peace Corps headquarters) field staff members *have something of a collective identity without even realizing it*. They are thus able to maintain that political engagement because they have the organizational support behind them to do so.

Volunteers, on the other hand, are often more unformed political subjects with different material compensation, and a very different type of interaction with the organization. We will explore the patterns and consequences of their experiences in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

The systemic logic of the Peace Corps—surviving and maintaining its legitimacy in an institutionally complex environment—ultimately manifests in an adherence to the idea of the Peace Corps a development organization, and in procedural professionalization. This chapter has outlined the trajectory of how the Peace Corps, facing various environmental constraints and various challenges, has adopted a structure that (in terms of the macro-organizational survival at

least), is workable. The agency has survived half a century in spite of pointed assaults and a consistently unfriendly environment. It has survived in spite of constant resource scarcity. Its behavior is a reflection of understandable adaptations to organizational life cycle crises. These behaviors produce systemic outcomes, which are a reflection of officials and staff making "obvious" choices, which in turn get locked into the organizational structure and produce side effects.

These patterns articulate through the Peace Corps field offices, but it is precisely because of their invisibility that they become so powerfully taken for granted. Peace Corps field staff are not simply unwitting purveyors of these processes of professionalization. Rather, they are ideologically-motivated workers who in fact *have* a number of the critical support systems in place that permit them to retain their sense of commitment to their work. Professionalization thus seems less hollow to them than it might to a volunteer. The rationale, and the process of "dealing with" bureaucratic constraints is less threatening to them, because their work is circumscribed by a sense of purpose, and they are fundamentally ideologically supported in what they do.

CHAPTER 6: Organizational-Level Effects: Professionalizing Volunteers

The preceding chapters outlined the specific crisis of legitimacy that the Peace Corps faces, as a state agency involved in social change work, and described how professionalization is instantiated and moves throughout the bureaucracy. In this chapter, I argue that the organization's emphasis on individual-level, technical work for volunteers is a specific reflection of that process. The project of maintaining legitimacy lends itself to procedural professionalization, which manifests within the Peace Corps in the volunteer training, amongst the staff, and in the field offices.

This procedural professionalization is linked to several important outcomes that foster institutional cynicism: it emphasizes the individual as the agent of change, bypasses the big-picture deliberative questions in favor of that which is relatively more discrete and measurable, and cultivates an understanding of formal organizations as both the *only* relevant intervention in human development and social change work, but also one that must be managed, bypassed or tolerated, rather than transformed or focused.

In the beginning: the training

Procedural professionalization in the Peace Corps happens throughout the organization, both in the Washington office and in the field sites. Importantly, volunteers are primarily professionalized and socialized *to the norms of international development* rather than to the norms of their specific occupation at their field site. For instance, an ESL teacher is not socialized into the profession of "teacher", but rather that of "development professional".

Though there are nods to professionalization even in the application and placement process for volunteers (the "Aspiration Statement" asks applicants to identify and describe three professional skills that they plan to use during service), the Peace Corps' program of pre-service training, a three-month onsite training program that all volunteers must complete before they are officially sworn in, represents the first point at which the logic of professionalization is clearly

evident. The components of the pre-service training vary slightly by country, but each training program includes three major thrusts: an intensive language component, training in the technical components of volunteer duties, and some degree of cultural training. Throughout volunteers' service, and varying by region, country offices typically hold mid-service trainings and/or language refreshers.

First, volunteers are socialized to understand themselves as development professionals, explicitly, as one country director put it, as "knowledge workers". As such, they are trained to focus on the technical, rather than the structural or political components of their work. One of the Peace Corps manuals, for instance, emphasizes the "capacity building framework" for development, claiming that capacity building needs to happen on a number of levels (among individual community members, professionals, and organizations). The manual offers standardized suggestions for strengthening local organizations: "Strengthening organizational capacities, such as management skills within an NGO, working with teachers to develop organizational skills and materials for a school, and helping health workers develop a record-keeping system for a clinic all help root other activities in an ongoing, functioning, and supportive environment" (Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange, 2002, p. 7). "Taken as a whole," the recommendations conclude, "this framework provides the structure for planning and evaluating sustainable development work in any sector" (Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange, 2002, p. 8).

The training program for incoming volunteers has been overhauled a number of times in Peace Corps' history, typically in keeping with the changing norms of the development field. The Office of Programming and Training Support at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington recently assumed responsibility for redesigning the core components of the pre-service training. The office does see its job explicitly as providing a link between Peace Corps and the rest of the field of international development, and also tends to frame their work as informing the rest of the development community about insights gleaned in the Peace Corps. One staff member says:

> We are a bridge in a sense, a known partner, both known to Peace Corps posts [and] outside of Peace Corps. You can take the CDC or the USDA or the USAID, and help make that bridge between what's happening in the international development world and what's happening with the Peace Corps. How can we bring what we're learning and doing, and the creativity and the grassroots of implementing some of the things that have come out of these organizations: how can we take our lessons and share it with them? But also their plans and share it with the field.
>
> RPCV 1990s; Staff member, Washington, DC

Pre-Service Training for volunteers is centered on an agency-wide program called Focus In/Train Up, which began in 2011. This program is standardized across host countries to provide training in six areas. Those areas are listed below, along with their distributions over time:

	1960s	**2010s**
Education and teaching	62%	46%
Youth and community development	20%	32%
Healthcare and disease	17%	29%
Business and communication	5%	20%
Environment and conservation	2%	18%

The nature of the program represents a departure from previous systems of training that were more tailored to individual countries. The program was designed to help volunteers "imple[ment] those projects that have proved to be most effective at achieving development results. Monitoring and evaluation is a […] critical part of the Focus In/Train Up strategy" (US Peace Corps, 2012, p. iii). Focus In/Train Up emphasizes partnerships with other US agencies, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Global Health Initiative, the President's Malaria Initiative, and others. Through these partnerships, the Peace Corps hopes to "maximize the impact of U.S. government development investments in [PCV] communities" (ibid: iii). Even in the language of the program itself, the influence of the broader norms of international development are perceptible.

Rather than focusing on the "big picture" issues within the profession of development, or discussions on the state of the profession, the language of the training program within the Peace

Corps headquarters heavily emphasizes standardization, as well as monitoring and accountability. It also works to promote the idea that human development is the result of generalizable policy ideas. For instance, coverage from the *Peace Corps Times* announcing the changes in 2012 reads:

> [Focus In/Train Up] will ensure that no matter where a Volunteer serves, each will receive a high level of training that includes sessions on monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Standard sector indicators that will be used across the world have been created to enhance qualitative stories and help the Peace Corps see and share its impact on a global level (Peace Corps Times, 2012, p. 3).

Organizational concerns with demonstrating impact and uniformity are apparent throughout the documentation of the program and volunteer accounts of it. FY 2012 agency reports, for instance, boast that the process of "demonstrating the impact of the work of Volunteers has gained significant momentum over the last few years. The agency is strengthening its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to improve Volunteer programs and better articulate the value of the Peace Corps to our overseas partners and the American public. Considerable progress in building *an M&E culture* was made in FY 2012" (US Peace Corps, 2012, p. 29). The 2013 report notes that "monitoring and evaluation efforts remain critical elements of the Focus In/Train Up strategy in order to continue to achieve best results" (US Peace Corps, 2013, p. iii). This type of emphasis in the public presentation of the training reflects both the organizational insecurities around demonstrating value (notably, in this case, to "overseas partners and the American public"), and in demonstrating routinization among its nascent professionals (e.g., an "M&E culture").

Importantly, however, there is very little data collected from host communities or governments about their reactions to Peace Corps programming. In some field sites volunteers' counterparts are surveyed periodically, but the data with which the organization is concerned is almost exclusively generated by the organizational participants themselves, specifically volunteers and field site staff. Such a strikingly one-sided approach to collecting information suggests that the "data"—the fact of having it—is far more important than its utility or content.

Importantly, this highly professionalized quality of the Peace Corps—while unique in a number of ways—is the most recent expression in an extremely varied organizational history. Pre-service trainings have been conducted differently over the years. The first groups of volunteers, explicitly recruited as generalists, received training that resembled military basic training far more than it did a field-internship at USAID, as it does now. Volunteers from the 1960s recalled being taught basic survival skills, to rappel down the sides of buildings on university campuses; one had his arms and legs bound, and was thrown in a swimming pool and expected to free himself. Applicants were deselected at several points during training—for physical weakness, character mismatch, and the like—as they are in military scenarios. One recalls a battery of standardized tests he was given:

> [They were] personality tests, achievement tests, things like that. The idea was that Peace Corps was still so new that the Government really didn't know what they were getting into. […] What kind of people would do it, and how would they behave when they got out in these really poor faraway wild places in the world? What would happen to them? Would they break down? Would they cause international incidents? I guess they wanted to get as full a measure of us as they could. […] At the end of the week, the psychologists who were following all of us gave us a summary of what they measured, and they said that, on the psychological part of it, we tested more autonomous than astronauts and Antarctic explorers.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Nigeria

As this volunteer points out, the Peace Corps was so new in the 1960s that there were no templates besides that of the military with which to train new volunteers. The agency thus did what much of the rest of the nascent development apparatus did at the time: it took its cues from the military. Not only was the military largely responsible for development aid before the 1960s, but it was the only other major US program that recruited large numbers of young people for an ideologically motivated end.

In the 1970s, as concerns about the legitimacy of the international development project grew and as the Peace Corps sparred with Nixon, the first major attempt was made to recruit specialists (volunteers with more specific skill sets), and to professionalize the Peace Corps somewhat. One man who served during that time remembers,

> The first volunteers were dumped out in these villages. And then the second—I was in the second generation of volunteers, where there was kind of an attempt to professionalize Peace Corps. Everyone in my [group]—I was in an agriculture and forestry group, and everyone in my group had degrees and we all had like, nine-to-five type jobs. The emphasis was really on the work and being professionals.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Morocco

The Peace Corps has since gone through pendulum-like swings between emphases on generalism and specialization in its training program. As the profession of international development and the Peace Corps both grew older, the militaristic components of training fell away and were replaced by more systematic cultural, linguistic, and technical training programs in the 1970s and 1980s. However, as late as the 1990s, the push towards professional and technical training had still not taken on the explicitly development-focused character that it has today:

> I went in to the Peace Corps thinking that maybe there would be more people like me who had studied international relations and international development, and who would understand the theory behind it […] But most of the volunteers came from like non-development backgrounds. […] You would think that that would be all the more reason that [the Peace Corps] would focus more on international development issues, or say "this is why we do it this way in Thailand", but I can't remember much about the ways in which our training was really international development-focused. It seemed very specific to the country, and just sort of like "this is the way we do it now".
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Thailand

Even still, volunteers recount being frustrated with the lack of guidance in what they perceive to be the hardest part of development work: grappling with the interpersonal, existential, and big-picture dimensions of trying to create change, and of living in a community so different from one's own. One woman sums it up eloquently:

> I don't think anything in Peace Corps training helped you think about how you *actually* motivate change in people's lives. When I got out to my site, I found that I wasn't prepared at all. The most basic things—from social navigation, to what was expected of me, to how to actually begin to do a job, how to actually go out and let people know that I was there. That's the piece that was completely untaught, and it's not easy or obvious.
>
> --RPCV 1970s/80s, Paraguay

The technical components of training have evolved to the current version in Focus In/Train Up that is now heavily focused on creating young development professionals. This is reflected both in the formal skills that volunteers are given and the type of logic that informs them, and in the language used to talk about those skills. A more recent volunteer remembers:

> During your training they teach you a couple of different ways of assessing community needs, meeting community leaders. They call it PACA—I don't remember what it stands for now. But it's some sort of development term; it's like a way of assessing community needs, community resources, and ways that you can utilize all of those.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Morocco

A large focus of the Focus In/Train Up volunteer training is the individual or personal nature of development work. In other words, the Peace Corps' theory of change turns on the individual. This manifests in a number of ways. For instance, incoming volunteer classes (they are called "stages") are understood as a collection of individuals, rather than as a group. More importantly, each volunteer is given a series of tools (such as that described above) with which to evaluate their *individual* contributions within their host communities. They are not trained to collaborate with each other, though they are expected to collaborate with the community.

Current Peace Corps staff is also explicit about the values of professionalization that they are instilling, and a number of them understand themselves to be doing so in response to the wishes of the volunteers themselves. An RPCV from the late 1990s who is currently a staff member in a field office recounts:

> Part of the push toward professionalization is responding to our host country, that's true, but there's a supply side in that equation too. The supply side is—I would say this generation of volunteers is very career-development focused. […] All three of our American [staff] that are here were volunteers, so we talk about how it was compared to our service […] When I was a volunteer […] I don't think many of us had a clear idea going into it about how Peace Corps was fitting into some kind of path for us. And a lot of our volunteers now do. They *really* do.

Another staff member even sees the professional aspect of Peace Corps service as a quiet "fourth" goal of the Peace Corps:

> The first [agency] goal is about development and the other two goals are about cultural exchange, so, you know, it's both. But I also talk about what I call the "fourth goal", which is […] personal professional development, which I think is very important too. […] I find, actually, [it] may be the most interesting, although it's not officially part of the goals of Peace Corps.
>
> --RPCV 1970s, Field Site Staff

In 2010s, a number of articles in both Peace Corps and university-based publications touted the professional benefits of Peace Corps, dovetailing with the discourses within Peace Corps itself. One law school alum published a blow-by-blow of her service in Swaziland in the University's paper: "From a practical perspective, it helps in the job search, because Peace Corps gives you non-competitive eligibility for federal jobs after service. Also, you're eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness for Peace Corps service as well as federal employment […and] Two years is long enough to get a good feel for living abroad, particularly in developing countries, and what that would entail, but still has personal and professional value if you decide you want to pursue a career stateside" (Rutgets-Camden NEWS NOW, 2015). Another current employee of the Federal government recalls "having a PC experience that covered so many experiences and topics prepared me for my wide experience at GSA [US General Services Administration]" (Fitzgerald, 2015). The Peace Corps is currently seen as a career-booster; as one volunteer described it, the "ultimate fieldwork". The agency trains volunteers carefully in marketing their experience upon their return to the United States.

Whereas at its inception the agency both built and protected its legitimacy in pre-service training by borrowing tactics from the military and *its* legitimacy as a state organization, the Peace Corps now depends heavily on the relatively more established international development community and its elaborate accountability apparatus (such as the "M&E culture") for that legitimacy. Further, and as these staff members indicated, PCVs are active participants in professionalization; the current crop of volunteers, primarily Millennials, have been socialized to understand that professional development is important an important component of any undertaking. The unforgiving job market of the 2010s, coupled with the highly professional

nature of the contemporary social change apparatus and nonprofit sector (Kallman and Clark 2014) have taught contemporary volunteers that, as one staff member put it, Peace Corps service must "fit into a path".

Volunteers in the Field

As I have argued thus far, the US government's problems with legitimacy have created an organizational structure within the Peace Corps that is largely professional, whereas the motivations of its participants (and frequently its staff members) have to do with social commitment. Rather than acknowledging the discursive needs of its socially committed workers (such as group processing, or mechanisms for dealing with both affirmation and criticism), the Peace Corps pathologizes disillusionment and individualizes success. In doing so, it neglects the emotions and social commitment of those within it.

This procedural professionalization that I have described above "trickles down" to volunteers in their field sites as well, though the nature of the volunteer work renders this process uneven—intense in some places and absent in others. Many volunteers have very little contact with the country offices during their service because of the remoteness of their field sites, coming into the capital city perhaps once a month for meetings or to collect paychecks. These juxtapositions—the high level of isolation contrasted with the intensely professional environments and requirements of the field site offices—may exacerbate volunteers' responses.

In their field sites volunteers are required to fill out periodic evaluation forms and to report on their activities, but more importantly, they are directed towards the field's standard practices as regards their work. For instance, the agency teaches its volunteers to apply for funding through the Small Grants Program, which includes several different agency collaborators and permits volunteers to practice pitching their projects. The program includes the Small Project Assistance (abbreviated to SPA, a collaboration with USAID), Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP, which asks the volunteers to activate their own social networks for donations from

organizations and individuals), Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST, a collaboration with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)), Feed the Future (FTF, also with USAID), Global Education Framework (GEF), and Energy Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA, with the Department of State). By design, the program explicitly links volunteers with established development agencies and trains them in one of the primary components of international development work—managing funding.

The imperative for justification of the Peace Corps' activities—reflected in things like quarterly activity reports—permeates programming decisions both in DC and abroad. For instance, notably absent from either the training manual or mid-service trainings is discussion of what volunteers perceive as the common hurdles in grassroots development work: program mismatch, absenteeism, lack of buy-in, and the soul-searching that accompanies projects, suggesting that the tools that volunteers are given to engage with their projects fail to meet their needs as altruists.

Many volunteers resolved this tension by "focusing on the small stuff" as a way to combat feelings of disillusionment and helplessness. One volunteer from Africa, having tea with me in a sidewalk cafe, summed up this impulse succinctly, and with impatience: "for me, one of the main lessons of the Peace Corps was that you gotta aim small. And as soon as you aim big, for anything that you're working on, you're going to be disappointed" (RPCV 1990s, Togo). Her comments hearken again to Eliasoph's observations on volunteering, quoted above: "What was missing was respect for discussion itself, willingness to debate about troubling issues that might not be resolved immediately; willingness to risk discouragement" (Eliasoph, 1998, p. 28), or even to Castells' observation that "When people find themselves unable to control the world, they simply shrink the world to the size of their community". Both the RPCVs' comment suggests that disappointment is just as dangerous, if not more dangerous, than a "failed" undertaking, precisely because it risked her belief in the whole system of participation. That disappointment, if it were permitted to flourish, could call the entire enterprise into question.

Related, volunteers reported a lack of forums for engaging with the potentially difficult conversations around development, perhaps because there is no immediate resolution available for such questions. Many reported that they talked with other PCVs (or "bitched") about development, but that there were no spaces to engage with larger questions surrounding their experiences within the structure of the organization. A volunteer from Albania in the 2000s said "As far as 'Is development ok?', I don't really remember talking about that specifically […] I guess we didn't have a forum." Another said,

> I do not remember any mechanism from Peace Corps about processing some of the bigger issues about development, whether what we (the US) was doing in Mali, etc. […] I feel that it was really left up to each individual to process all that on their own. I think many of us did, and came to our own conclusions, but nothing was facilitated through Peace Corps.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Mali

There is a potentially important point to be made here, however, between "bitching" and collective processing. While venting is important, over the long term, negative emotion is associated with ruminative (brooding) cognitive styles that emphasize small issues and individual selves, rather than effectively extending or integrating knowledge (Nes & Segerstrom, 2006). Another former volunteer and current staff member commented,

> To be honest with you, I think that there isn't [a conversation about what volunteers are doing here]. I mean, we all need to be careful about what we say and how we say it. But I think that sometimes within positions of power […] people have forgotten of the importance, the need for this cohesion, and the importance of what we're all about […] I just always assumed that most people really are here for idealistic reasons; I'll bet you they'll be the exact same ones [as when I was a volunteer…] But I think it's important to be reminded of that more.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Field Staff

This staff member's comments imply that she knows that collective identity and a sense of purpose is important, though she appeared to be giving it serious thought for the first time when probed in this interview. Both of these comments point to a lack of options for engaging with these large questions of "what it's all about" within the formal structure of the organization,

primarily because such conversations could risk disappointment, or because of a need to "be careful of what we say and how we say it".

Correspondingly, the Peace Corps as an organization deals with the emotional consequences of volunteering in an individual-oriented way. Just as volunteers were trained that individual people can make a difference, they are also trained that problems are primarily individual as well. The agency pathologizes disillusionment (commonly by referring volunteers to the staff psychologist), rather than utilizing a collective structure for introspecting on the role of the volunteer, the American, or the development professional:

> Our [Associate Peace Corps Director] is very great with handling technical questions and things about projects, […] but with the projects, like, she's not our mom so you can't go to her complaining and crying about personal life issues. [Peace Corps does] offer—like, the doctors you can go to them any time, to talk about anything.
>
> --PCV, Dominican Republic, 2010s

The Peace Corps attitude generally is that feelings of disillusion, questioning, or burnout that accompany the necessarily difficult and flawed work of international development are individual pathologies to be resolved in an individualized setting, among psychologists or doctors. This approach is consistent with other findings; Rodgers, for instance, found in her study of Amnesty International that "emotional distress [was] viewed as a sacrifice for the cause, and it [was] not regarded as something that either the employee, his/her supervisor, or the organization as a whole [was] compelled to deal with transparently and purposively" (Rodgers, 2010, p. 279). Staff members are understood as having a purview of "technical questions" and program management, rather than a responsibility to collective group processes that have been shown to sustain idealists in other settings.

Similarly, the organization does not facilitate bonding with like-minded communities or individuals, processes that have also been shown to help maintain their social commitment in other settings, particularly within social movements and emotionally intensive work. Though our theoretical framework suggests that PCVs need to be part of a collective identity to sustain their

commitment, the structures in place in the Peace Corps inhibit the building of collective identity among volunteers, and do not acknowledge the impediments to building a collective identity between volunteers and community members.

Peace Corps volunteers are actively discouraged from collaborating with each other, presumably because the organization wants them to integrate as deeply as possible into their community. One volunteer remembers:

> Lauren[9] and another volunteer, Jamila, they both have teaching backgrounds. And so [when I was an education volunteer] I really tried to get them to help me with some workshops, and to change whatever needed to be changed about my teaching style, and [our country director] just had none of it. She was just like, "no, you can't travel to each other's sites!" And I never really understood why. And I still don't really understand why. I mean, I think her intention was to keep us at our sites all the time—she thought, like, if you were leaving you weren't doing a good job. And I found that really frustrating, and it kept me from ever wanting to tell her what was going on.
>
> --RPCV, Uganda, 2000s

This particular volunteer had no background in education prior to joining Peace Corps, and was an education volunteer; she perceived that her country director's resistance to intra-Peace Corps collaboration impeded the progress of her project.

PCVs do typically form very deep friendships with members of their host communities, and perceive those bonds to be important positive consequences of their volunteering. However, those friendships do not constitute collective identity—they do not build a sense of "we-ness" *towards a specific end*, in part because the structural barriers are so high:

> The hardest part universally about being in the Peace Corps, especially in Africa, is this incredible loneliness. Because you, you know, even if you're good at making friends, they have no idea what you're talking about […] I mean, my friends knew that I looked different, I spoke French and Gbe funny, but—they assumed, rightly, that we all had much more money and resources than they did. But they had no concept of what my life was like […] I mean, there was this constant loneliness that most of us felt, and everyone was usually very happy to see other volunteers, because it was very hard for it not to be a one-way relationship [among friends in the community].
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Togo

[9] All names are pseudonyms

> Human beings want to connect to other people. Some people make great Albanian friends, but it's hard to connect with someone, you know, who never watched Saved by the Bell.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Albania

That lack of a sense of collective identity can manifest in behaviors such as the one described below, in which there are clearly two groups (rather than one) working towards a human development goal. This shifts the power dynamic away from one of collaboration:

> We [volunteers] made the decision to—I guess I could soften it, but no—we lied to our communities, and we said that this aid [money we had received] was dependent upon some community efforts. We leveraged that aid to create work groups to clear the trails back out to the more common paths to folks' farms. We had the community decide what projects needed to be done, but we told them that the aid would dry up if the Red Cross wasn't seeing progress. [We did that because] I think there was a sense that […] this area would see this as their comings, […] that we would create this sense of dependence. The aid would convince people that there was no urgent need to go and do these community efforts.
>
> --RPCV Dominican Republic 1990s

In some cases, the mechanisms that the Peace Corps has in place to connect office staff with volunteers actually serve to *increase* the sense of alienation among volunteers. In one staff meeting that I observed, a rural volunteer was asked to come in and present on his work with an impoverished agricultural community. He arrived at the Peace Corps office from the countryside via a complex network of public busses and shared cars, carefully dressed. It was a breezy but hot weekday afternoon, and the volunteer gave an hour-long presentation on his projects at the tail end of the weekly staff meeting. Excerpts from my fieldnotes:

> My overall sense of this meeting is that it's intended to make [staff] feel good about what they are doing, and to praise the volunteer enough to get a little more buy-in/sustain him for a bit longer. Another thing I noticed was that these [local Peace Corps] staff are by and large city dwellers with little or no understanding of what happens in the [countryside], so these things are curiosities for them, and there's just as much Othering going on here [among urban and rural host country nationals]. [The volunteer] just seems a little dazed, like he busted his butt expecting some kind of USAID-esque formal presentation (his PowerPoint is carefully done and he almost didn't get to use it because the projector wasn't working), and instead he found a bunch of people chilling out on a Tuesday afternoon, almost looking at him like he was the entertainment. If I were he I might also feel let down, like it wasn't being taken totally seriously. But [the local] staff really seems to love this, like it's validation for *them*. Later I chat with [the volunteer] and he says he had no idea that it was going to be so "cheerful".

This was an interesting moment, because the volunteer's program was clearly intended to give staff members a sense of purpose and to remind them why they did what they did. The volunteer, however, had a different expectation of the exchange and did not appear to gain the same sense of validation and reinforcement that the paid staff did. The organization seems to understand on some level that a sense of the collective is important, but there are barriers to constructing a true collective identity either among volunteers, or between volunteers and host community members. While the latter are not within the organization's purview (and indeed, both a challenge and a frequent success of the program), the former is potentially obtainable by reorienting some of the organizational attitudes towards volunteers as a group. Ironically, paid Peace Corps staff members are most able to do so, as I expressed in the previous chapter.

Retreats and introspection: when it works

If the previous section laid out the ways in which much of the Peace Corps can impede the development of a collective identity, collaboration, and engagement with large political questions, one of my field sites offered a compelling example of the integrative outcomes that can occur when the organization creates different and more introspective structures.

Europea is a former Communist country, and its Peace Corps program distinguishes itself: whereas the attrition rate among Peace Corps volunteers generally is quite high—24% in 2012 (US Peace Corps, 2015a)—the attrition rate in this country office was well substantially below 10% at the time of this study. During my visit to a mid-service language training at Peace Corps Europea, I was presented with a powerful example of what can happen when an organization *does* create space for introspection and connection, and actively cultivates a sense of purpose.

We had traveled approximately several hours outside the capital city to the retreat space, which was in a shabby hotel under banks of snow. It was fiercely cold outside. The first morning

I was there, I encountered the Country Director coming in the door around 7:30am, rosy and glowing, chatting with a group of volunteers after his morning constitutional.

At the formal convening of the training later that day, a local staff member welcomed the volunteers in English: "You are our heroes!," she proclaimed. "It's cold outside, snowing, and there's [political unrest] and still you're here." From my notes:

> [Peace Corps staff] makes a bit of a show of the welcome, an introductory speech about gaining new motivation in their language and in their work, hoping that the training will contribute to optimism, leadership, a will to continue living here, as well as new friends.

By the end of the training, it seemed as though the majority of those aspirations had been achieved. The training began by cultivating a sense of purpose and intention among those in the room. There was what staff called a "town meeting" before classes started each day, in which staff made announcements in the local language, and volunteers interpreted (reflective of a heavy emphasis on participation throughout the retreat). There were announcements of daily activities—a movie screening, an analysis of events occurring in the country, a joke/story swap with an emphasis on vocabulary, a debate over what the state language should be. Throughout the course of the training there were prizes for language acquisition, tastings of jam that volunteers had made in a language training the previous summer, and panels on fundraising skills.

There was also a great deal of emphasis on discussing the political climate in Europea, an emphasis that stood in stark contrast to the intentionally apolitical nature of the other two field sites. On the second day of the training I recorded the following field notes:

> At lunchtime I sit with a table of four […]. The four of them all have very positive things to say about the staff and the language training […] The banter around the table is that of people who don't know each other's situations well, and partly for me perhaps, and partly because they are all from three different groups [entering classes]. I ask them why they are at the trainings, and no one's first response is that they want to improve their [language]. Patti and Oscar both say they would lose their minds without this training, between the loneliness, the isolation of their field sites, and the like. Chet says that he leaves trainings like this inspired to learn [the language], inspired to go back to his site, and inspired to be a better volunteer. Apparently, if you scored below passing on your language test you are required to come, but otherwise there's an application process and it's somewhat competitive. Volunteers treat it as a treat.

Over the course of the next several days, the extent to which this thoughtful, retreat-like atmosphere makes a difference becomes clear. Further excerpts from my field notes:

> This language refresher is very obviously a place to blow off steam, but still seems different from [Peace Corps Caribbeanea], which was more a place to complain? In spite of that, the overall tone of this language refresher is much more positive, unified, and fun. PCVs sit together and greet each other and get to know each other—in [Caribbeanea] they were all glued to their own computers during breaks […] the attrition rate is good and the morale here seems to be excellent.

While this is but one example, it is a vivid one. Whereas the mid-service language training in Caribbeanea was characterized by disengagement and frustration on the part of the volunteers, in Europea (despite brutal weather, a great deal of travel, and a host of other disincentives), the training had a purposeful, retreat-like feeling that people valued. Volunteers bonded with each other, and were encouraged to think about their experience within the larger context of the country and the historical moment. The attrition rate of Europea was nearly 10% lower than that of Caribbeanea at the time of my study, suggesting that something about this experience may quite literally keep people engaged.

Socializing development professionals: norms and values

A number of specific values get transmitted from staff to PCVs through office culture, some intentionally and others not. First, the notion that development can be run by individuals and programs, and that a single person can make a different, is quite common. While it is certainly true that individual Peace Corps volunteers do begin successful programs, the notion that work can be undertaken by oneself not only runs counter to theories of empowerment, but also counter to basic organizational or bureaucratic thinking: no man is an island.

It is certainly likely that much of what Peace Corps intends to communicate with its emphasis on individual contributions is, first, that the onus is on volunteers—that they are not stepping into established programs when they arrive at their field sites. More importantly, the agency is likely trying to communicate that collaboration with host communities is important.

However, as the volunteer comments above suggested, the barriers to creating a collective identity (that can then be activated in service of a project) with members of the host community are typically very high. The consequence of these dynamics is that that, while collaborations frequently emerge, volunteers are not able to build that sense of collective with anyone, as intimate as they may become with their new neighbors, friends, and colleagues. While isolation may be frustrating to volunteers, it has perhaps a more pernicious consequence: it can foster both white savior complex and an inability to see agency on collaborators' parts.

Second, the narrative of the strength of American values—being active citizens, engaged community members, a work ethic, and a sense of voluntarism and service as desirable characteristics, pervades my field sites. This value is held both by American and local staff, and is treated as ideologically uncomplicated by volunteers. One American staff member, who served in Mongolia in the 2000s, describes volunteers as "hardworking, wanting to make a change, desperately trying to do something, incredibly motivated". Another calls them:

> …very creative, and they're dogged. Meaning, 'this route closed, I'm going to try another route'. They're good at completing things due to their dogged determination. They're *not* good at staying positive through that process. But they're good at […] not letting their negativity, which can bleed into their thinking, stop them from continuing forward.

These descriptors all resonate very deeply with a set of American values, and turn on individualism and hard work as a theory of change. American and local staff alike value a work ethic—in many cases, a great deal more than any given outcome—and that ethic is praised and rewarded in the office environment.

Similarly, values of democracy and tolerance are treated as a standard starting point in all Peace Corps offices that I visited. One country director, in response to a proposed piece of local legislation restricting the rights of LGBTQI individuals in his host country, went to lengths to announce in staff meeting that the Peace Corps has a policy and a value of nondiscrimination, despite that it occasionally counsels lesbian or gay volunteers to remain closeted for safety. Host

country staff describes themselves as being stretched by some of these policies, and as changing their convictions because of them.

Finally, the attitude within the office conveys the impression that a large bureaucracy has a life of its own, and is both inaccessible and something to be dealt with and tolerated (individually, of course); it does not suggest that it is a malleable institution in service of those who comprise it. Concerns with orderliness and strategy pervade the office, socializing both local staff and volunteers *to be good workers within an organization that is too big to change*—rather than being dynamic actors using an organization to solve a social problem. In other words, the people are working *for* the organization, rather than the organization working *for* the people—"organization" becomes a proxy for the social goal of human development. The unidirectional nature of the monitoring and evaluation, the types of training, and the like, build the perception that the organization is a machine, and individuals are expected to *put their work into it*, rather than to shape or reshape it with their own contributions. In other words, volunteers do not learn to shape or use the organization: they learn conformity, work-arounds, and how to protect themselves and each other from, as one staff member put it, the "underbelly, this sort of bureaucratic side".

This particular dynamic has important professional and civic consequences, which I shall explore subsequently. While it is certainly the case that large organizations, particularly government organizations, can be perceived as unwieldy by their participants, that unwieldiness can have particular consequences for how people think about work. Specifically, can create feelings of powerlessness in the sense that an organization "too big" to change, and the best that can be hoped for is to do one's work in spite of it, rather than because of it. When an organization becomes an iron cage to be tolerated, worked around, and protected from, it serves its ends other than those of the people who comprise it. This translates, as we shall see, into feelings of impotence in community organizing, and stifles the collective possibilities of returned Peace Corps volunteers as a group.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the procedural professionalization articulates throughout the agency: within headquarters, in the training, and in the field offices. Further, I have argued that this sort of procedural professional conformity fosters:

- An emphasis on the individual as the agent of change. This individualizes success and pathologizes disillusionment.
- A hyper-professionalization that, when not augmented by interpersonal work designed to meet the emotional needs of volunteers, impedes volunteers' ability to make sense of the experience for themselves.
- A lack of opportunity for perceiving or processing the "big picture" questions related to social change work or international development. This forces staff and volunteers alike to "aim small".
- An environment in which organizations are understood to be tolerated, rather than activated, acted upon, or utilized. This creates lasting beliefs that organizations are to be endured, worked-around, and manipulated, rather than engaged.

This understanding, in turn, may impede volunteers' abilities to leverage their experiences upon their return to the United States, a topic that I shall explore in depth in the conclusion.

CHAPTER 7: Micro-Level Effects: the Political Consequences of Volunteering

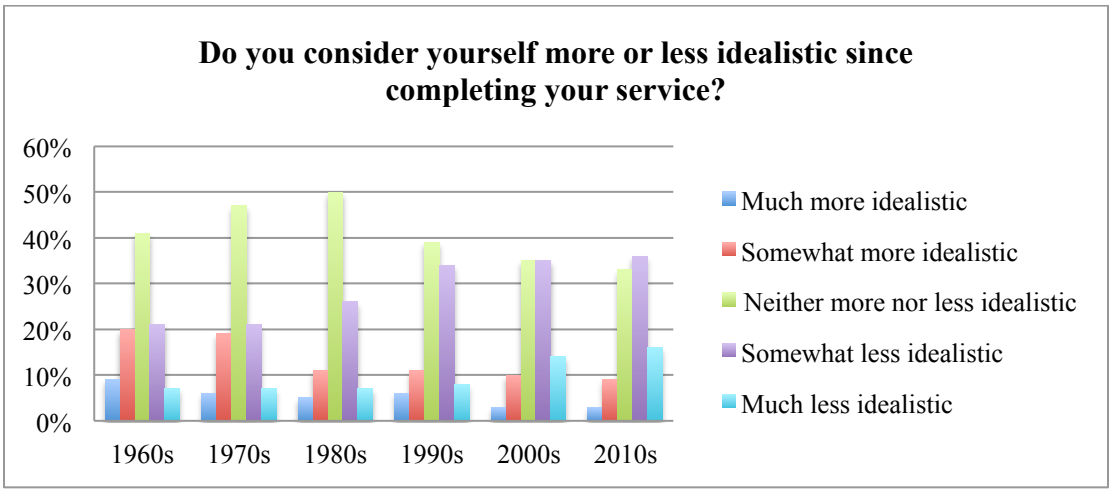
In the previous chapters I have documented the process of professionalization in the Peace Corps, how it articulates at a macro and at an organizational level, and what its effects for the agency and staff members are. In this chapter I turn to the individual-level consequences of Peace Corps service for volunteers, including both the dynamics of professionalization specifically, and the broader social and political patterns among RPCVs.

There are, of course, several dimensions along which Peace Corps volunteers transform as a consequence of their service. Not all of them can be traced solely to an organizational or an institutional effect; the experience of living abroad is varied for Peace Corps volunteers (after all, they serve in 75 countries) and is affected by time of service, historical context, and geography. Nonetheless, there are a number of very striking patterns among returned Peace Corps volunteers present across time and space.

The overwhelming pattern in both my qualitative and quantitative data is that the Peace Corps experience is paradoxical: while it enriches personally, and increases participation in some of the classic dimensions of political activity (such as voting and volunteering) and is an experience that most volunteers value greatly, it tends to neutralize criticism of the United States, it tends to depoliticize volunteers' engagement with institutions, and to promote a very professionalized understanding of social change. In general, volunteers report that they feel enriched by their life experiences; they participate in conventional politics, feel okay about the US, and see professionalism as a way to do well while doing good. This is not the self-image that draws people to the Peace Corps initially, but more importantly, it dampens political critique and creates a persistent, low-level sense of disillusion that does not find broad articulation. In other words, this life experience (which is expected in popular culture, media, as well as scholarship to be radicalizing) creates the opposite dynamic. It creates institutionally cynical left-of-center-centrists. This surprising finding explains both volunteers' commitment to the organization as part of their personal and professional development, but also the pattern of disillusion and

skepticism visible among RPCVs and, to a certain extent, among development professionals as a whole.

For instance, experience in the Peace Corps seems to substantially dampen volunteers' idealism. Prior to their service, 54% of volunteers identified or strongly identified as idealists, 26% somewhat identified as idealists, and only 19% identified as idealists slightly or not at all. But 43% say that, since completing their service, they are either somewhat less or much less idealistic than they were before. Though most young people do become more conservative as they age, there are patterns to this loss of idealism suggesting that something within the organization and the time period is catalyzing or contributing to the process. We see these trends represented in the table below:



In the chart above, we see rather striking patterns. Primarily, those who answer that, since their service, they have become "somewhat less idealistic" and "much less idealistic" *in*crease steadily over time, and those who answer that, since their service, they have become "somewhat more idealistic" or "much more idealistic" *de*crease steadily over time. In other words, volunteers from the 1960s and 1970s lost their idealism at lower rates than volunteers from the subsequent three decades.

The 1980s represent the widespread adoption of neoliberal economic practices, as well as the rapid professionalization of both development in general and the Peace Corps in particular.

While the data do not permit me to make a causal claim here, it's meaningful to see that, as the organization professionalized, its participants' idealism dropped off. That suggests that they are dealing in a meaningfully different set of emotions and incentives than they were at the beginning.

Further, the experience seems to qualitatively change volunteers' political convictions in some areas; even more striking is that, as they become less idealistic, some also become *more liberal* on a number of political issues, primarily social ones, while becoming, on the other hand, less liberal on issues relating to the economy, development, and organizing. The task of this chapter is to explain how these transformations occur.

Increased political engagement in classic civic dimensions

First, experiences in the Peace Corps are correlated with higher levels of political and civic engagement in the most classic dimensions—in voting and in volunteering.

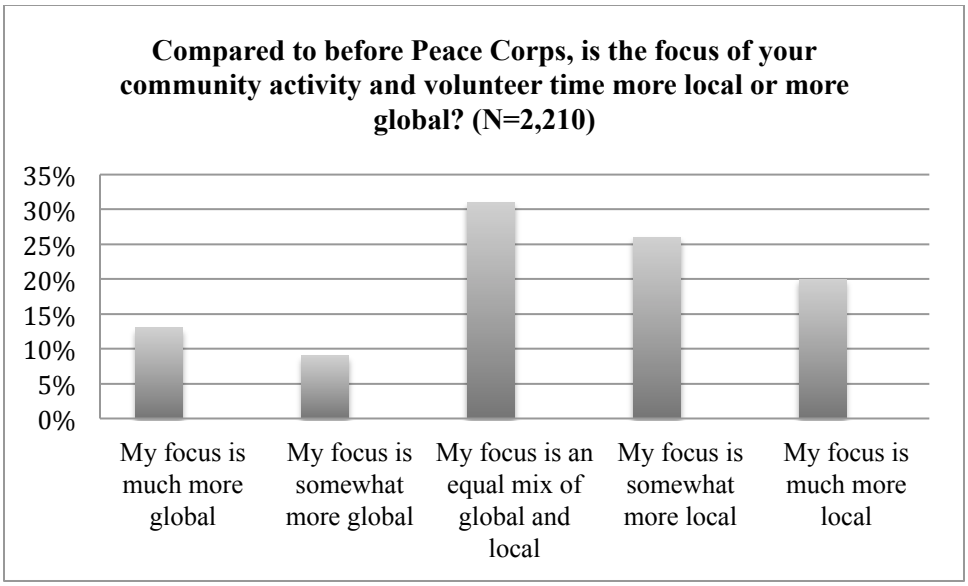
Though Peace Corps volunteers voted at a higher rate than the national average *before* their service, after service their regular voting rates continue to increase. While prior to service 74% of volunteers reported regular voting, that number climbs to 85% among returned volunteers. This stands in contrast to the national average of 35% of Americans who vote regularly (Pew Research Center, 2006). So volunteers—before they are volunteers—already vote at much higher rates than average, and the experience of being in the Peace Corps drives that rate still higher.

It is worth noting here that voting represents at least a degree of faith in electoral politics that other research suggests is not widely present in other segments of American society. (In fact, interesting recent work proposes a theory of civic engagement via "scenes" or consumptive patterns, instead of via traditional electoral politics—see (Silver & Clark, 2016)). A 2006 survey showed that "rare" or "unregistered" American voters (about 40% of those eligible to vote) were much *less* likely than regular or intermittent voters to believe that voting would make much of a

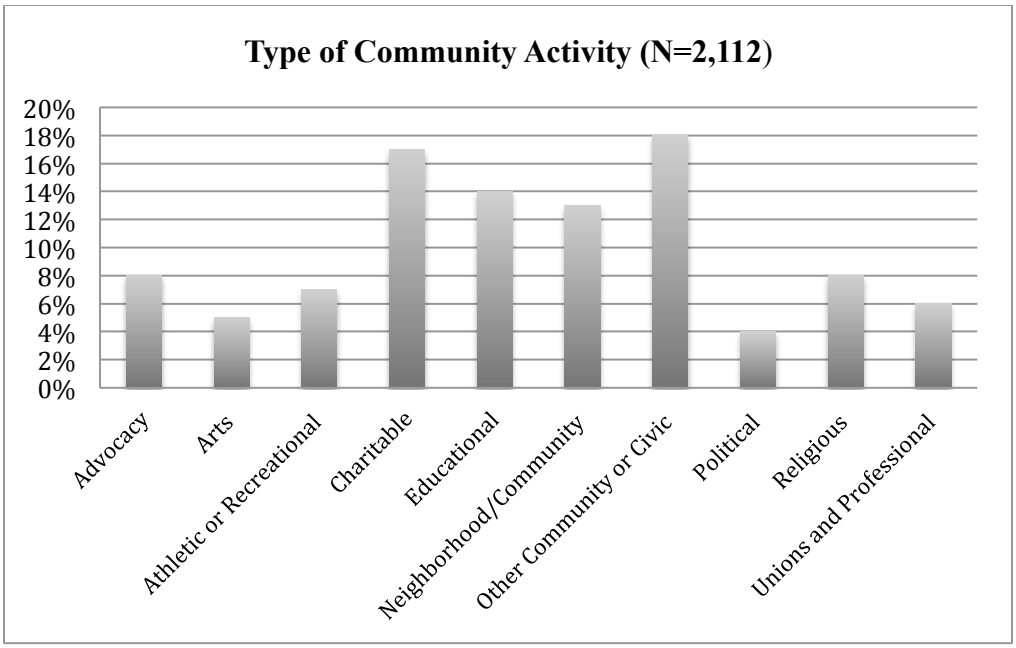
difference, and less likely to feel guilty about not voting (Pew Research Center, 2006). The high voter turnout among Peace Corps volunteers—even accounting for the large percentage of white RPCVs, their high professional status, and their relatively high income, all of which predict higher voting rates—suggests that RPCVs either have more faith in the electoral process than do Americans on average, or that they consider voting something of a non-negotiable duty, whether or not it is effective. As returned government volunteers, they may also be predisposed towards positive feelings about the United States government.

Second, returned Peace Corps volunteers continue to volunteer elsewhere throughout their lives. A large-scale agency assessment undertaken in 2011 found that RPCVs volunteer at much higher rates than other Americans (Bridgeland et al., 2011), and my data corroborates this. 73% of returned volunteers in my survey report either being somewhat or highly engaged in community or volunteer activities since their return. This stands in contrast to national volunteer rates, which ranged from 17.8% to 44.6% between 2011 and 2013 (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2014).

However, my survey provides interesting resolution on this regard; it shows that 46% of this volunteering happens in *more local contexts* than it did previously. It seems that the Peace Corps not only encourages people to volunteer more, but to do so in contexts that have more immediate consequences for their local communities, reflecting the liberal adage of "thinking globally, acting locally", and resonating with the previous chapter's finding that aiming small and local has a protective effect against feelings of powerlessness.



This focus, however, does point to the same pattern of individual and local behavior that the Peace Corps encourages in volunteers throughout their service. In other words, the Peace Corps does not seem to foment the development of volunteers who help put on the World Social Forum, but rather for the library, the soup kitchen, or the domestic violence shelter, which does not differ dramatically from other middle-class volunteers, but *does* differ from what one might expect of an internationally-oriented experience that is popularly understood to transform people's worldviews. RPCVs are, overall, more secular in their voluntarism than the American population overall (8% of RPCVs report volunteering for religious organizations, vs. 33.9% in the country generally (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2014). Yet it is worth nothing that labor organizing and political work ranks among the lowest; the distribution of volunteering focus does not look all that distinctive for an upper-middle class population. Importantly, this is at odds with the public image (and the volunteers' conversations about) the Peace Corps as catalyzing and life changing, and rather suggests an "avoiding politics" approach to community work:



One volunteer's quote effectively summarizes a familiar refrain: the experience of the Peace Corps both localized and globalized volunteers' perspectives. He reflects:

> I think [Peace Corps] made me a world citizen. I came from a little town in western New York state […] I think coming out of the Peace Corps made me feel like a world citizen in terms of knowing everybody in the world really wants the same things. […] They want to be healthy, they want to take care of their family and they want their kids to grow up and have, maybe have a better life then they did.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Sierra Leone

For this volunteer, the experience localized him in that it attuned him to the notion that most people want similar (local) things, such as education for their children and good health for those he loves. His comments about being a "world citizen" suggest that he is referring to the local piece of the global experience (everyone wants the same things), as opposed to a global structural understanding (for instance, an end to North-South inequality).

The experience of being a Peace Corps volunteer is correlated with increased political participation along some of the classic lines of engagement: voting and volunteering. However, there is also evidence that being a Peace Corps volunteer is related to self-identifying more as an

activist. 45% of returned Peace Corps volunteers consider themselves either "more activist" or "much more activist" since completing their service. One volunteer recounts:

> I don't know that I find myself at protests and all those, but I am more interested in what people are saying instead of just dismissing people. So I went to the Occupy movement with a friend—he emailed me and was like "I think you're the only person I know who would ever dream of going to the Occupy, you know [to…] check it out and talk with people". And it was really nice that someone would think that I was someone who would do that, because I never had before. So I was like, "sure, let's go check it out!". And it was really—I mean, I liked the experience. I didn't, you know, participate too much, there wasn't much going on that day, but it was just out of the realm of things that I would have thought of to do before. And now people see me as someone who can do that.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Uganda

The increase in activism is an interesting finding—particularly coupled with high degrees of professionalization throughout the agency—because it suggests a somewhat holistic type of political development: not only are RPCVs participating in the classic types of civic work, but they appear to be at least somewhat more willing to consider either confrontational or mass action as a language of politics.

But this is an odd point of analysis, because it is one of the only places in this project where qualitative and quantitative data tell different stories. While 45% of people report thinking of themselves as more activist subsequent to their service, interview data suggests that there is some degree of credibility and desirability attached to the idea/identity of being an activist for this group of people. They may therefore self-identify in that way, even though very few of them actually engage in organizing, and certainly almost none of them are involved in direct action. Rather, as I have shown, they engage with highly localized community volunteerism, as well as institutionalized mechanisms of advocacy through their professions.

We now look at the transformations of political attitudes in volunteers.

Political and Ideological Changes

Second, the Peace Corps experience seems to have meaningful effects on volunteers' politics, in both a formal (voting) and an informal sense. Though volunteers' formal political

affiliations hardly change at all in terms of political party, their opinions on specific issues appear to transform quite meaningfully.

Three specific patterns are visible in this regard. The first pattern is that about half of RPCVs report that their opinions on specific political issues remain unchanged after service, and importantly, that women's opinions are more stable than men's. These findings are in keeping with the relatively static nature of volunteers' political *affiliations* after service, as compared to before service.

However, the other half of RPCVs exhibits more sociologically interesting tendencies. 30-40% of RPCVs become more liberal on specific issues, particularly social issues. In all categories of social issues, at least 31% of respondents reported becoming more liberal, though the liberalizing effect of the Peace Corps is lower for economic policy, military policy, foreign aid and development, and labor policy than it is for other social issues.

There are a number of possible explanations for this trend. The first point is that Peace Corps volunteers are already quite liberal. (A full 66% of them self-identified as Democrats prior to their service. 6% identified as Republicans prior to their service, and 13% as Independents. After their service, the percent of Democrats remains unchanged at 66%; Republicans drop to 3% and Independents climb to 16%). Part of this trend may simply be previously held political views solidifying. But it is, I believe, much more likely that volunteers' experience abroad—particularly of extreme poverty—is responsible for these effects. One volunteer says:

> I mean, since I've been eighteen I've voted, really, one way. I know that I get really frustrated when it's like, "Albanians get free birth control! Why can't Americans do that?" I get really frustrated when I hear about socialized healthcare—we do *not* have socialized healthcare […] Sometimes I think back, you know, "this third world country, or developing country, can make it a priority that everyone there has healthcare! Even though they're no longer Communist, their healthcare is socialized. At least they have healthcare!"
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Albania

This person's remarks reflect a developing nuance within her political understanding that her experience in the Peace Corps helped to foment. While she may have been voting Democrat

for her entire adult life, her experience abroad helped shape (and in this case liberalize) her perspectives on certain issues. Another describes her experience:

> I think that before I was very socially progressive and not as economically progressive. Now that I'm not part of corporate America anymore—I had these inklings [prior to service] but now I've crystallized it. […] In recent years, I've seen inequities growing dramatically in this country. I'm terrified because I've lived in a culture where inequalities meant violence. It led to violence. There was just nothing good about it. Nobody gained. I don't want to see that here. I continue to get engaged in different ways to try to introduce change.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Papua New Guinea

For this other volunteer (also a woman, who joined the Peace Corps in her late thirties), the experience of living abroad sharpened her understanding of how inequalities can be linked to other social dynamics, including violence. This, for her, sparked both a change in her politics, and a change in how she engages.

The remainder—between 5 and 18% of respondents, depending on the issue—report becoming either "somewhat more conservative" or "much more conservative" on those domestic social issues. The greatest polarization occurs in issues of foreign aid and development, and in foreign policy, areas that are closest to the volunteer experience. Men outstrip women in becoming more conservative. Men, in general, experience slightly more polarizing outcomes in their political tendencies:

	Much more liberal (%)		Somewhat more liberal (%)		Stayed about the same (%)		Somewhat more conservative (%)		Much more conservative (%)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Economic policy	9	11	21	23	59	50	10	13	1	3
Domestic social policy	16	16	22	26	57	51	4	6	1	1
Domestic immigration policy	16	18	26	27	51	47	5	6	1	2
Foreign aid & development	14	17	26	25	44	41	14	14	2	3
Domestic environmental policy	16	20	22	26	58	49	2	5	0	1
Domestic education policy	16	15	22	25	58	53	3	6	0	2
US government	11	12	20	23	61	51	7	11	1	3
Foreign policy	13	16	25	29	52	45	9	8	1	2
US military policy	15	16	16	20	62	51	6	10	1	3
Domestic drug policy	11	13	17	23	65	58	5	4	1	2
Domestic labor policy	10	13	20	22	66	58	3	5	1	2

Here, another puzzle in my data emerged. In the survey, as demonstrated above, between 31%-44% of respondents reported becoming either "much more liberal" or "somewhat more liberal" on certain issues. However, in their interviews, respondents took a much more critical tone, tending to be extremely critical of the agency in general, the recipients of services specifically, and the project of development as a whole.

In order to ensure that my interview respondents were representative of my sample, I had the 56 interviewees who were cited or referenced in this chapter retake several questions on the survey. I wanted to make sure that I hadn't accidentally captured a more conservative segment of respondents than the survey as a whole yielded. I found that they were slightly more conservative than the survey respondents overall on some dimensions but not on all:

Opinions on select social issues after Peace Corps

	Much more liberal (%)		Somewhat more liberal (%)		Stayed about the same (%)		Somewhat more conservative (%)		Much more conservative (%)	
	2,833	56	2,833	56	2,833	56	2,833	56	2,833	56
Economic policy	10	9	21	14	56	55	11	16	1	5
Domestic social policy	16	16	24	29	54	50	5	5	1	0
Domestic immigration policy	17	14	27	32	50	48	5	4	1	2
Foreign aid & development	15	7	25	25	42	46	14	14	4	7
Domestic environmental policy	18	14	24	20	55	62	2	4	1	0
Domestic education policy	16	13	23	25	56	52	4	9	1	2
US government	12	9	21	25	57	54	8	11	1	2
Foreign policy	14	9	26	29	50	50	9	13	1	0
US military policy	15	13	18	23	58	52	7	9	2	2
Domestic drug policy	12	13	20	29	62	55	5	4	1	0
Domestic labor policy	11	9	20	25	63	55	5	11	1	0

Two phenomenon therefore warrant explanation: first, the transformations into liberalism and conservatism in issues of foreign policy and international development, and second, the reason that quantitative data suggests increased liberalism but that qualitative data suggests conservatism (as well as the disparity in respondents' own understandings of what is occurring). I take each question by turn.

There is a meaningful explanation for the more conservative turn in some of these Peace Corps volunteers' politics and opinions. The Peace Corps as an organization presents the volunteers with a series of puzzles, including massive cultural differences, ideological and

professional challenges, and the limits of one's own agency. The agency gives volunteers a complicated development project that they have been socialized to believe that they can solve as individuals in an individually-oriented way; they frequently find themselves unable to do so. Second, Peace Corps is idealistically driven work, but volunteers are only provided with small-picture, organizational tools with which to do that work. PCVs then attempt to make sense of these paradoxes without organizational guidance or facilitation. It then becomes cognitively easier to make sense of these dynamics through conservative ideas.

It is important to note that these dynamics of disillusionment are likely exacerbated by the nature of the "average" PCV—a self-selected group of people who typically have college degrees and are dedicated, motivated, and success-oriented. One staff member observes:

> Volunteers are really high achievers, they're really driven […] you put that person who is such a high achiever out in the middle of nowhere and […] nobody shows up to their meetings and it's the first time. *I* don't identify that as failure, but I think it feels like failure when you're that person. It's devastating and it seems to rock their world […] So, these people who are thoughtful and well-spoken are reduced in their ability to communicate in a way that they've never been before and then nobody shows up to their meeting and they have diarrhea.

The quotation above suggests particularly that volunteers are powerfully encountering the limits of their own agency—a new experience for many of these people, who come from overwhelmingly privileged backgrounds and have been overwhelmingly successful in most of their prior endeavors. Such an experience can serve to readjust people's senses of what is possible in the world; in either case this kind of readjustment requires an explanation. These processes of reckoning—with the paradoxes of development, with the limits of PCVs' agency, and with the differences between volunteers' self-perceptions and the way the organization treats them—resolve into three general patterns of disillusionment (which are, importantly, related to but not identical to political changes). Volunteers either become disillusioned with the project of development in general terms, or with the organization, or with the recipients of the services.

First, disillusionment with the general project of development is widespread among RPCVs. In this case, participants express different kinds of frustration about the mechanisms of professional development and/or practices of US engagement in developing countries:

> Like, why do we do aid the way we do? […] I don't think that a lot of the stuff that we've done has helped countries or individuals in any way. I mean, in some ways I think it's helped maybe individuals, at some levels. But overall I don't think it has helped countries […] I mean, Africa doesn't seem that much better off than it was fifty or so years ago.
>
> --RPCV, Uganda, 2000s

> My politics, I believe now, are very solidly center-right, and I'm very confident of that. I want nothing to do with the development industry […] there's this sort of hardness that develops when you talk about actual development and change. And limitation. And you just sort of—yeah, a real lack of, just—I mean, many of us just develop this extreme lack of tolerance for bullshit.
>
> --RPCV, Togo, 1990s

> I think what [Peace Corps] did teach me […] is that development is really long. […] And the way that development is set up by these western countries, like, "Yes, we'll give you this grant for two years, five years, and we need you to have x, y and z outcome," is particularly pointless. It's just really not helpful to creating sustainable changes […] Because the outcomes that they are looking for, and especially the numbers—the numbers, which you could easily make up—it's like they want *this* many people to be using condoms, you want *this* many people to suddenly have these attitudinal shifts. In like, two years!
>
> --RPCV, Togo, 1990s

> I didn't see the aid working in Nigeria […] That changed my feeling about aid. I sort of felt the same way about welfare, that it wasn't good, that it was destructive on families. That time was before the welfare reform and there were people that stayed on welfare habitually and I thought that was very destructive of families and counterproductive […] The aid programs that I saw [in Nigeria] were typically unsuccessful and useless, and the local people knew it.
>
> --RPCV, Nigeria, 1960s

> I mean, I *do* think that I did leave an impact with these girls [that I taught]. Is it a sustainable one? Probably only in them. I hope that they raise their daughters with, you know, a better explanation of why they menstruate every month, which is something that no one ever explained to *them*. And I think that if I left any impact, that's what I left. And if you count that as development, then maybe most Peace Corps volunteers *do* do something that is lasting, and that stays, and that is sustainable through people. But I think it's uncommon—I'm sure it happens—but I think it's uncommon that we do monumental things in two years that, you know, forever change the community.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Bolivia

These volunteers link their experiences in the Peace Corps to the practice of development generally, finding fault with the apparatus as it currently stands (and employing exceptionally strong descriptors such as "bullshit"). Words such as "unsuccessful" and "useless" indicate a strong disillusionment with the system of development in general. In two of the cases quote above, this sense of disillusionment even resolved itself into a critique of the US welfare system, signaling a conservative political turn in these volunteers in much broader terms.

Second, volunteers may become disillusioned with the mechanisms of Peace Corps specifically, but they have overwhelmingly positive memories of their service. Here again, the qualitative and quantitative data diverge in an evocative way. It suggests that what volunteers value about the experience is also related to the experience of being abroad, rather than necessarily the content of the work.

When surveyed, just over half of volunteers reported that they felt "very positively" about the organization, and 38% reported that they felt "positively" about it. However, in interviews, a much more critical tone emerged among respondents around this as well, who perceived the organization to be responsible for poor decision-making, insensitivity, and even for pushing an ulterior motive. One says:

> The […] thing that seemed really frustrating about Peace Corps was that they were constantly changing staff. I actually heard somewhere that they don't allow people to stay in their positions for more than five years or something. So it felt like people were always reinventing the wheel, nothing could really be accomplished.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Kyrgyzstan

Volunteers criticisms of the Peace Corps as an organization also became wound up in their criticisms of development more generally:

> We learned these things [during our Peace Corps training] that were like totally useless, absolutely useless in Ghana. The assumptions that were made about what was available in Ghana and how to train us were just stupid. Once we got there, it was like 'oh my God, why were we taught this?'
>
> --RPCV, Ghana, 1980s

> Most Peace Corps projects I've experience with, the long-term value is questionable. There was clear short term value […] but the long term value, in terms of that's projects staying on. In terms of enough skills transfer to capacity building to be given to make that project lasting. In terms of that project's value not being overridden by people's growing dependence on aid organizations […] I'm still not sure, two years on, if I took the job of a Cameroonian.
>
> --RPCV, Cameroon, 2010s

> I, along with everybody else, felt like we'd done nothing. […] we did not push their program forward, we were disappointed because though we're generalist trained, we're enthusiastic and we're dedicated to our work […] we probably made friends, and taught them something about America, but we didn't feel like we really did anything. We really just did their program, we weren't innovators or anything like that. So we gave them no gifts of organization, we just tried to do their job and we didn't do it as well! […] I felt kind of useless, and I felt like the—all the preconceptions I had were just sort of gone.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Korea

> I went into [Peace Corps] with low expectations, and yeah, I went into it with really low expectations. Our nickname for people who came in all idealistic was "six-month-ers", like they'd be gone in six months.
>
> --RPCV, Togo, 1990s

This volunteer is unique in that he was explicitly *not* idealistic when he joined the Peace Corps, but his comments on "six-month-ers" speak strongly to the pattern that he observed about burnout among those who were. Some volunteers perceived the organization to be actively attempting to cover up the disillusionment that more seasoned volunteers felt, rather than engage it. For another, the disillusion with development was compounded by the sense that the Peace Corps was holding back important information from the volunteers:

> I'm not as idealistic about [international development]. That's for sure. […] I guess because I feel like the--it's really difficult to tap into something that's going to make a difference. I didn't see a lot coming my way as far as help and support. It was more like I learned a lot for me to bring back. Like I said, [Peace Corps] wanted us naïve out there or something.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Honduras

> We were sort of a cynical, caustic bunch. We drank enormous amounts. And […] those of us who went through that, you know, when more than half the country quit, there's nothing that will create *espirit du corps* faster. [laughs…] We're the badasses, we're the guys that are still here. […] The administration always wanted to keep us away from the new volunteers. When we got there, too, they tried hard just to isolate us from the serving volunteers […] They were afraid that they were going to disenchant us, and infect us with cynicism.
>
> --RPCV, Togo, 1990s

In these last two quotations we see a theme of volunteers feeling as though the Peace Corps wanted to keep the complexities of volunteering invisible or quarantined. For the agency, having volunteers retain their naïve (but authentic) idealism makes the complications and complexities of development less relevant, and absolves it of having to engage some of the difficult questions of efficacy and approach.

Disillusionment with the Peace Corps specifically (rather than development in general) was somewhat less common, partly because, in spite of their disillusionment, most volunteers (92%) remember their experience fondly.

> I was born into who I am in Nigeria with the people there. [It was] Very life changing, more than life changing. […Before,] I had like five personalities. I had dresses for like artistic or for conservative or for French or scientific. It depended on who I went out with how I dressed. […] I didn't know who I was. Nigerians didn't know the games, so I had to become somebody. That's how I say I was born there is because the inner me came out.
>
> —RPCV, 1960s, Nigeria

> Peace Core to me is, well, it's a great experience for the people doing it. I feel like the volunteers get more out of it than the […] beneficiaries […] We benefit way more—you know, I was in Ghana and definitely it was more about us than it is about anyone else.
>
> --RPCV, Ghana, 1980s

This was a common refrain in my data; the notion that volunteers got a great deal more out of the experience than the host country did. A third reflects "one third of the [Peace Corps'] goal—isn't that interesting? One third of the goals is for where we go work, and two thirds of it is for the United States. Which is true." That is, the Peace Corps systematically disillusioned them with the *content* of its programs—including the idea that the program is more valuable for the participants than for the recipients—but at the same time facilitated interpersonal experiences that RPCVs value highly.

Finally, this cognitive dissonance sometimes seems to resolve in disillusionment regarding the actual recipients of services (host country nationals specifically, and poor people

more generally); this is where the political conservatism emerges. At a remedial language training on-site in 2013, for example, two volunteers were sitting with a language teacher, practicing verb tenses. The instructor asked them to tell him, in Spanish, what their projects need to be successful. From my fieldnotes:

> The woman [volunteer] says, "Es necessario que los participantes vayan a las reunions (it is necessary that participants go to the meetings)". The man [volunteer] says "Es importante que las chicas asistan a mis practicos (it is important that the girls come to my practices sessions)".

Both of their examples name things that the *community* should be doing, rather than things that they as volunteers should be doing, or that the organization should be doing. The problem, for these volunteers, is perceived as external and located in the community, rather than internal or located within the volunteer or the organization. This as well was a common occurrence in my data, particularly in the case of volunteers still in the field. A staff member explains:

> Frustration is there and very fresh and very real for people who are trying to do good things. I've seen it unwittingly and I've heard it from some staff. People might say some pejorative things about [host country nationals]; you hear people make fun. Even if it's just venting, like, "Having a conversation about anything but the weather in my community is impossible!" Maybe that's really the experience—because you're talking about folks who don't have the educational background, so they're not going have conversations about things that are existential, or maybe go deep into politics; they're not able to read or write. […] You're limited in different ways in how you form your relationships with others, but I think some of that gets translated to [things] said in a pejorative way.
>
> --RPCV, Madagascar, 1990s

While frustration—in a current moment—may indeed resolve itself in pejorative language towards the host community, sometimes these opinions solidify into more general critiques. Another volunteer ruminates on the nature of aid recipients in more general terms:

> [In the 1960s] I was more taken toward the Malcolm X version of the civil rights struggle than the Martin Luther King version, anyway. Malcolm X was very strong in self-reliance also. Pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps type of thing. I didn't like the version of the civil rights movement that was 'provide help to people'. That was already there to some degree, but when I came back from living in Africa it was more so. […] I still

> would really support equality before the law and opportunity, but not that way of giving people things and supporting people that don't work and stuff like that.
>
> --RPCV, Nigeria, 1960s

> Really my problem, I guess, with foreign aid, is any aid that's sent that's not accountable. […] I don't think someone should—if they're able bodied and they're able to work and there's a job—that they should be able to not work because […] they're able to get welfare.
>
> --RPCV 1980s, Sierra Leone

These final two comments allude to a more conservative turn in volunteers' own political understandings—experiencing the flaws of international development assistance appears to have affected their understandings of the merits of different types of welfare domestically.

I have illustrated throughout this project the ways that a mismatch of professional imperatives onto the identities of organization participants facilitates institutional cynicism in the form of disillusionment with development, with the Peace Corps as an organization, and with the recipients of aid. It also seems that RPCVs emerge from Peace Corps with an understanding of deservingness and aid as micro- or meso-level phenomena, rather than macro-level dynamics; it seems that the experience has done relatively little for their structural understandings of aid, development, poverty, or policy. In other words, RPCVs' political critiques tend to focus on *people* or occasionally *organizations*, rather than economic systems, international relationships, and the like. This mirrors the strong individual-level discourse and interventions that the Peace Corps as an agency promotes, pointing to the dimensions of institutional cynicism that I outlined earlier in this book.

There were few comments from RPCVs about, for example, the structures that facilitate systematic violence, oppression, or poverty, suggesting that many of them still see aid, development, and agency in largely individual terms (empowerment is "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps" rather than economic policy changes or social movements). No volunteers mentioned, for example, US trade policy or environmental degradation as a factor in poverty. This suggests that a final consequence of the Peace Corps experience is socialization that

encourages volunteers to understand dynamics of poverty from an individual or community-centered (rather than a structural) perspective. For instance, the prohibition on collaboration, and the individual-centric outcome measures described in the previous chapter, all contribute to this dynamic.

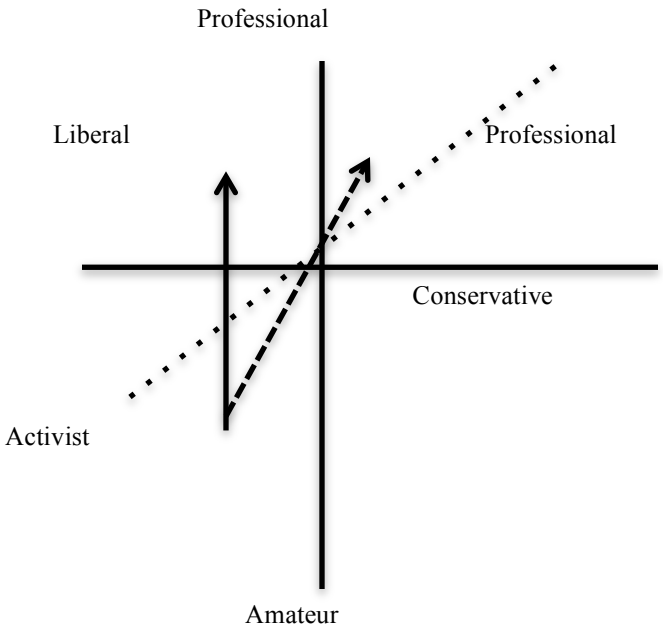
Similarly, PCVs' political critique (particularly their understandings of personal responsibility in the context of development) can be linked with the treatment that they receive from Peace Corps. PCVs transpose the discourses they have absorbed from the organization (that individual, professional development workers rather than members of collectives or groups can enact development), and extrapolating that learning to their political analysis of poverty. In other words, if an individual Peace Corps member is trained to think of themselves as able to "make a difference" independent of any collective identity or group (regardless of whether or not they feel that they successfully have achieved that), then the message that volunteers absorb is that the solution to any political problem is correspondingly individualized. Poverty reduction, development, and aid is thus, by extension, understood as largely contingent on individuals' behavior and sense of responsibility. The Peace Corps can be said, therefore, to affect individual volunteers' social commitment and politics, through the quality, character, and incentives of the organization, its priorities, its training program, and its culture.

At this point I return to my theoretical argument about the inherent nature of professionalization to explain the patterns that I have just documented. As I described earlier, the neoliberal order does not create roles for adult activists in American society, because activist and organizing roles are all precarious in one way or another.

Looking again to the graphic in the introduction of this project, we see its dynamics most clearly illustrated here. Most Peace Corps volunteers understand themselves as always to the left of center, politically. In their own formulations, they are simply moving from an activist to a more conformist perspective on social change, *while sill remaining liberal.* That moves them from the bottom left quadrant to the top left quadrant as a consequence of their service, indicated

by the solid arrow. This accounts for the finding that volunteers report becoming more "more liberal" or "staying about the same" on classic political issues as a consequence of their Peace Corps service.

Yet I have argued that the appropriate contrast to activism in this case is *not* conformism, but rather professionalization, because modern society affords virtually no other way to be socially active if one has children, or other responsibilities, particularly given the absence of a social safety net. Professionalization, as I discussed in the theoretical chapter of this book and throughout, is inherently a more conservative dynamic than activism, precisely the way that organizations operate. Therefore, the mere fact of being an organizational actor within a social industry moves actors to the right, as indicated by the dotted arrow in this graph.



Whereas activists understand themselves as moving from "activist" to "conformist"—but all within the liberal side of the graphic, this interpretation would see them as moving to the right because of the inherently conservative tendencies of most organizations. This process can help explain the difference in qualitative and quantitative data; while people understand themselves as

following one trajectory, the qualities of organizational life place them in a more conservative category than they recognize.

Depoliticization: avoiding politics through gratitude

A final mechanism at work at work among RPCVs neutralizes their political critiques via gratitude and appreciation for American institutions. This process, though counterintuitive, is relatively straightforward, as is its mechanism: re-identification with the United States and American values again challenges volunteers' self-perceptions. Many of them, prior to the Peace Corps, describe being either explicitly critical of the United States, or somewhat ambivalent about being an American. Returning to the United States is frequently accompanied by a more positive perception of American institutions, which then softens that criticism and incentivizes participation via classic mechanisms of voting, volunteering, or working. Guilt, which one might expect to appear, appears hardly at all. Volunteers return to the States believing things aren't really that bad in the US compared to their host country placements, which makes them more apt to use the standard mechanisms for political participation. The experience appears to give them more faith in the institutions that exist, a faith that in turn makes them less critical of those institutions. We shall now see how this occurs.

The question of patriotism is somewhat distinct from this notion of gratitude. Being abroad brings into relief the problems of the United States, but also its virtues. One African-American volunteer eloquently described himself as not patriotic, due to being poorly treated at home. However, he remarked that his Peace Corps experience had given him an opportunity to see how national privileges work as well:

> [Before my service] I wanted to be patriotic; I'd wanted to be patriotic for a long time. *And I don't have it in me.* […] I think now maybe it's just—it may be a bit worse. It's supposed to be the other way around, right? If you're going to serve, you should be patriotic, and then when you're here so long, maybe you become less patriotic? I've never been patriotic […] I'm black, and I'm a black male in the United States. So, and I've had my fair share of discrimination, pulled over by police officers, really harassed. I almost didn't come to Peace Corps because I got a charge from a police officer for

> resisting arrest when I wasn't […] So because of this and things I've seen, I'm not patriotic. But I do think America is a very good place, has a lot of opportunities, and I'm fortunate to go abroad and be an American because I get privileges here. Like how people speak about white privilege in the States, I'm a recipient of that, actually, based on my passport.
>
> --RPCV, Africanea, 2010s

This particular volunteer, because of the multiple dimensions of his identity, did not bring an overwhelming sense of national commitment to his service, and indeed, identifies a falling-off of the patriotism that he *did* have. However, during his service he was able to reexamine the ideological values of the United States, and the privilege that his nationality afforded him abroad, even while his race made him a target of discrimination at home.

Another volunteer identifies his Peace Corps experience as catalyzing his decision *not* to work for the government:

> You can talk about your politics in private, but [in the Peace Corps] you represent the US. And I was considering going into the Foreign Service and that was a very valuable lesson. I realized "I can't do this. I can't represent the US when they're engaged in illegal wars"…[Peace Corps] deepened my awareness of the conservative military-industrial country that we are. I learned from Turks about the spying and the control, blackmail, that we engage in at every level through foreign aid. Foreign aid is good, but the way it's manipulated to get access to, for example, military bases and spy planes—the U-2 spy plane was in Turkey, so the young people educated us about this hypocrisy of the United States. That was my learning.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Turkey

A third finds the difficult readjustment upon coming home; he discusses the political dimensions of his reception in the United States:

> Something definitely had changed. You know, the election went through with President Nixon. I arrived back in country and I--I don't know if I expected there to be a band playing or something, but I expected it to be, you know, friendly. But it wasn't. And I got in the airport in Seattle and I got taken aside by DEA agents who thought maybe I had drugs on me or something, and got everything gone through, including me. And you know that, that's a disappointment […] And but I didn't have a reentry problem especially, I just felt like things were a little frostier, that you know, the great Camelot experiment was over somehow.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Korea

While volunteers do recount challenging readjustment periods that ask them to question some of the values that Americans and the US holds, they also recount dramatically increased senses of both gratitude and patriotism upon return from the field. RPCVs across countries and decades of service report increasing feelings of patriotism and gratitude after their Peace Corps service. 81% of survey respondents report that they feel "much more grateful" or "somewhat more grateful" for their life situations upon completion of their tours. Much of this gratitude is focused around questions of material access (to food, water, electricity), and some to American values:

> It's given me a greater appreciation for the US and for being home. […] Everything that we *do* have, like couches that you can actually sit down in and not just plastic chairs or carpet […] it's always nice to walk on carpet […] Just other things, the access to different foods.
>
> --RPCV, Dominican Republic, 2000s

Another emphasizes appreciation for the institutions of the United States:

> It makes you realize, one, what you come from. And the institutions, especially functioning institutions. Two, you're like "my government pays for me to come and do this. This is really something special!" You know? […I]t's something I'm very proud I did. And I'm proud that the government does this.
>
> —RPCV, Togo, 1990s

A third reflects on the American values that he did not see in himself prior to his service, but which became very clear during his time abroad:

> I went up in 1973. The US's tenth draft had just ended. I had marched against the Vietnam War. I was angry with US government, and wanted to get out of America. I didn't want to be American, and I got over there, and found out how American I was, particularly in the terms of values. Which was a real shock to me when I had to admit that I was "one of the Americans". Living under a military dictator, I realized how much I value the liberties we have, the idea of freedom. […] I realized how individualistic I am. I remember traveling in Africa, and […] I'd pack enough food for me, and I'd get in the back of the pickup truck […] Everybody else would break up their food and start sharing it, and I had sandwiches that couldn't share very well. I realized I had only prepared for me! It never occurred to them to prepare for just themselves; they just shared. I have other stories like that too, but the whole business is, they have this much more communal understanding of who they are, and I'm very individualistic. That's humbling. I would admit that I was really American on that one.
>
> —RPCV, Congo, 1970s

However, this gratitude and appreciation can have the effect of transforming people's political critiques—softening them in some regards, and redirecting them towards more standardized forms of engagement. The process of becoming more identified with Americanness, coupled with the difficulty of using organizations to effectively push for positive change, can have the consequence of depoliticizing volunteers. In other words, volunteers' newly acquired understandings of the relative dimensions of wealth and poverty do not find articulation in a specific type of action, but rather in a quiet, low-level combination of gratitude and powerlessness:

> By the end of my three years, I had realized that, on Peace Corps income, I was absolutely wealthy. I understood finally what wealth was, because I knew what poverty was. And I've always kept with me that I'm absolutely wealthy, but now, I'm so used to having this big salary. It's amazing how wealthy I am. But I don't mind; I don't seem to feel so guilty about it that I don't take the money.
>
> —RPCV, Congo, 1970s

Similarly, RPCVs' critiques can become softer when taken in the context of the newly developing gratitude. One man says:

> I think we can talk about how inefficient our government is, but I have lived on a couple of continents now, and let me tell you, show me a government that's more efficient than ours. I think that all of these things about some issues that the United States has—I have real concerns about the United States being somewhat of a police state. Well, you step out there where […] a lot of that control and security disappears, or, in the case of some third world nations, where it's even more so—I mean it really gives you an appreciation for that we may not have it right, but we have it more right than a lot of countries. A lot of things that people railed against, well they went out and got a chance to see what it might look like if those things that they hated disappeared. They at least understood why they're there.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Dominican Republic

Another volunteer says:

> I was so much more grateful for being an American than ever before, because it's very critical. It's like—George Bush and whatnot, and I left just as Barack Obama was elected. I realized how lucky I am to be American after that, which I think I took for granted before.
>
> --RPCV 2010s, Suriname

In this case, the RPCV who served in the Dominican Republic sees "it could be worse" as a reason for suspending his criticism somewhat. In his case, the understanding that "it could be worse" elsewhere justifies his relative acceptance of a domestic system with which he is uncomfortable. The finding that gratitude can actually *de*politicize instead of politicize is striking, and suggests a reversal of conventional wisdom that suggests that gratitude can animate and politicize.

Finally, dynamics of conformity within the organization also influence volunteers. This type of organizational dynamic teaches actors that the organization itself is the priority, rather than those who inhabit it, or the values that it seeks to uphold. While this may seem predictable, particularly in the context of a state organization, I believe it merits a more critical analysis: it creates habits within organizational life that strip organizational participants of their power and make the logic of professionalization less plausible. One volunteers reflects on the beginning of his time in Peace Corps:

> I was like, "these are the rules, Stefano[10], follow the rules" […] But then at some point I felt like—I felt very—like [the Peace Corps] took a piece of my identity. Like they slowly took a piece of me, like "we don't want this, we don't want this part of your identity, so be this". That annoyed me very badly. I think they overdid it. But they said they "prepare you for the most conservative place in Africanea". Even so, I believe that they should push it a bit more. I think sometimes we try to remain too safe. And if we remain too safe, then what's the point of us being here? Like what actual cultural lessons are being made, you know, cultural exchange is being made? I think Peace Corps needs to do a better job of letting people be themselves. Because I don't think they do. [And if not], they're not learning diversity, you know what I mean?
>
> --RPCV, Africanea, 2010s

This particular volunteer, an African-American man, had a confrontation with the country offices over his dreadlocks in a complicated interplay between professional norms and race. He ultimately chose to cut his hair over going home. By quelling diversity along a number of dimensions, the Peace Corps produces homogenized development professionals whose socialization prohibits them from pushing on the boundaries of the profession and the practices,

[10] All names are pseudonyms

though their actual convictions—as we saw in the section on political beliefs—may be more pointed than their behavior. This careerism can have consequences for people's political critiques. Another volunteer says of his daughter and niece, both RPCVs:

> I see that [in] my daughter and my niece […] One is working in Thailand for agriculture for an NGO and the daughter works for the State Department, refugee resettlement. They exploited [Peace Corps] for professional advancement but I can't talk about […] military industrial stuff because they want to keep their noses clean.
>
> --RPCV 1960s, Turkey

These processes of learning to "follow the rules" and "keep your nose clean" are certainly, in some regards, endemic to organizational life, or life in groups. But they do point to a trend of homogenization, in which the politically challenging edges of people—including their identities in some cases—are sanded off. These trends facilitate the idea that social transformation and good work necessarily happen through organizations staffed by similar people; by "working from within".

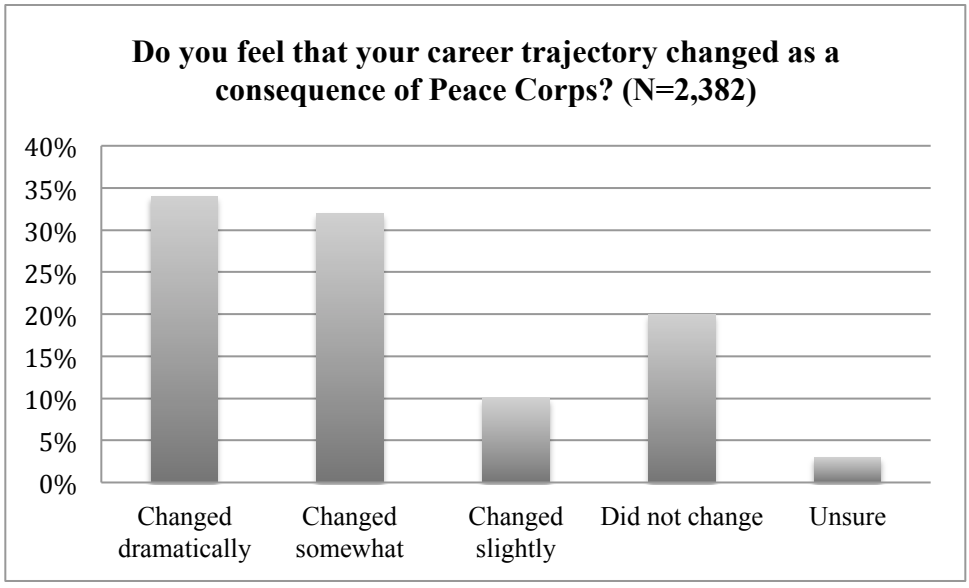
This finding is important for three reasons. The first is that working from within a system does not, structurally, tend to care for the social commitment or emotional needs that volunteers bring with them to the field. Second, volunteers, as we have seen, critique these "rules", believing them to be inappropriate or over-powerful. Finally, the process of learning to follow the rules and adhere to professional norms represents a theory of change that relies wholly on the formal organization. The real point is that the organization trains participants to understand an organizational intervention as *the only kind of intervention*, which comprises part of institutional cynicism.

Professional Trajectories

Perhaps the most telling consequence of the Peace Corps is what volunteers do with the remainder of their professional lives. A great many of them go into helping professions or development; relatively few of them work in the private sector at all, and no interview respondent

pointed at private sector work as a way to express a social vision. Of the RPCVs in my survey, 21% were employed in international development in some capacity; another 22% were employed in education, training, or literacy, and 9% were employed in community or social service. Just over half of the respondents, therefore, are working directly in nonprofit, development, or educational helping professions.

Further, RPCVs report that the Peace Corps was very formative for their career decisions. As the table below demonstrates, 34% of respondents said that their career trajectories had "changed dramatically" as a consequence of being in the Peace Corps, and 32% reported that they had "changed somewhat". While there is little data available on the career goals that RPCVs held *prior* to their service, this data suggests that it is likely that being a volunteer encouraged at least some people to focus on careers in development, nonprofit, or community service. These percentages did not vary greatly for RPCVs who are now in helping professions.



In most cases, the Peace Corps seems to both channel and solidify convictions, perhaps shifting their articulation. Furthermore, a striking number of RPCVs (493, or 21% of respondents) pursue work in the field of international development. (For instance, 50% of USAID staff is

returned Peace Corps volunteers). Though their specific agency affiliations vary, RPCVs are present in development agencies ranging from USAID to the World Bank to private nonprofits:

These helping professions—of which international development is only one—are professional expressions of the same impulse that brought many RPCVs to the Peace Corps in the first place. One volunteer elaborates on her career trajectory:

> I started with health stuff, health education actually, in college, where I was a volunteer with the needle exchange in Santa Cruz, and I started seeing lots of grassroots health […] So I guess that's sort of how I got into healthcare, and healthcare in Togo continued, and then I got my Master's in Public Health, because all the jobs I wanted after Peace Corps required an MPH, so I went an got an MPH, and I did this work in Kenya. And really in Kenya it became clear that it was either a doctorate of public health or an MD, and an MD, I felt, would give me more opportunities. A doctorate of public health would have led me—I could have easily found jobs in the capital city of a country, running projects behind a desk. Whereas an MD, I knew that no matter where I was, including in the middle of nowhere, I could keep my fingers in the ground treating people, and that I could also run a program, or do both at the same time.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Togo

Another also attributes many of her career decisions to her experience in the Peace Corps. This volunteer as well explicitly rejected the Peace Corps' understanding of development work as individual:

> I have spent my career doing healthcare policy work. I think that the experience of living in Paraguay led me to the conclusion that rather than changing the world one person at a time or on an individual level, that I was going to do policy work where you could with the sweep of a piece of legislation change the reality for thousands and tens of thousands of people. […] I think that that was the learning experience for me about my Peace Corps experience was that while there are enormous satisfactions in working individually and one on one—Certainly, over the years there have been times when I feel like what the hell am I doing as a policy wonk, […but ultimately] I did come to the conclusion that, for me, working individually was not satisfying because it was so incremental.
>
> --RPCV 1970s/80s, Paraguay

A third recounts his career trajectory in similar terms:

> Right when I came back from Peace Corps I knew I wanted to continue in some kind of international work. Development, humanitarian work, whatever. So I thought, "how can I best place myself in a position to do that?" I just knew that I wanted to quote unquote serve. And I also knew that I wanted to make a living. And I thought, "I can go back and work for an NGO for a couple years and maybe I end up where I need to, or I go and get a degree that's a functional and a technical degree, spending the same amount of time, and maybe I'll have more opportunities. You know, I won't have shut the door to some things if I focus on a particular organization or nonprofit". So I went to law school. […] And then, right out of law school, I got very lucky, and it was good timing, and I had certain qualifications, and I got hired by the UN, the High Commission for Refugees. And since then I've been working for the UN High Commission for Refugees. In Dgibouti, and Liberia, and Montenegro.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Togo

In these three quotations, as in countless other conversations I had in the course of this project, volunteers recount their career trajectories as deeply informed by their Peace Corps experience. Interestingly, these RPCVs all retain a similar theory of change, *which is expressed in their career decisions*—my data shows that Peace Corps service socializes volunteers to understand a great deal of their agency as linked to their careers and professions. One volunteer who pursued a subsequent career in public health, captures this transition succinctly:

> I used to [consider myself an activist]. I don't know that I—I consider myself an advocate. Not quite an activist anymore.
>
> --RPCV 2000s, Bolivia

While this pattern may seem intuitive, I do wish to denaturalize it, arguing again that the most relevant contrast to activism is professionalism. A widespread understanding of social change as a professional undertaking is unique to the neoliberal order (Kallman forthcoming). It

also stands in rather stark contrast to the language that Peace Corps as an agency uses to recruit its volunteers (which is primarily a language of altruism and personal transformation). Because professional or paid social change "work" is broadly understood by the neoliberal order as the most effective—and in some cases, the only—form of social change, the Peace Corps trains its volunteers to assume these kinds of jobs.

Related, the Peace Corps is currently seen as a career-booster; as one volunteer described it, Peace Corps service is the "ultimate fieldwork". He continues,

> I get so much respect. I've been in—I mean, I've worked throughout Africa and developing countries for the past—since Peace Corps basically, with the exception of [graduate] school, so for ten years. And now it's just the headquarters, where I'm working. But you get credibility, street cred. So that's what it does. It really does.
>
> --RPCV 1990s, Togo

Another says:

> Do I think that having been in the Peace Corps opened a lot of doors to me? Sure. Do I think I would have gotten into Vanderbilt to do my Masters? Maybe, maybe not. Would I have gotten into Yale or Hopkins? I got into some pretty good schools, and I think having been a Peace Corps really helped. It showed them that yes, I must have compassion or I wouldn't go overseas and I must have cross-cultural skills or I wouldn't have survived two years.
>
> —RPCV 1990s, the Gambia

The career trajectories of RPCVs present yet another interesting paradox—in general, RPCVs emerge from their Peace Corps experience much more critical of international development than they were when they went in. Though some of their values liberalize, some also get more conservative—particularly along economic, labor, and foreign policy lines. And yet over half of these former volunteers go to work in development or other types of helping professions. What accounts for this?

I theorize that there is a fascinating question of identity at play here. Throughout this chapter we have seen patterns of RPCVs holding private doubts or political convictions that are much stronger than their political behaviors or their accounts of themselves suggest. The reasons that RPCVs largely go into professionalized, helping careers may be based largely on an interplay

between who they understand themselves to be, and the mechanisms of professional and social advancement that are available in the world. In other words, volunteers may be disillusioned with development as a practice, or with social change in general, but have already invested a great deal of their time, training, and identity into these processes of becoming people who are skilled in that field. The patterns of personal, political, and ideological compromise that we have seen in this chapter, while they are endemic to organizational life, I believe represent a much broader pattern. In other words, returned volunteers may take up careers in development even though they understand development is problematic—they may do so in part because they cannot imagine how else to think about themselves, given the time they have invested in the project already. Their political attitudes sharpen (both to the left and the right), but they express them via voting and professionalism, rather than by organizing, consumption, religious engagement, activism, or anything else.

Futher, there are important dissemination consequences for these findings. If these attitudes—of mild disillusionment and conformity that mask stronger critiques or political convictions—are common among RPCVs, and RPCVs populate and head some of the most powerful agencies in the world (including USAID, US Congress, the World Bank, and the like), then the Peace Corps is creating an identifiable political dynamic that has potentially broad-reaching consequences.

Conclusion

Peace Corps service patterns subsequent volunteer experiences in distinct ways. First, there are broad patterns of increased levels of civic participation for volunteers who served across countries and decades of service. Second, there are patterned changes in volunteers' political convictions: they tend to become more liberal on issues such as the environment, education, and domestic social policy, despite the fact that their formal political affiliations tend to remain quite static. However, there are also patterns of disillusionment with development generally and the

Peace Corps specifically that occasionally resolve into more conservative attitudes about social welfare generally, and foreign service and economic policy.

Second, we see several fascinating dynamics that feed into the depoliticzation of volunteers—specifically, in this chapter, gratitude. Gratitude, or appreciation for the institutions of the United States, tends to have the effect of softening volunteers' former critiques of the country, and redirecting their criticisms into more institutionalized forms of participation (professional work, voting, and local volunteering).

The final notable dynamic of the RPCV career trajectories is that those trajectories are centrist—volunteers' professional lives do not reflect either the full extent of their liberal attitudes, or of their conservative ones. This, I argue, is a reflection both of volunteers' own identities as regards social change, and the limited options for living one's values in contemporary US society.

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION: Agency, Professions and Social Change

In this project, I have traced the professionalization of international development as it articulates through the Peace Corps. Both theoretically and practically, the Peace Corps sits in a liminal space between foreign policy and development. It has managed to survive because it can mobilize and resonate with a number of different discourses, including professional development and apolitical humanitarianism. It enjoys a high degree of loyalty from most of its returned volunteers, and a generally high degree of loyalty from its staff, which have in part permitted it to survive as an organization as long as it has.

I have showed, at a macro-level, how professionalization in international development emerged as a response to crises of legitimacy specific both to the American state, and to the nature of foreign aid in particular. That professionalization acted on the Peace Corps, particularly as the Cold War ended and the agency's external environmental demands changed. At the meso level, I have demonstrated that, as with other organizations, the Peace Corps is an adaptive social structure facing challenges that are external to its own creation. In this case, the legitimacy demands and the skepticism of state organizations are the most relevant. Its adaptive practices have become institutionalized, and in managing its complex environment, organizational practices become locked in and in some cases valued beyond the ends themselves. Those practices also articulate in the Peace Corps field offices, wherein the dimensions of the legitimacy crisis lend themselves to isomorphic professionalization (professionalization in name but not in spirit), which manifests in the volunteer training, amongst the staff, and in the field office cultures themselves. At the micro level, I have explored the individual-level consequences of Peace Corps service for RPCVs.

The question of procedural professionalization resonates with a great deal of other work (cf. Lipsky 2010; Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews 2013) that looks at how overwhelmed "street-level" workers make sense of or deal with that which is unmanageable or unknowable. It

seems clear, based on both this project and on other research, that adherence to protocol is a way to see "method in madness", and certainly to gain credibility within a highly rationalist society.

I have shown that the Peace Corps' move towards professionalization has intended to stave off criticism of being overly "ideological", a concern that exists in parallel with the idea that too much autonomy is a recipe for corruption and abuse of power (Bibas, 2009). On the other end of the spectrum, writers like Coslovsky (2011) understand the autonomy of the workers as key to buy-in and as protection against the meaninglessness of rote adherence to policy. I argue, however, that the question of autonomy is not the relevant point here—a social movements perspective, as I outlined in the beginning, is a sense of purpose, of collective identity, and a commitment to a political and social intervention in the world.

A lack of this sense of purpose or collective identity breeds what I have termed "institutional cynicism", a type of depoliticization. This institutional cynicism has consequences both organizationally (in which participants understand the organization to be very powerful, and also understand themselves as relatively powerless within it), and socially (participation and genuine investment is what makes things successful. Professionalization strains participatory relationships through its pressures). Here I take the consequences by turn.

Theoretically: the organization as emancipator

"Organizations are not responses that evolve as detached rational calculations," write Hasselbladh and Kallinikos, "Rather, they are social entities, embedded in complex networks of beliefs, cultural schemes, and conventions that shape their goals and practices" (Hasselbladh & Kallinikos, 2000). The Peace Corps' emphasis on professionalization facilitates the idea that social transformation and good work necessarily happen through organizations staffed by similar (professionalized) people, and that it is functionally the only way to engage with issues of import. That is an interpretation that necessarily conflates formal organizations and social movements. I have reviewed a good deal of evidence showing that formal organizations are more risk-averse,

static, and inert than less formal organizations, as well as being less confrontational. To have socially committed young people understanding social change as *specifically organizationally and professionally based* can dramatically alter their understanding of how social transformation happens.

This organizationalist idea of organization-as-emancipator reflects the widely held belief, which has emerged under the neoliberal order, that paid work is the only and/or the most meaningful work. Reflecting on the voluntarism findings in the previous chapter, we see that, although RPCVs are active in their local communities, their activities tend to be clustered around charitable or community activities, rather than political organizing, advocacy, or labor activities that include more structural critiques. While increased levels of voting are also normatively "good", that kind of engagement remains problematic because—as recent work has convincingly shown (cf. Gilens & Page, 2014)—conventional political institutions do not actually represent the aggregate preferences of the American public. Rather, they represent entrenched power structures and extant social patterns. In other words, voting is civically "good", but given the structure of US society, it only goes so far in challenging or shifting structures of power. This is coupled with the fact that Peace Corps experience does not foster a structural critique within its volunteers.

Theoretically, this message—that committed people ought to become professionalized—reflects the perception that organizations are the only mechanisms that foment transformative change, and that paid work is the most appropriate way to engage those changes. And the volunteers learn this lesson well: one reported at the conclusion of his service that he was looking for a job that would "professionalize [his] passion."

This professionalization happens broadly *in spite of increased levels of institutional cynicism and burnout that volunteers experience on the one hand, and in spite of liberalized attitudes on the other.* In other words, the social commitment that volunteers bring with them to the Peace Corps is voided by burnout, and professionalization frequently fills that void.

Second, procedural (as well as ethical) professionalization promotes a homogenized understanding of who should be powerful in social change, development or otherwise. By its nature, professionals are an exclusive group, set apart by their qualifications, experience, and access to certain resources, both material and collective. Missing here is an analysis of how grassroots work—particularly to the extent that it cannot be enshrined in a grant proposal or documented in an outcome measure—has been historically important in human development and social transformation.

Third, this type of professionalization within social change work—without the attendant emotional space and organizational introspection—means that participants are not bringing their whole selves to their tasks; this can potentially increase burnout. Professional jobs are somewhat unique in the sense that they are expected to be fulfilling; the expectation of a "vocation" is part and parcel of this type of occupation. Therefore, it is all the more discouraging to participants when those expectations fail to map on to their lived experiences. In the case of the Peace Corps, professionalization specifically de-incentivizes some processes that have been shown to increase cohesion and political commitment in other spaces. For instance working in groups—which the Peace Corps discourages among its volunteers, and which encounters meaningful barriers when volunteers and community members collaborate—has been shown to reduce the likelihood of feelings like inauthenticity (Erickson & Wharton, 1997). Similarly, requirements for demonstrating outcome (an important part of the agency's accountability procedures) that are aggregated to justify Peace Corps' continued funding, de-incentivizes honest feedback and conversations about failure (in other words, organizational introspection).

Any case of disillusion, of course, has undesirable outcomes: when participants burn out and leave, the field loses their skills, learning, and commitment. If they do not burn out in the traditional sense, but rather become disillusioned professionals whose own political commitment does not fully articulate in their work, the field also loses their inspiration and dedication, as has been documented in work on detachedness and inauthenticity (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

The professional structures to which participants must adhere may exacerbate that burnout, because they may feel particularly trite and pointless, and they may jeopardize the plausibility of professionalization.

This understanding—of the organization as an iron cage—means that returned Peace Corps volunteers do not carry particular political agency (either individual or collective) back into their lives. Because the Peace Corps has given them tasks that are too big to solve individually, their sense of individual power is compromised; because it discourages collective processing and group work, their sense of collective power is similarly compromised, or never taught to begin with. RPCVs do carry individual-level personality traits back into the remainder of their lives; skills like self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, confidence, and the like, under the rubric of personal characteristics are fomented or cultivated by the experience abroad.

However, I would like to argue here that this is something of a missed opportunity. To have generations of young people returning from the Peace Corps as more self-sufficient and confident is a wonderful thing, and yet unless those characteristics are linked to an understanding of how social change is made, *they remain individual characteristics*, and do not get converted into political or social power. And thus the effects of the Peace Corps, which could be incredibly powerful for American society, are not nearly as strong as they might be because those who complete the program remain siloed.

The Peace Corps itself seems to perceive a dimension of this dynamic, though it is expressed in the language of agency goals, and no staff member I talked to explicitly articulated their concerns in the context of collective power. One former agency official says,

> Probably the [goal] we do least well is Goal Three; we don't spend enough resources on bringing the Peace Corps home, and doing enough to help other Americans understand other cultures and other peoples. We have a lot of volunteers that do a lot of that, but in terms of resources it probably gets the shortest end of the stick and is probably the least successful.

This dynamic in general has interesting consequences for RPCV's professional lives as well as for international development and social change projects generally. If RPCVs are disillusioned, but continue to work in development and/or helping professions because they cannot conceive of an alternative that would better fit their values, then the development apparatus and the social change apparatus is left with a great number of "burned out" participants who are disengaged, detached, or inauthentic in their work. This is consequential for the actual practice of development, and more broadly, for other social endeavors. These organizational dynamics may generalize to a particular and modern problem: that the mechanisms entrusted to do social change may systematically strip people of their politics.

Finally, institutional cynicism is problematic because a great deal of research has demonstrated that successful international development is far more political than it is technical. Clean-cut, scalable plans that do not provide for deep adaptations, do not meet with success in development or elsewhere. Taking a professional toolkit entitled, for example "entrepreneurialism" to a village in Tanzania will not yield the desired results: a great deal of research has shown that development is all about power and politics (Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Barnett & Finnemore, 1999; Ferguson, 1994; Lupton & Mather, 1997).

For practitioners who think that development is an expert issue, having to do primarily with diffusing expertise, Weberian professionalization makes perfect sense. However, a nuanced understanding of development must take into consideration these issues of power and politics, and participants or professionals who are depoliticized are blind to the underlying political and social dynamics. Being "good at development" means being able to use one's critical skills to interpret local situations, critically. In other words: professionalization by definition does not deal with politics, and social change (of whatever sort) is all about politics.

The Peace Corps is not the only type of social change organization that has embraced professionalization. It is not the only type of organization wherein people bring their emotions and their commitment to work. It is unique, however, in its visibility and power, and the lessons

that it teaches disseminate powerfully through the fields of international and human development. It is important to understand the effects of formal organizations on social commitment, so that we may make better use of both.

Epilogue

"From the very beginning of my service, after I finished pre-service training, the Peace Core staffers would bring volunteers to the different districts where they were going to serve. In each district you'd have to meet the top administrative official and pay your respects. We met the governor of the […] region who is a big shot appointed by the president. It was really just a formality. There were 4 or 5 of us volunteers. We went in. It was in his office. We greeted him in French and he talked about the Peace Core and Mali strong relations with the United States.

"He said something, that at the time I thought was bizarre and borderline crazy. He said, 'I'd like to know that there are Americans who know my countries and who have lived here because someday if the US government wants to drop a bomb on Mali there's going to be an American there who knows this country and can say, no don't drop that bomb'. At the time in 1997, that seemed so out of place. After the global war on terror and the US now has drones deployed in the region and things like that. In hindsight it doesn't seem so crazy. I do think--as an anthropologist now and somebody who is active in policy circles […]-- I'm meeting policy people and I'm meeting state department people and NGO representatives who are interested in Mali.

"A lot of them are Peace Core volunteers. They have the knowledge that they do in large part because of that experience. A lot of the people who know and care about these other parts of the world it's because of this organization. I strongly believe that level of knowledge, as stand on the ground as it is, and inadequate as it might be. I do feel that that level of knowledge that the returned volunteers bring back with them serves an important goal in advancing the cause of neutral understanding and peace. I think the third goal is really important in that.

"Whether it's in the role of an educator, a college teacher like me, or a lot of my friends who teach at the primary or secondary level or just the informal outreach we do talking to groups, I think we have a very important contribution to make in terms of furthering neutral understanding and furthering peace."

—RPCV, Mali, 1990s

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Appendix A: Listservs Contacted

Country Listservs Contacted
Armenia
Afghanistan
Belize
Benin
Bolivia y Peru
Burkina Faso
Colombia
Costa Rica
Côte D'Ivoire
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Ethiopia and Eritrea
The Gambia and Senegal
Guinea
Guyana
India
Jordan
Korea
Kyrgyzstan
Lesotho
Liberia
Macedonia
Malawi
Malaysia
Mongolia
Morocco
Nepal
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Panama
Paraguay
Philippines
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Swaziland
Thailand
Turkey

State listservs contacted:
Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
California
Colorado
Connecticut
DC
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Indiana
Kansas
Kentucky
Maine Peace Corps Association
Massachusetts
Lousiana Peace Corps Association
Minnesota
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New York
North Carolina
Ohio
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
Tennessee
Texas
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin

City and Affinity listserv groups contacted
RPCVs Wisonsin-Madison
Big Apple Corps
National Peace Corps Association
Atlanta RPCVs
Peace Corps Worldwide
Northern California Peace Corps Association
LGBT PCVs
PCVs at the Department of State
Museum of Peace Corps Experience

Appendix B: Survey Respondents by Country

Country	Number of RPCVs	%
Afghanistan	14	1%
Albania	5	0%
Anguilla	1	0%
Antigua and Barbuda	2	0%
Argentina	1	0%
Armenia	39	2%
Azerbaijan	24	1%
Bahrain	0	0%
Bangladesh	2	0%
Barbados	1	0%
Belize	11	0%
Benin	58	2%
Bolivia	27	1%
Botswana	20	1%
Brazil	11	0%
Bulgaria	45	2%
Burkina Faso	26	1%
Burundi	1	0%
Cambodia	4	0%
Cameroon	65	3%
Cape Verde	9	0%
Central African Republic	8	0%
Chad	5	0%
Chile	7	0%
China	20	1%
Colombia	23	1%
Comoros	1	0%
Congo, Democratic Republic of	8	0%
Congo, Republic of	2	0%
Cook Islands	0	0%
Costa Rica	44	2%
Cote d'Ivoire	10	0%
Cyprus	0	0%
Czech Republic	0	0%
Dominica	3	0%
Dominican Republic	88	3%
East Timor	0	0%

Ecuador	34	1%
El Salvador	27	1%
Equatorial Guinea	0	0%
Eritrea	5	0%
Estonia	4	0%
Ethiopia	43	2%
Fiji	5	0%
Gabon	1	0%
Gambia, The	45	2%
Georgia	7	0%
Ghana	34	1%
Grenada and Cariacou	3	0%
Guatemala	95	4%
Guinea	17	1%
Guinea-Bissau	0	0%
Guyana	14	1%
Haiti	8	0%
Honduras	45	2%
Hungary	1	0%
India	20	1%
Indonesia	2	0%
Iran	8	0%
Jamaica	31	1%
Jordan	5	0%
Kazakhstan	17	1%
Kenya	78	3%
Kiribati	1	0%
Kyrgyz Republic	8	0%
Latvia	7	0%
Lesotho	12	0%
Liberia	26	1%
Lithuania	8	0%
Libya	1	0%
Macedonia, The Republic of	11	0%
Madagascar	14	1%
Malawi	22	1%
Malaysia	17	1%
Mali	42	2%
Malta	0	0%
Marshall Islands	0	0%
Mauritania	12	0%
Mauritius	0	0%

Mexico	7	0%
Micronesia, Federated States of	28	1%
Moldova	15	1%
Mongolia	19	1%
Montserrat	1	0%
Morocco	98	4%
Mozambique	30	1%
Namibia	20	1%
Nepal	36	1%
Nicaragua	31	1%
Niger	36	1%
Nigeria	60	2%
Niue	0	0%
Oman	0	0%
Pakistan	2	0%
Palau, Republic of	2	0%
Panama	97	4%
Papua New Guinea	4	0%
Paraguay	60	2%
Peru	58	2%
Philippines	106	4%
Poland	5	0%
Romania	28	1%
Russia	2	0%
Rwanda	6	0%
St. Kitts/Nevis	4	0%
St. Lucia	5	0%
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2	0%
Samoa	16	1%
Sao Tome and Principe	0	0%
Senegal	37	1%
Seychelles	0	0%
Sierra Leone	32	1%
Slovak Republic	29	1%
Solomon Islands	3	0%
Somalia	1	0%
South Africa	25	1%
South Korea	37	1%
Sri Lanka	1	0%
Sudan	0	0%
Suriname	6	0%
Swaziland	10	0%

Tanzania	23	1%
Thailand	22	1%
Togo	23	1%
Tonga	12	0%
Tunisia	6	0%
Turkey	28	1%
Turkmenistan	31	1%
Turks-Caicos	0	0%
Tuvalu	0	0%
Uganda	13	1%
Ukraine	46	2%
Uruguay	0	0%
Uzbekistan	16	1%
Vanuatu	12	0%
Venezuela	9	0%
Yemen	1	0%
Zambia	28	1%
Zimbabwe	4	0%
Total	2,548	100%

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

1. What is the Peace Corps to you? What do you think of when someone says 'Peace Corps'?
2. Do you consider yourself a patriot? Did you before you began your service?
3. Did you consider yourself an idealist before you went? An activist?
4. Why did you choose to go abroad versus doing a domestic development program like VISTA or CityYear?
5. Why did you choose the Peace Corps over entry-level jobs in other types of development organizations (ie, World Bank, other development NGOs or companies)?
6. How did your family and friends feel about you going?
7. Where were you stationed? How long were you there?
8. Did you speak the language before you went? If so, how did you learn it? If not, how did you learn it?
9. What were you doing in your post?
10. Did your formal assignment change in any way once you got there?
11. Did you have any good mentors, either in your host community, or in the country office?
12. Did you feel like your work was helpful to the community in which you were embedded?
    a. Why or why not?
13. What sort of contact did you have with the country headquarters while you were abroad? How frequent was it, and what was its character?
14. Did you feel supported by the Peace Corps organization?
15. What was your experience like with the staff of the Peace Corps organization, either in your country office or in the United States?
16. Did you have contacts with local NGOs or other development organizations in your country?
17. Where did you live during your service? Was there anything notable about the experience of living how you did?
18. Did you have much contact with other volunteers during that time? Why/why not? Do you remain friends with them?
19. Did you make close or enduring friendships with members of the community?
20. Did the experience of being in the Peace Corps change your perspective on the United States in any way?
21. Did it change your opinion of other Americans in any way?
22. Did it change your take on child bearing or child rearing?
23. How did you communicate with your friends and family at home while you were abroad? Email, phone calls, social media, etc.?
24. What did you do for recreation while you were abroad?
25. What effect, if any, do you think that your gender had on your experience as a volunteer?
26. Did your politics change in any way during or after service? On what issues?
27. How do you feel about international development now?
28. Did your religion change during or after service?
29. In your estimation, what were the best part(s) about the whole experience?
    a. Please describe in detail.
30. What were the most difficult parts?
    a. Please describe in detail.
    b. What motivated you to keep going on the difficult days?
31. What would you do the same, if you could do it again? What would you do differently?
32. Do you think that your experience is typical of volunteers? How do you think that other volunteers feel about their experience? I am interested in your perception of their perception.
33. Did you speak to Peace Corps volunteer/alums either before or after your service? Is there anything about those conversations that stands out to you? Did they give you any advice or insights that were particularly valuable?

34. What is the mission of the Peace Corps as an organization?
35. Do you think that it meets its mission as an organization?
36. What else do you think the Peace Corps does, outside of that mission? What other sorts of effects does it have as an institution (either intentional or unintentional)?
37. Are there perks or downshots to working for a federal agency in a capacity like this?
38. How do you think your host community perceived you personally?
39. How do you think your host community perceived the Peace Corps as an organization?
40. How do *you* feel about the Peace Corps as an *organization*?
41. If you had any interaction with other expats, how do you think they perceived the Peace Corps? Again, I am interested in your perception of their perception.
42. How has your Peace Corps service had an impact on your career decisions subsequently? In terms of choosing higher education, career paths, etc.
43. Has your Peace Corps *network* helped you in your subsequent career?
44. Do you have your application essays (or application materials) that you would be willing to share with me?
45. Is there anything else about the experience that you would like to share with me? Vignettes, stories, memories, that stand out?
46. What do you think the relationship is of the Peace Corps to peace?