Confronting the "Ugly American" Stereotype:
A Study of the Acculturation of Peace Corps Volunteers

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ABSTRACT

In this study I examine the processes of assimilation and acculturation of Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) abroad and their potential confrontations with the "Ugly American" stereotype. PCVs consciously and unconsciously decide how to fit in overseas based on their identity and personal methods self presentation. If met with adversity based on being subjected to the Ugly American stereotype, they resist urges to either fight to defend one's identity or shed the associated idiosyncrasies and blend in to the foreign culture. PCVs must maintain a sense of self and purpose while on their assignment. By interviewing a small sample of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) I gain insight into the potential hardships encountered during their first few months in the service. I also use literature from both critical and instructional sources on the topics to supplement my inquiry. These critique and demonstrate the various methods RPCVs use to acclimate and find a reasonable balance for themselves in their positions. The goals of this paper are to increase awareness and understanding of the difficulties and hardships faced by those who joined the Peace Corps with the aim of spreading knowledge abroad, not only in their areas of specialization, but about Americans in general.

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Chapter 1: Problem Statement and Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the assimilation and acculturative processes of Americans serving abroad as Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs). By looking at the social mechanisms and exchanges that are consciously or unconsciously involved in the choice to either "go native" or preserve one's identity from the "Ugly American" stereotype, I can contribute to a better understanding of nationality, identity formation, acculturative processes, and reactions to negative stereotypes. I will focus on the choices regarding self presentation that Americans working for the Peace Corps, as both representatives of America as well as aid workers abroad, must face. My research question is: how and to what extent do PCVs respond to being accused of portraying the Ugly American stereotype by assimilating/acculturating with the local community, as opposed to responding defensively (i.e., defending American nationality and culture-based behaviors and attitudes) and how does the training they received from the Peace Corps influence this?

Many Americans working for US based service organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and non-profits abroad can be greeted with animosity stemming from other countries' perceptions of "stereotypical Americans." American Volunteers[1] are taught by the Peace Corps to decide how to react to the hostility and prejudice stemming from the idea that they, as Americans abroad, can be belligerent, ethnocentric, and condescending (Hall 2007: 31-32). The options that PCVs abroad are faced with can be placed at two opposing ends of a spectrum. One option is to shield themselves from personal affronts by attempting to change the way that they are viewed as Americans. The other option is to "go native" or acculturate as much

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[1] The word "Volunteer" will be capitalized throughout the document as it is a proper noun referring specifically to Peace Corps Volunteers.

as possible to the local culture. The most radical form of "going native" is to become a permanent expatriate, and completely renounce their US citizenship.[2]

Peace Corps Volunteers are trained extensively in integrating into a new culture with the aim of their achieving this balance. I will use literature that the Peace Corps program provides, as well as texts on the subjects of assimilation, acculturation, and expatriation in order to provide a more comprehensive overview of these subjects. Many works have been published on the subject of intercultural communication, acculturation, and adaptation, but none sufficiently address the issues that Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) face when met with the negative, and oftentimes hostile, "Ugly American" stereotype.

I do not wish to critique the Peace Corps's current procedures with my research; I merely wish to review the literature and provide a resource for the furthering of the dialogue on the subject of Peace Corps Volunteer acculturation. Other possible areas where my research may have an impact would be in supporting an increase in multicultural initiatives, study abroad or cultural exchange pre-departure training, training programs for other international aid efforts, and basic pre-departure information for unaffiliated Americans travelling abroad. The socio-psychological outcomes of my research will focus on issues pertaining to personal and interpersonal struggles surrounding identity and presentation. And, more importantly, the sociological findings of my research will shed light on group processes and relations such as societal reactions to, and interactions with, members of an obvious out-group.

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[2] There is a bit of confusion surrounding this term due to the shortened version of the word, "expat," being used to mean two separate ideas. "Expat" is the now more common usage meaning someone residing in a country that is not their own for an extended length of time Green, Nancy L. 2009. "Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept." *American Historical Review* 114:307–328..

My research will qualitatively examine the interaction between PCVs and their host community focusing on how the host country or community's potential prejudices (or perceived potential prejudices by either group) affect the Volunteers' attempts at assimilation and acculturation. The Volunteers choose their method of integration, whether it is to act out and defend their national identity or to be more of a social chameleon and blend in before they make a name and identity for themselves. As previous research indicates, an individual is dependent on his or her surroundings and environment and will most likely gain the greatest positive experience from it "if he [sic] bases his interaction with the environment on realistic grounds, either adapting himself to the surroundings or influencing and changing the environment itself" (Torbiorn 1982:70). The reception and interaction of American PCVs with the local community is a useful case through which to examine this process.

The training that the Volunteers receive from the Peace Corps is broad and varies in depth. Before even leaving the US the Volunteers are put through an initial orientation. Upon arriving in their host country, they then take part in 8-12 weeks of intensive training, before joining their host communities. Then, Volunteers are placed with local families in order to gain perspective on ordinary life in the country as well as to aid in cultural integration and language acquisition. According to the Peace Corps this experience of staying with a host family is meant to "begin the process of building and maintaining various networks of friends and contacts with host country nationals and fellow Volunteers that will support each Volunteer's efforts for a successful service" (PeaceCorps 2009c).

Some of the other areas that I aim to address pertain to identity formation, the acculturation process, and, the various ways that the Volunteers deal with the pressures of combining the two. Identity formation and maintenance of that identity are parts of all social

action whether individuals do it consciously or not. Foucault and Giddens theorize the idea of "self-reflexivity" (Appelrouth 2006). This concept maintains that humans are able to reflect on their actions as they pertain to their own sense of self and, in turn, this indirectly reflects back on themselves when others regard them in the same manner (Adams 2007). This concept is very similar to Charles Horton Cooley's "looking-glass self" which states that individuals' sense of self grows from these interactions (Ritzer 2003).

People constantly partake in identity formation and maintenance. Ideas about one's self are constantly shifting and others and give off verbal, social, and other cues to help shape our sense of identity (the classification of a kind of person) and self (the attributes of the individual). The difference between these two similar terms lies in semantics. As Adams 2007 states in *Self and Social Change:*"Giddens conflates the terms into the hybrid "self-identity," whilst defining it in a sense more akin to identity: the self as a reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography" (Adams 2007: 12). These concepts of identity, self, and presentation have an impact on how PCVs face integration into their host communities.

Assimilation and acculturation are two key processes of adjustment to living in a new cultural setting. In order to fully assimilate one must be open and receptive to the new environment they are entering. To entertain new ways of thought and action, as well as to accept and implement them, is the true essence of acculturation. This adaption is particularly important when pertaining to Peace Corps Volunteers. These Volunteers commit to living in and hopefully having an impact on their new communities. The training they receive helps them in their process of making these transitions and fitting into their new surroundings.

In my research on this topic, I conducted in depth interviews with eight Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) from the Blacksburg, Virginia area to gather data from their

experiences. I asked several open ended questions that enabled the respondents to speak freely and direct the course of the interview. Through this process I gained insight as to each respondent's specific experience thus allowing for a more complete understanding of their actions and reactions in the acculturation process. Through these interviews the data that I gathered was used to examine the acculturation of Peace Corps Volunteers.

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual. I looked at the strain the Volunteers were under and the potential resentment that he or she met and overcame. This is the proper unit of analysis in this case because one cannot collectively state that all U.S. Americans[3] living and working abroad will respond in this way, that only some may. A key variable, though certainly not the only one, that I anticipated would impact the action the PCVs choose to take is the degree of negativity that the individual encounters. The degree of negativity in this study is the amount of hostility toward their nationality that U.S. Americans face from their host community during his or her work or travel abroad. The population for my study is all RPCVs who face adversity for their nationality.

I analyzed these responses using the interpretive approach to social research which Neuman (2006) describes as being used to understand and describe meaningful social interaction, since the focus of this study is to examine the inter- and intra-personal meanings of nationality and self representation (Frisby and Featherstone 1998). After the first round of interviews, I analyzed the responses, taking a closer look at the recurring themes present. From this open-ended approach I gained more freedom and flexibility in the replies from the respondents in order to gain a broad range of experiences on which to draw my conclusions. The

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[3] The qualifier "U.S." in front of American designates the fact that the peoples of North and South America can also technically call themselves Americans. When I say American throughout other parts of this paper I am referring to U. S. Americans.

main themes that I studied are the factors that go into choosing how and to what extent to integrate into a community and how to respond to negativity faced while doing so. Neuman (2006) describes the interpretative approach that I used as being helpful in understanding and explaining meaningful social interaction. Critical analysis of texts, theories, and personal accounts gained through my own interviews, are the primary sources for my research and analysis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter explores previous scholarship that forms a background to my study. It examines past scholarship on national identity and national stereotypes, on the Peace Corps' operations and training practices, and on the larger theoretical framework in which this thesis fits.. It concludes with a discussion of this study's potential significance.

2.2 "Being" American

In his piece entitled "Domination, Subordination and the Dialogical Self: Identity Development and the Politics of 'Ideological Becoming,'" Tappan discusses the idea of identity as a "mediated action," the socio-cultural formations of identity. One must observe the social, cultural, historical, and institutional impacts on a person to begin understanding his or her perceptions of personal identity (Tappan 2005). The ideas that identity formation comes from a combination of one's experiences, and that identity can be fluid and situational are both relevant to this study. This study is premised on the idea that changes in social, cultural, historical, and institutional conditions influence one's sense of identity**.** As Tappan observes: "The cultural and historical resources for identity formation do not constitute a single, undifferentiated whole, but represent a diversity of meditational means.… In that way, identity may be conceived as being formed when individuals choose, on particular occasions, to use one or more resources from a cultural "tool kit" to accomplish some action" (Tappan 2005).

The process of drawing out aspects of our identity from a semi-unconscious source is called identity work (Smith 2006). Ideologies are embedded in a multitude of tools and signs; in this respect, identity researchers must be open to the variety of settings and signs in which an

individual's identity is being constructed or expressed (Tappan 2005:52). If an identity was to

be reconstructed and redefined or expressed through multiple outlets or repositioning it would

be called ventriloquation (Wortham 2001). According to Wortham, ventriloquation is the

positioning and re-positioning of oneself with respect to others over time (Wortham 2001). In

relation to Peace Corps Volunteers abroad, the identity work process is hard to begin and

initially hard to manage; for some, these difficulties can last the entire duration of their service.

To have to balance multiple identities – an American abroad, a Peace Corps Volunteer, and

eventually, a member of the host community – can create stress though it can be facilitated by

appropriate training. Processes of national identity help us understand this balancing act.

National Identity and the Ranges of Nationalism

> "…Many of us have not chosen our countries. And yet the process of growing up in a
> certain place, becoming accustomed to certain landscapes, acquiring a sense of
> connection with a certain past, absorbing a language and customs—can similarly produce
> a sense of special connection to one's nation" (Antony 2003:381).

Peace Corps Volunteers may, as Antony suggests, affiliate themselves so closely with

America that they cannot separate or distance themselves from it. By claiming a nationality of

"American," or more correctly "U.S. American," they affiliate with something greater than

themselves. They are subscribing to an ideology of what it means to live in the U.S. and asserting

that they identify with their compatriots as sharing something based on where they grew up

(Antony 2003). However, such attachments may produce dissonance if one develops strong

feelings for a new place or way of life, an experience that is quite possibly common for Peace

Corps Volunteers and other long-term international travelers. The existence of such role conflict

between past and current place affiliations demonstrates the situationalization of identity.

In his book, *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*, Keane states that nationalism, "like

other ideologies, is an upwardly mobile, power-hungry and potentially dominating form of language game which pretends to be universal"(Keane 1998: 93). He describes it in such a way that it seems almost predatory: "it feeds upon the pre-existing sense of nationhood within a given territory, transforming that shared national identity into a bizarre parody of its former self" (Keane 1998: 94). To convey his view of nationalism, he quotes philosopher Albert Camus' statement that he loves his country too much to be a nationalist. These sentiments, of an overarching domineering ideology, constitute a fanaticism for where one was born or the nation one belongs to. Keane states that nationalism is different from national identity because the latter is not as bounded and regimented. He states that nationalism requires people "to believe that they are not alone, that they are members of a community of believers known as the Nation, through which they can achieve immortality by living their essential nature" (Keane 1998: 95).

Though Keane focused on Europeanist sentiments, his analysis also describes Americanism or any other country's national pride. For many Americans, the words freedom, tolerance, choice, justice, democracy, and so on, sum up much of what it means to be American. Americans tend to adopt these mythical founding ideologies of the United States as their own and use them as part of an identity and communicate them as important to their individual sense of self and to their sense of being Americans. Thus their national identity is constructed.

As Keane noted, this pride can be taken to extreme lengths. When someone identifies strongly with their country and shows preference for it over others they are exhibiting a national bias. This preconception in favor of one's place of residence and all that it stands for is a type of sociocentrism – a bias in favor of one's own group or society that resembles ethnocentrism,

though the latter concept refers more to culture than national affiliation. I will discuss later how these ideas relate to the Ugly American stereotype.

A bias tailored to national identity specifically is called "nationalistic sociocentrism"(Doise 1978). While it is common to form these biases, it also tends to inhibit personal and cultural growth and understanding if they are taken too far. When one begins to side with one's government regardless of the issue, cause, or outcome and impact on others, one becomes too narrowly focused and loses sight of a balanced informed, cautious and questioning mindset.

While patriotism can be defined as devoted love, support, and defense of one's country, jingoism is taking these sentiments to the extreme. The sentiment: "My country, right or wrong" is an example of jingoism (Antony 2003:379). The inability to separate oneself from right and wrong actions, however pure or malicious they may be, is a liability and a shortcoming. This blind pride in one's nationality, without any critical assessments or lack of openness to the possibility of other ways of doing things is detrimental and limits oneself. A consuming national pride must not be confused with patriotism in general, however. One can favor the society with which they identify nationally without giving themselves over to blind fervor.

These concepts of nationalism, nationalistic sociocentrism, and jingoism, help us better understand the idea of cultural imperialism: the culture or language of one nation being forced upon another. This unwelcome intrusion is usually imposed by a more economically, politically, socially, or militaristically powerful nation upon a less powerful one. It can be actively enforced by government or less formally inflicted by dominant groups or their members. The Peace Corps is often accused of fomenting this second, less formal type of cultural imperialism. The idea of

cultural imperialism is integral in more ways than one to my research. It is one concept from which we get the stereotype of the Ugly American, it is a raison d'état for institutions like the Peace Corps, and it in itself is an argument against the Peace Corps' presence and influence in other countries.

While the Peace Corps exists to "promote world peace and friendship by: helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women, helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, and helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans"(PeaceCorps 2003c), many people across the globe, including U.S. nationals, believe that the Peace Corps' presence in less developed or less powerful countries promotes the spread of Western values and imposes other elements of Western culture on these countries.

This is the sentiment behind the ideas of "the white man's burden" and manifest destiny. The concept of the white man's burden is taken from Rudyard Kipling's poem by the same name. It describes the perceived or intentional drive of Western countries to push for the westernization of countries they deem to be culturally backward, unsophisticated, or underdeveloped. Manifest destiny is the political and social belief that dominated 19th century America and gave credence to westward expansion. It endorses the idea that expansion and the promotion of democracy are important to Americans and that Americans can and should take it upon themselves to carry out these goals. The idea that America holds this ideology and embodies it through the Peace Corps is perpetuated by several factors. America's increased military presence in over 135 countries around the world and its humanitarian presence in almost all are testament to the fact that what they do shapes the global community. Leaders of countries

around the world benefit from connections with the United States. America's general status as a global superpower and the associated, seemingly lavish capitalistic and commodity driven lifestyle both enhance the aura that Americans have a sense of entitlement.

2.3 Stereotypes

A stereotype is a commonly held perception about a certain type of person or a group of people based on prior, usually negative, assumptions. The negative sentiment of interest to this study is the idea of the "Ugly American." This stereotype paints Americans as boisterous, immature, ethnocentric, and judgmental and involves Americans enacting these while abroad. In addition to this, other scathing perceptions of American characteristics include them being: boisterous, condescending, arrogant, rude, and thoughtless (Kohls 2001).

As mentioned previously, Tappan describes identity construction and expression as parts of a two-sided action; they are ongoing processes that individuals engage in, but in order to be considered real one's identity must be acknowledged by others. For social constructionists something does not exist unless it exists socially and is reacted to by others. Therefore, an identity does not exist until it is noted, reacted to, and reinforced by others. It is through these reactions that misunderstandings come to exist. By generalizing about a group of people based on a few characteristics of their identity or actions, a stereotype of that group is formed and reiterated by others.

This connection between social identity and stereotypes is integral to my thesis. Stereotypes, by definition, are "commonly held" and must come from somewhere. The *kernel of truth* idea states that many stereotypes are grounded in reality, even if they constitute an

exaggeration of reality (Leyens 1994: 15). Stereotypes are perpetuated though their social construction and also others' reactions to this social construction. By "rendering individuals interchangeable with other members of the category" (Leyens 1994: 11), stereotypes create a sort of an in-group and out-group solidarity and cohesion around a representation, which may be quite unrealistic. With the formation of this group, voluntary or involuntary, a social identity, like that of the "Ugly American" is produced as well.

The "Ugly American"

According to Brendon O'Connor, the idea of the Ugly American is not one collective set of traits and ideology, but more of a conglomeration of negative idiosyncrasies and uncommon worldviews. This view of the stereotype is quite accurate, as different parts of the world view America and Americans differently. According to O'Connor, there have been four phases of anti-American sentiment around the world. The first begins with America's independence in 1776 and ends with World War II in 1945; in this phase, the U.S. was perceived as a culturally deficient entity and therefore unworthy of attention or concern. Our brazen but uncultured demand for freedom and recognition had the air of a petulant child to many people outside the U.S. The second phase spanned the time period of the Cold War, from the mid 1940's to the beginning of the 1990's, and was more a political attack than an ideological one. The third phase began around the end of the Cold War. This period criticizes capitalism, Americanism and expansion, and globalization. These ideas were seen to be spreading rapidly and were unwelcome in the other countries of "the West" as well as the second and third worlds. This pervasive American air was easy to define but difficult to contain. The fourth, current phase of anti-Americanism began on September 11th, 2001. Although many view the attacks on the US on September 11th as attacks against liberty, democracy, globalization, Osama Bin Laden clearly stated that it is his

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wish that America and the West leave Islamic and Eastern societies to rule themselves unhindered and unbothered. Bin Laden insists that the September 11th targets were specifically chosen to demonstrate all Americans' participation in political, economic, social, and global schemes (O'Connor 2004).

During O'Connor's second phase, Cold War, some people outside the U.S. began to see the U.S. more positively. By taking an interest in underdeveloped countries, the US was able to promote a more positive, civically-minded, developmentally-practical image. Though the Peace Corps strives for improved conditions for the countries it is partnered with, the program's purpose is also to improve America's image. The host country nationals see America in a better light and also in turn, Americans see both their culturally different hosts and their own country more positively. As Hall notes, "Americans, having traditionally defined themselves in terms of ideals, were in desperate need of such an image at the time of the organization's establishment" (Hall 2007: 53).

While America's post-WWII and pre-Cold War foreign policy initiatives weighed heavily on the development of the Third World, the tone of the policies were heavy with a self interested slant. In 1958, shortly before the Peace Corps' founding, William Lederer and Eugene Burdick published *The Ugly American,* and it gained immediate popularity and influence. According to Hall, "the book projected a damning image of American foreign policy in the Third World. *The Ugly American,* which detailed self-serving, luxury-loving, condescending, and culturally offensive bureaucrats working in the Third World, also gave explicit expression to the growing uneasiness of many Americans dealing with their nation's newfound power" (Hall 2007: 55). This idea of a smug, self-satisfied, self-involved, boisterous, know-it-all became the

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caricature of all U.S. Americans that was understood in other parts of the world. Anti-American sentiments drew on this stereotype and the US's foreign policy and diplomacy didn't always do much to help the country out of the hole that had been dug.

After the fall of the Soviet Union the US became the world's only superpower and resentment abroad, mainly among Europeans, grew. Berman draws attention to the fact that between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of the Twin Towers, negative European sentiments towards the US grew and were finally confirmed: for much of the western world, especially Europe, the events that took place on September 11th were further proof that America had provoked the rest of the world and that it should "be up to Americans to repent and change their ways" (Berman 2004: xxi). There are two main positions that stem from this view of Americans.

The first is that the US deserved the attacks on September 11th 2001 – that the country deserved to be taken down a few pegs, that its power-and-greed-driven foreign policies were wrong, and that America had overstepped its bounds. The other argument in regards to how the rest of the world felt about Americans after that fateful day portrays America as the underdog and asserts that "an attack against America was therefore an attack against common values held dear by all who live by standards of democracy and the open society that it implies" (Kroes 2006: 417). This latter sentiment was short lived, however.

Foreign views of America grew more negative between 2001 and 2005. In Britain, positive views of the US fell from 83 percent to 55 percent during this time. Daniel Johnson points out that "anti-Americanism is strongest in Muslim states—and also in Western Europe, even in countries that are longstanding NATO allies. It is most virulent among the young"

(Johnson 2006: 27). This gives Americans an idea of how they are currently seen by the rest of the world politically, but according to Johnson (2006), many attitudes about America are not based on actions of America as a whole. Evidence points to aid relief and other positive international actions taken by the U.S. The article implies that the negative image comes from Americans' actions as individuals (Johnson 2006).

But although many people around the world appear to accept the Ugly American stereotype, many others do not. People in many areas of the world, including many areas served by the Peace Corps, do not have any preconceptions of the U.S. or Americans at all. To many of the countries helped by the Peace Corps, the organization provides an opportunity for improving their living conditions.

2.4 Identity work
Coping with this Stereotype

Americans abroad may be confronted with having to cope with the Ugly American stereotype. To illustrate, I will use quotes from a blog written by one such American, Daniel Riveiro, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine from 2004-2006. His experiences help to reinforce the idea that I am exploring despite being from a different part of the world than any of my interviewees. In 2005 Riveiro wrote: *"I'm sick of people hating America. I'm sick of people seeing us as this greedy behemoth. I'm sick of people seeing us as warmongering simpletons. And if simply being an American that people know as their neighbor, that people know as their coworker, that people know as their teacher, can help change these views, that much more understanding lead[s] to that much more peace in the world"* (Riveiro 2005). This quote perfectly introduces the idea of Gordon Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory which I will discuss

in detail in my Theoretical Perspectives section. In the present section, I review social psychological and anthropological understandings of how people adapt to cultures other than their own.

Cultural psychology, social psychology, and sociology all acknowledge the cyclical interactions of culture and psyche through the study of "culturally constituted selves." This approach realizes that individuals are a part of a larger culture and that we use practices and symbols from our culture to create meaning (Gone 1999). In sociology this idea is represented by the symbolic interactionist perspective: the understanding that individuals create meaning based on social cues and interactions and that an identity can also be constructed and interpreted similarly.

Individuals cannot fully separate themselves from the culture and social world they were brought up in. As Gone notes, it is an essential premise of cultural psychology that individual action is constrained by culture as much as it is enhanced by it" (Gone 1999 :372). Every individual constructs a cultural identity even if they don't ascribe to all aspects of the culture in which they are situated. These narratives that are formed constantly change in relation to the social interaction of which they are constantly a part: "even in the context of interpersonal interaction, past personal narratives become resources available for a wide range of meaning-making activities"(Gone 1999:384).

Chaundhary describes the relationship between self and culture "as a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical positions can be established" (Chaundhary 2001: 381). Self and culture are so closely linked that cultural psychological studies are either studies of the self as being "culture inclusive" or culture as being "self inclusive" Chaundhary adds that the

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inability to separate the two comes "from the dualistic notion of self and other.... The social interactions involved in relationships emerge as predominant, shaping the self through dialogue with individuals in different zones and voices" (Chaundhary 2001: 381).

Both social psychology and sociology have shown us that each person does not have one and only one true self. Some people act as if they have not one, but many selves, dependent on the context or situation they find themselves in. Moreover, in spite of the widespread belief that the self is an integral feature of personal identity, for many people, it seems to be largely a product of their relationships with other people. These people exhibit striking gaps and contradictions between the *public appearances* and the *private realities* of the self (Zhao 2005: 4). These social cues and relationships built on interactions from social situations play a huge role in the development of the self. In new situations, people have to determine quickly how they will respond to new or different social stimuli and what aspect of themselves to emphasize or hold back. This dance is an integral part of the acculturation process.

Acculturation

Social mechanisms have an impact on a person's ability to make decisions about how to proceed with interactions and acculturations. The new culture's collective identity as being ideocentric or allocentric (self interested or interested more in the well being of others), or independent or interdependent (self reliant or dependent on others) and their in-group and out-group relations all affect how the new member of the community is treated and how he or she reacts to said treatment (Kim 2005). The ideas of idiocentrism and allocentrism are individual-level concepts and "have been utilized to account for variations in individual communication behaviors both within and across cultural groups" (Kim 2005: 558 : See also Singelis & Brown,

1995). The interactions between a community and their new member are shaped by the community's cultural identity. As Kim explains, "cultural identity tends to be conceptualized as an essentially uniform and stable social category or a communal entity with little attention to individual variations within a group and the dynamic, evolutionary nature of cultural identity as it is enacted in an individual's everyday life" (Kim 2005:561). This cultural identity can easily be perceived negatively, however, with unfortunate misunderstandings, biases, and stereotypes which will be discussed later.

The social sciences pose linkages between culture and personal behavior development. In his 1997 study, Berry investigates the phenomenon and long term consequences of acculturation, or the adaptation to a new culture, which those moving to a different country must undergo. Though each experience is highly personal and the process and results vary dramatically, there are general similarities to be investigated. Individuals generally act in ways that correspond to cultural influences and expectations (Berry 2002).

Several questions arise from this generalizing statement. First, how do those acculturating deal with the meshing of their new and old cultures and ways of doing things? More specifically do PCVs drop their Americanized ways of doing things and fully adopt the local or regional way of life or do they try to meld the finer points of both, or do they resist the new culture and grapple with the difficulties of scrambling to cling to the loose threads of their unraveling tapestry of Americanisms?

According to Berry and many other scholars of cross-cultural psychology, the option most taken is that of the individuals changing their behaviors and ideologies to incorporate both new and old ideas about how to go about their new ways of life. Thanks to the movement of

people through both immigration and travel, many societies have become culturally plural, meaning that there is a mixing of cultural backgrounds making a society more diverse (Berry 1997).

What is acculturation? The original definition of acculturation was presented by Redfield: "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield 1936: 149). The more recent and accepted version of acculturation is provided by Berry: "the concept of acculturation is employed to refer to the cultural changes resulting from these group encounters, while the concepts of psychological acculturation and adaptation are employed to refer to the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation" (Berry 1997:6). Berry distinguishes among psychological, sociocultural, and economic forms of acculturation.

Although in principle acculturation may take place in either or both groups, in practice acculturation tends to induce more change in one of the groups (termed the acculturating group) than in the other (Berry 1997). A different approach to making the distinction has come about with the development of Clanet's concept of interculturation, "the set of processes by which individuals and groups interact when they identify themselves as culturally distinct" (Berry 1997).

As interest and research in this area has grown, scholars have identified more specific forms of acculturation. For example, it is now accepted that assimilation is not the only form of acculturation, but that a foreigner's arrival changes both the foreigner and the new host culture.

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The distinction between general acculturation and psychological acculturation is integral to my study. General acculturation is a change within the culture of the group in question, while psychological acculturation is a change in the psychology of the individual under observation. Acculturation is based on the need for self preservation which is, in the biological or animalistic sense, the processes one uses to stay alive. The present study, however, is concerned with self preservation in the form of PCVs' actions to survive in their new setting – effectively, the ways in which the PCVs learn to fit in to their new surroundings enough not to cause major disruptions in daily life in their new community. These actions are typically unnatural to the individual at first and are performed merely "for show," either to fit in or to gain a favorable image. Eventually the PCV habituates and becomes accustomed to the different way of living or acting, and the process of acculturation draws to a close. This period of feeling unnatural is called affectation (Corsini 2002).

Expatriation

Expatriation is the long term or permanent removal of oneself from one's country of origin (Green 2009). There are a variety of reasons for such a drastic action, e.g., political, social, economic, or professional, but expatriation always includes long term or permanent migration. With this movement comes the transmission of culture and ideas from the expatriate's origin to her or his destination, as well as from the new host society to its new member. This exchange of ideas and ways of doing things is called diffusion. Sometimes, however, either the expatriate or the new host society dominates the transmission of information. An American expatriate who attempts to dominate this process is a living example of the Ugly American, the know-it-all individual obsessed with sharing their better way of doing things with anyone who will listen.

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Global Citizens

A global citizen is an intelligent participant in, or at least advocate for, world peace and the reduction of inequality. This type of person is typically an activist and an actor in advancing dialogue on many issues, especially those that are moral and ethical. Thomas Paine's quote: "My country is the world, and my religion is to do good" (Paine 1791), succinctly describes the ideology of a global citizen.

The global citizen concept often implies participatory leadership or participatory action. Participatory efforts are those that engage local communities in solving their own problems. These strategies are often viewed as "putting people first" and tend to be action centered – helping promote partnerships to end global injustices and inequality. Global citizenship is based heavily on idealism and optimism, though creating change requires realism as well (Moses 2006). This concept of a well rounded and world-minded person is the type of individual the Peace Corps typically recruits and hopes to subsequently mold into one of their many interchangeable poster children.

US Nationals Abroad

In June 2010 the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries (OTTI) put out their annual report detailing U.S. travelers visiting overseas for the previous year (2009). The following statistics were reported. Out of 30,300,000 U.S. travelers going overseas, 40 percent were doing so for leisure or recreation, 37 percent were visiting friends and relatives, 16 percent went for business, 4 percent to study or teach, 2 percent for a convention or a conference, 2 percent for religious reasons, and 1 percent for health treatment (see Figure 1). Though pertinent to my thesis, we cannot break these statistics down further by volunteer or international aid efforts due

to the fact that some of these types of trips abroad are considered voluntourism and therefore include either a religious, recreational, or educational components and therefore may already be included in another section. Also, despite this report not including military or governmental travel, we can assume that these two would not fall under business or any other category; we know from other sources that the US military deploys around 253,300 people plus dependents and civilian officials (Johnson 2004).

2.5 The Peace Corps

Background

From modest beginnings as an idea that sprang from an inspirational speech by then-Senator John F Kennedy to University of Michigan students in 1960, the Peace Corps has grown into the independent U.S. governmental agency that it is today. Over the past fifty years more than 200,000 Volunteers have served in 139 host countries (see Figure 2). The Peace Corps describes itself as "a United States government agency that promotes peace around the world by sharing one of America's greatest resources: volunteers" (PeaceCorps 2003b). The program accepts around 4,000 new Volunteers annually, and has around 8,000 Volunteers abroad at any given time. They each serve abroad for 27 months, spending the first three of these months doing in-country training in language, cross-cultural issues, technical training, health and safety skills, and similar topics (PeaceCorps 2009b).

The idea that the Peace Corps would foster peace and would create a better understanding of Americans and cross-cultural awareness was a main reason for the program's creation. During the Cold War period there were countless accusations of American imperialism and arrogance, and events at home did not do much to counter these accusations. President Truman proposed a

plan in 1949 called the Point Four Program in which Americans provide assistance to underdeveloped nations and peoples "so that they might realize 'their aspirations for a better life'"(Hall 2007: 54). The program's implication that underdeveloped countries would be better off if their people acted more like Americans is an example of why people elsewhere might perceive the US as smug. Hall explains that "the formation of prosperous, developed nations…was a prerequisite to the American vision of a U.S.-led global economic order in which peace could flourish only in conjunction with economic stability" (Hall 2007: 56). This American sense of superiority as well as an American foreign policy of dominance helps to explain why much of the rest of the world shared a sense of America as an imperialist and self important nation. Despite these feelings abroad, the Peace Corps provided reassurance at home that "at least one aspect of their nation's policy…was indisputably good. It symbolized what America wanted to be, and what much of the world wanted America to be: superhero, protector of the disenfranchised, defender of the democratic faith" (Hoffman 1998: 1).

Peace Corps Program Changes, 1960-1990

A brief timeline of significant events in Peace Corps history was published in 2010 in preparation for the upcoming 50th anniversary celebrations. The following information is taken from both this fact sheet as well as other Peace Corps documents available on the agency's website. Some major changes to the program were undertaken in December of 1981 – the main organization became an independent federal agency and is no longer a part of ACTION – a now nonexistent government agency created as "the Federal Domestic Volunteer Agency." Another significant milestone in Peace Corps history is that in 1985, just months before the 25th anniversary of the program, the gender ratio of male Volunteers was exceeded by female

Volunteers for the first time (PeaceCorps 2011a).

Several offshoots of Peace Corps were created over the years. In 1964 both VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) as well as the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) were created. AmeriCorps was created in 1990. The Crisis Corps, now called Peace Corps Response, was created in 1995, to respond to natural disasters and provide "short-term humanitarian service" (PeaceCorps 2011a). Each of these offshoots provides national aid and service while the Peace Corps remains the only long term international contingent. The largest Peace Corps sector is education, which includes English Language Training. A close second is the health programming sector which includes immunization and health education. The primary health effort focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention; much of this work is in Africa. The Peace Corps also offers programs to support small business development, environmental protection, agricultural development, and counseling for young people (Monsen 2007). (See Figure 3).

Application and Placement Process

The Peace Corps application process can take anywhere from six to twelve months (see Figure 4). This process takes so long due to the selectivity of the Peace Corps, needed due to the gravity of work that Volunteers will undertake and due to the applicants' adjustment and acculturation requirements. After completing an in-depth paper application, potential Volunteers are nominated by recruiters to be interviewed. Next, potential Volunteers must clear legal and medical evaluations. Those selected to continue are matched and placed with a country assignment. The number of applicants is reduced drastically at each step of this rigorous process. According to Peace Corps statistics, about 12,000 applications are received each year and 8,000 receive invitations for interviews. Medical and legal issues eliminate 3,000

applications. Of the 5,000 applicants who are offered positions, only 1,000 turn down their placements (PeaceCorps 2008a), underscoring how highly sought-after these positions are.

Acceptance into the Peace Corps

Peace Corps psychiatrists meet with and identify candidates who are expected either to cope successfully with their overseas placement or to fail. On the primary Peace Corps recruitment website is a page entitled "What Peace Corps Is Looking For in a Volunteer Applicant." This page describes a successful Volunteer as flexible, adaptable, and patient, and as having skill, self-reliance, a positive attitude, resourcefulness, responsibility, and a sense of humor. By listing flexibility, adaptability, and patience before skill, the Peace Corps is emphasizing the greater importance of these characteristics. If a Volunteer didn't possess these characteristics, their skill level wouldn't matter on an assignment.

> As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will likely be placed in an environment very different than anything you've experienced in the United States. Letting go of expectations and being flexible will assist you in handling whatever comes your way. Having the ability to adjust to the many new and different situations you encounter as a Peace Corps Volunteer allows you to be responsive to the people you will live with and serve (PeaceCorps 2008a).

This emphasis on accepting only the best candidates as potential PCVs indicates that the Peace Corps is doing its best to select only those individuals who will not embody the stereotype of the typical Ugly American.

Here is an actual application question that illustrates the Peace Corps' commitment to only accepting well prepared individuals, and also shows the Peace Corps' concern with acculturation. "Describe an experience you have had in living or working in a social or cultural

environment different from your own. What specific challenges did you face concerning trust, confidence, and/or integration? What did you learn from this experience that you will bring with you to your Peace Corps service?" (PeaceCorps 2010c). The organization explains this and similar questions by telling the applicants "your success as a Peace Corps Volunteer is based on the trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture (Core Expectation #4)" (PeaceCorps 2009a)

Peace Corps Training: Pre-Departure and In-Country

By holding training sessions and providing other guidance the Peace Corps attempts to lessen the shock of moving to a place so drastically different from what the PCVs are accustomed to. Convening a few days before leaving the country, Peace Corps Volunteers attend a pre-departure training session that lasts between one and three days. These sessions consist of orientation information, Volunteers' brief introductions to each other, and an official welcome into the Peace Corps. Each of the Volunteers at a pre-departure session is either going to the same country or same small region and will most likely have their in-country orientations and three month trainings together as well.

Stress, frustration, and hostility result in anxiety for every Volunteer. Hannigan points out that "upon arrival, workshops are important for providing more detailed information and to help groups of [those] recently arrived develop a group identity and a sense that they are not alone, nor unique in their adjustment difficulties" (Hannigan 2006: 71). One of the manuals that the Peace Corps uses for cross cultural experience training for their PCVs is *Culture Matters*. Typically used by those in charge during Pre-service Training, this workbook contains exercises, quizzes, and short guided lessons aimed at helping to facilitate discussion and prepare for future

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debriefings on experiences that the PCVs may have during their service. By providing session

objectives, supporting materials, preparation and delivery notes, and aims for the outcomes,

those leading the sessions are well equipped to guide the PCVs through each exercise and

discussion.   According to the Peace Corps:

> It [Pre-service Training] introduces and examines the key
> features or dimensions of culture, such as the concept of the
> self, the concept of time, the styles of communication, the
> definition of fairness, attitudes toward fate, friendship, risk,
> change, and uncertainty, the exercise of power, the concept
> of status, and many others. These are aspects of the human
> experience, common to all people everywhere, but with
> respect to which the people of different cultures, largely
> because of different historical and geographical
> circumstances, have developed different opinions, attitudes,
> and, ultimately, a different set of norms and behaviors. It is
> these differences that Volunteers encounter and must learn
> to adjust to when they live in another culture. (PeaceCorps
> 1999: 1)

Aside from these objectives, the *Culture Matters* manual covers communication,

coordination, and integration of the PCVs into their new culture. The manual describes PCVs'

and host community members' range of approaches as a spectrum. By recognizing that there are

many different responses along this continuum, PCVs can begin to determine for themselves

where they fall and where they should expect their new community to fall.

Another section, entitled "Can I still be ME?", describes adjustment problems that PCVs

typically face. Each exercise in this section addresses issues that Volunteers will typically face

during their service. One such issue is "what to do when being culturally sensitive conflicts with

the Volunteer's own personal values or sense of self esteem. In other words, what happens when

the culturally appropriate behavior in a particular situation offends or goes against the beliefs and

principles of the Volunteer? Does the Volunteer perform the behavior and violate his/her principles? Or does the Volunteer refuse to perform the behavior and risk offending people in the local culture?" (PeaceCorps 1999: 80). These aforementioned issues that PCVs are likely to encounter all illustrate my thesis' value. The fact that the PCVs must be trained how to act in order to successfully assimilate and acculturate shows that fitting in and avoiding the Ugly American stereotype is a potential problem for Peace Corps Volunteers.

By exploring American values in a constructive way, the PCVs have an opportunity to look at their culture critically from the perspective of someone less accustomed to it. By taking the time to work through the manual, the PCVs learn to become more culturally aware and should be more adept and better able to handle the experiences that await them. Studying this manual helps them to consider the gravity of their actions and understand the consequences of any course of action they may take while being an active member of their host community. This manual illustrates how the Peace Corps itself has grown more culturally adept: "for the first time in its 40-year history the Peace Corps has not only recognized the need for cross-cultural training but now has in place agency wide, approved, cross-cultural training objectives in goals" (Landis 2004: 370). The results of these increased efforts have yielded "an increase in the number and quality of requests [for experienced and well trained PCVs] as well as more support to support their own cross-cultural training efforts. This is due to the agency's formal recognition and awareness of the importance of cross cultural training in the 1990s and early 2000s and to the dedication it has increasingly shown in this area" (Landis 2004: 370). Both the Peace Corps and the host countries benefit significantly from this improved training and preparation of Volunteers.

Evidence on non-Peace Corps Expatriates justifies the rigorous and intense training

process that the Peace Corps puts their Volunteers through. "Many expatriates do not succeed in

their assignments and early studies estimated U.S. expatriate failure, defined as a 'premature

return from the overseas assignment,' at being 25 and 40 percent when the expatriate is assigned

to a developed country, and as high as 70 percent when assigned to a still-developing country"

(Andreason 2003: 43). Andreason explains that as a result of "ignorance and the misguided

ethnocentric beliefs that 'our way is best' or 'what works at home will work there,' business

executives simply do not believe that there is a need to engage in special efforts for their

expatriates" (Andreason 2003: 43) This is what the training provided by the Peace Corps is

trying to avoid. Andreason outlines three types of adjustment for business/professional

expatriates that can easily be applied to Peace Corps Volunteers as well: work adjustment (which

provides an overview of new job requirements), interaction adjustment (which addresses

socialization with the individual's new society), and general adjustment (which entails getting

used to the new culture and atmosphere).

History of PC Cultural Training

Donald Hess, the Director of the Peace Corps from 1972-1973 under President Nixon

initiated the first genuine in-country trainings. He was the first to suggest and implement the use

of host country nationals to train the Volunteers instead of having them learn the skills they

needed to survive in their new community while within the comfort and safety of the US

(PeaceCorps 2010a).

Alan Weiss, a Peace Corps Volunteer who did not complete his two year service, wrote a

book entitled *High Risk/ High Gain: A Freewheeling Account of Peace Corps Training*, detailing

his unconventional training during the early years of the Peace Corps. He described unprofessional and haphazard training:

> The general picture of Nigeria, in the African context, would become second nature to us, and beyond that, 'cross-cultural studies, to help us make the leap from Wonderbread America to juju-ridden Africa [sic]. The medical program included shots for everything from hepatitis to yellow fever, and a lecture on how to deliver a baby, if it ever came to that. The Royal Canadian Air Force's physical fitness regime would be used to whack us into shape. They'd have us playing cricket, and kicking around a soccer ball, Nigerian games and dances, anything with potential application (Weiss 1968:11).

From these early days, the Peace Corps has significantly changed its program to train Volunteers to deal with the realities of their service. From the hands on work they will be doing such as health care, community development, and engineering, to Volunteers' self preservation and cultural and psychological adaptation (e.g., coping with culture shock), the Peace Corps knows that it has to train its Volunteers well in order for them to succeed in their endeavors.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is the initial aversion to or discomfort with a culturally unfamiliar situation typically experienced by travelers abroad (Arnold 1967). Since the Peace Corps sends its Volunteers abroad for a period of approximately two years, it should have programs to help Volunteers cope with culture shock. The continual development of the Peace Corps' mental health guidance program has greatly aided the international Volunteers. Volunteers typically identify their negative experiences as culture shock long after they actually begin to feel the

effects (PeaceCorps 1999). At first, irritations with the smallest inconveniences presented by the host country are enough to set the process in motion.

From a psychological perspective, factors that help mediate culture shock and acculturation problems are achievement and self efficacy. Self efficacy is the idea that one can make it on their own and have the ability and knowledge to have an impact on one's situation. In the Peace Corps context, the Volunteer's ability to take control and their belief that they can make a difference contributes significantly to their adjustment. In the face of uncertainty they have the ability to thrive and make a significant change in the community where they reside.

Role conflict, as previously discussed, is another problem for those trying to fit in abroad. It is defined by Andreason as "conflicting signals about what is expected of individuals in a new work setting" (Andreason 2003: 45). Competing identities, value sets, and ideologies inhibit a Volunteer from progressing past an initial integration stage. By being pulled in many directions and being pressed to please more than one person, the placement becomes difficult and stressful. *Role novelty* or "the degree to which the current role is different from past roles" (Black et al. 1991, as quoted in Andreason 2003) is also an issue for expatriates struggling to fit in (Andreason 2003). Increasing the expectations on an individual while simultaneously throwing them into a completely foreign setting creates confusion for any expatriate.

Aside from having a new skill set to learn for a new role, the expatriate must also learn to fit in with the culture outside of work – the experience of *culture novelty.* This may be easier for the Peace Corps Volunteer than for most business expatriates. Often the PCV is living and directly interacting with the host culture during non-work hours. As part of their new "job,"

PCVs are learning the "ropes" of the new culture as they go and are integrated into the community through these interactions (Andreason 2003).

From a sociological standpoint, culture shock's impact on Peace Corps Volunteers primarily regards morale and work effectiveness (Arnold 1967). The ability of a Volunteer to keep up morale is integral for both their perception of progress, and actual progress. This forward motion is important to their survival, both as a PCV and as a new member of the community. Riveiro's blog demonstrates morale's failure: "It's over. I throw in the towel. Ukraine wins. For the past three weeks I have been frustrated at the home situation, not being able to eat what I want, being henpecked by my host mother over things that seem little to me but not to her" (Riveiro 2005). This frustration and desire to end the ordeal is quite common among Volunteers and expatriates alike.

Acculturation

Many Americans who travel abroad are at least mildly aware of the stereotypes that they will face during their trip and may even prepare themselves. But what of those who intend to actually live abroad for a length of time? Peace Corps Volunteers are required to spend two years abroad in the program and have little choice as to the country they are sent to.

Berry (1997) identifies five main factors in psychological acculturation: experience, meaning, coping, stress, and adaptation. The meaning of an individual's overall experience with a place is interpreted and evaluated as a source of comfort or discontent that they will associate with that place. Stressors and other negative experiences imbue a place with negative meanings. In order to deal with these stressors and other negative experiences, one must have a certain level of adaptability or ease for coping with new satiations. Coping with the stress of a situation has

an impact on how the situation is interpreted. When issues with acculturation (stressors) do come to a head, the situation must be dealt with by the individual. A situation may quickly turn sour and then grow even worse; this is why psychological services provided by the Peace Corps are so integral to maintaining a Volunteer.

This process of stressful acculturation has many facets: the Volunteer's outlook and actions, the community's outlook and actions, the Volunteer's preparedness for situations he or she may encounter, stereotypes held by both sides, and the willingness of both groups to work at acceptance and integration. Kim contends that the acculturation process is impacted by the stress of the situation as well. He coins a process "stress-adaptation-growth," to look at relationships among host societal pressures, willingness of the individual to be flexible, and the growth that comes to both the community and the individual afterwards (Kim 2005). Kim believes that the stress-adaptation-growth "dynamic gradually leads to greater functional fitness and psychological health vis-à-vis the host environment." This model "identifies key dimensions of factors that facilitate (or impede) the adaptation process, including factors of (intra)personal, interpersonal, and mass communication, as well as of the new environment and the individual's own background" (Kim 2005: 560)

According to Spradley, "anthropologists of nearly every theoretical persuasion have used the concept of stress and it goes by many names: anxiety, anomie, conflict, uncertainty, frustration, and culture shock. It leads to various responses: adaptation, normal behavior, mental illness, suicide, withdrawal, and innovation" (Spradley 1972:518). Systemic stress in relation to Peace Corps Volunteers is evidenced through what Spradley terms "General Adaptation Syndrome" or GAS. The stages of this syndrome are much like those of the process of

acculturation. The first stage is characterized by initial shock where resistance to new stimuli is decreased. Also a part of this first stage is the counter-shock phase where the activation of the body and mind's autonomic defensive mechanisms attempts to reverse the process of resistance. The second stage is that of resistance, where the individual attempts to adjust and adapt consciously. Exhaustion will occur if the stressors continue, and the adaptation process may fail. Spradley and other experts in this field stress the importance of flexibility and accommodation to change. In order to draw comparison, Spradley references Oberg's four stages of culture shock: "a honeymoon stage which lasts a few weeks; a hostile stage when the individual is critical of his host country and, if possible, withdraws among his fellow countrymen; an initial recovery stage characterized by superiority and humor and, finally, adjustment to the new culture" (Spradley 1972:521).

Psychological Acculturation

Within the study of acculturation, specific attention has been paid to the psychological outcomes, both positive and negative. Three levels of psychological acculturation can be identified, each successive level describing increasingly complex and difficult challenges for the individual to overcome while undergoing psychological acculturation. The easiest level, called cultural learning, pertains to the process by which behavioral changes that affect psychological adaptations are made in order to fit in with the new society. Some researchers call this level social skills acquisition or behavioral shifts. The second level is where difficulties such as culture shock or acculturative stress take place. Those individuals switching cultures have a difficult time adapting to their new surroundings. The psychological difficulties experienced result in any combination of the following: health problems, behavioral modifications, and overall personality changes for the individual. The third level, which is most difficult for the individual, is that

which causes the most harm or damage psychologically. This level often encompasses psychopathology or longer term mental issues and disease. Here, "changes in the cultural context exceed the individual's capacity to cope, because of the magnitude, speed, or some other aspect of the change, leading to serious psychological disturbances, such as clinical depression, and incapacitating anxiety" (Berry 1997: 13).

Psychological vs. Sociocultural Adaptation

Two distinct forms of acculturation are psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation encompasses both personal and cultural identity growth, good mental health, and general satisfaction with the new cultural context within which one is a resident. Sociocultural adaptation refers more to the external outcomes of the psychological changes that link the individual to their new cultural setting. Examples of this phenomenon would be the mental outcomes that help the individual cope with work, family life, and school. The distinction between these two forms of acculturation is important in that one form is internal and the other has external outcomes through social interaction (Zhao 2005).

Another important factor determining how affected one will be by the acculturation process is the cultural distance between the home and host cultures. This distance is partly a matter of political, economic, demographic, historical, and social characteristics of each place. Other factors to take into account are those that account for the individual's relocation from one culture to another (Green 2009).

Analysis of people's intercultural moves and subsequent acculturation commonly take into account voluntariness and permanence. Expatriates and PCVs have moved voluntarily while others, such as refugees and other displaced peoples, did not. And the permanence of moves

varies. For example, a businessman and his family may relocate on a short assignment, a Peace Corps Volunteer or other aid worker may take on a longer assignment of a year or two, and an expatriate may decide to make his or her migration permanent. These differences impact the acculturation process.

Individuals moving between cultures must contend with cultural maintenance, and with contact and participation. Cultural maintenance concerns how far the migrants are willing to go in changing their cultural identity, and how important their original cultures are to them. Contact and participation refers to how involved they intend to be with their new surroundings and culture. Berry identifies four possible options for individuals moving into a different culture: separation/segregation, integration, assimilation, and marginalization.

Separation and segregation are the terms used to define the stance that the migrant takes in the process of cutting her or himself off from the culture of the new place where they have arrived. Integration describes when the migrants pick and choose the elements they wish to keep from their own culture as well as those they will adopt from the new culture. Assimilation takes place when the migrants choose to adopt the ways of their new culture through interaction and seek to abandon certain parts of their own cultural identities. And finally, marginalization is when the migrant wishes to sever most or all ties with their original culture and acquire a new cultural identity. This final option is more commonly chosen when the new culture imposes exclusion and discrimination against a new arrival who rejects these options (Berry 1997).

Integration is generally regarded as the most successful kind of acculturation, marginalization is generally the least, and assimilation and separation are intermediate. Reasons for these alternative outcomes can depend on the new arrival's and the host community's mutual

desire for success. Positive attitudes and decreased prejudice, hostility, and discrimination make acculturation easier and less stressful for all involved. Unless both sides attempt to accommodate, those attempting to acculturate cannot fully succeed.

Assimilationist or melting pot cultures are more accommodating due to their encompassing and inclusive natures. This is to be expected of a multicultural or diverse society. However, integration doesn't rely solely on the host culture. This process also involves a degree of *culture shedding,* that is "the unlearning of aspects of one's previous repertoire that are no longer appropriate" (Berry 1997:13).

Redfield identifies three processes integral to acculturation: acceptance, adaptation, and reaction. Acceptance refers to assimilation, i.e., the individual takes on most of the characteristics of his or her new culture and loses a significant portion of their old culture. Adaptation refers to the individual creating their own constructed identity by combining traits of both their original and new host cultures. Reaction represents Berry's concepts of separation/segregation, and marginalization; those acculturating push themselves away either from the new culture, or their old culture, rejecting one of them outright (Redfield 1936).

Volunteers intending to spend time in a new society must prepare to cope with the intricacies of assimilation. One potential approach that PCVs may take in preparation for the potential difficulties ahead is to study qualitative research, ethnographic studies, or firsthand accounts of others in similar positions to the one they are about to enter. Another approach is to combat negative stereotypes by increasing interaction with different peoples; in order to understand a culture better, one must immerse himself or herself in it. Positive experiences,

successful coping with stressors, and support from the Peace Corps all contribute to a successful adaptation on the part of the individual.

Peace Corps Training Outcomes

Culture shock, emotional disorders, and adjustment problems all contribute to the early return of some Peace Corps Volunteers (Andreason 2003). Early returns are drastically reduced through proper training methods and by the Peace Corps' having a vested interest in the success of their Volunteers. In their study entitled *The Dimensions of Expatriate Acculturation: A Review,* Mark Mendenhall and Gary Oddou evaluate several empirical studies' findings on successful acculturation training strategies. They focus on "self-oriented," "others-oriented," "perceptual." and "cultural-toughness" dimensions of acculturation training. Each of these dimensions had been studied because multinational corporations (MNCs) were having premature returns of their overseas managers. These early homecomings were costing the corporations time, money, profits, and management performance, and, less visibly, costing managers' self esteem, self confidence, and business reputation. One of the main failings of the MNCs were that they provided little to no acculturation training for their overseas employees and their families, thus putting them at a disadvantage from the outset.

The "self-oriented" training dimension focuses on self-esteem, self-confidence, and mental hygiene. Each of these is important since one of the main problems of acculturation, as emphasized by the Peace Corps' model, is mental health and ineptitude felt during the phases of culture shock and mental isolation. Mendenhall and Oddou found that three training methods were used to encourage a positive mental state: reinforcement substitution, stress reduction, and technical competence. In reinforcement substitution training, the expatriate learns to replace his

or her favorite pastimes or activities from their home culture with different yet similar activities from their host culture (Mendenhall 1985). A different culture's manifestations of similarly compelling activities will not only allow the expatriate to feel more comfortable, but will also engage them in their new culture and provide a social link to the community.

Stress reduction training helps individuals cope with acculturation-related stressors more aptly and have a greater chance of long term success. Coping mechanisms, both learned and inherent, are important to develop and can be cultivated and maintained through training such as that which the Peace Corps provides for its Volunteers.

Technical competence training helps provide the expatriate with tools necessary to complete demanding tasks. Without proper training in job-related tasks, the completion of the task would be difficult even without the added stress of being in a foreign community. In order for the individual to be as prepared as possible, pre-departure training greatly helps adjustment once abroad.

The "others-oriented" dimension addresses expatriates' interactions with their host community members. The two key components of this element are relationship development and willingness to communicate. Again, the idea of becoming involved in the social aspect of the community helps both to alleviate stress and to provide valuable community ties. It also helps to provide a support and help system. By forging friendships, the expatriate will have people to fall back on or ask for help when it is needed. A willingness to communicate is also needed to promote camaraderie and ease entrance into the community. Confidence and a desire to fit in with and understand the host community also help and are in turn helped by the partnerships formed between the expatriates and their host community.

The "perceptual" dimension concerns the expatriate's understanding of how and why things are done a certain way in their new culture. Mendenhall comments that "the ability to make correct attributions about the reasons or causes of host-nationals' behavior allows the expatriate to predict how they will behave toward him or her in the future, thus reducing uncertainty in interpersonal and intercultural relations" (Mendenhall 1985 :42). Understanding social behaviors and realizing how to influence them to benefit the individual's social situation is a key skill that an expatriate must master.

The "cultural-toughness" dimension addresses the level of difficulty of outsiders' acculturation that is inherent to how different a particular society is from the outsider's society. The more different or difficult a country's religion, language, dietary restrictions, the more difficult it will be for the expatriate to make an easy transition. If an expatriate feels socially cut off from the society he or she is attempting to acculturate into, the process will be much more difficult and has a greater chance of failure thus resulting in a project being left incomplete with the early return of the person from abroad.

Mendenhall and Oddou had two propositions for businesses' improvement of the acculturation training process. First, they suggest that those selected for overseas work be rated and judged on more than one area. This multidimensional approach will produce more holistic and well rounded candidates. Second, they state that the comprehensive preparation of future expatriates will produce better results and will ease the acculturation process. The Peace Corps puts both of these propositions into practice, as their selection and training processes are quite rigorous. Additionally, Mendenhall and Oddou encourage assessments for stress maintenance, rigidity, flexibility, values, openness, and other interpersonal skills, factors which the Peace Corps seems to excel at.

Mendenhall notes that the expatriate training procedures managed and carried out by

organizations such as the Peace Corps are invaluable: "knowledge about—and effective training

based on—the key factors of expatriate acculturation …would help the military, the Foreign

Service, the Peace Corps, and a large number of religious organizations that rely on expatriates

to manage their overseas operations" (Mendenhall 1985:40). Torbiorn's 1982 research showed

that expatriates in India, Pakistan, North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia had a harder

time adjusting to their assignments versus those Volunteers in other parts of the world such as

Asia, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and South America. They had higher levels of difficulty in

job satisfaction, levels of stress and pressure, health care, housing standards, entertainment, food,

and the skill levels of their coworkers.

Alan Weiss commented on the "sick circus of training" that was his experience with the

chaotic training that early Peace Corps Volunteers received. He relays a quote from the

psychologist that oversaw the final stages of their training:

> It is not in our interest, but it is certainly not in yours, to
> send a person to Africa if he's basically unsuited for the
> type of life he will have to lead there…It shouldn't surprise
> you that we want emotionally mature, competent
> individuals who can bear up under the stresses and strains
> of living in an alien culture. This is not to say you haven't
> given every evidence so far of being exactly that. You are
> already a highly select group. The mere fact of your being
> here indicates that you have survived rigorous selection
> procedures that have whittled you down to your present
> size from a group of applicants in excess of a thousand
> (Weiss 1968: 31-32).

An assessment on the psychology and success of Peace Corps Volunteers done in 1965,

four years after the start of the Peace Corps, examines self-reported data from PCVs in the

program. The study predicted that respondents would score highly on values associated with "authoritarianism" and that scores low on "ego stregnth" would be detrimental to the PCVs'effectiveness. Among other criteria examined were person-to-person contacts (interpersonal behavior), teaching effectiveness, adjustment ability, and cultural understanding and sharing. The study shows a strong correlation between what the Peace Corps expected of the varied types of people that it accepted in this very early stage of the program (Mischel 1965).

As discussed previously, Berry and Redfield note that acculturation is a process full of high points and low points; it is supremely personal, but inevitably involves other individuals or even whole communities. One model of acculturation described by the Peace Corps resembles a jagged graph (see Figure 5). The Volunteer first goes through the "honeymoon" stage, during their first week or so in country. This stage involves being excited and enthusiastic about being in country. The Volunteer is fascinated with how exotic and quaint the setting is, and almost all experiences are positive. Next the PCV enters culture shock, coping with the stressors of their host society's new and foreign culture. PCVs' circumstances improve in the next stage: "initial adjustment." It is in this stage that the Volunteer has adapted to some of the intricacies of his or her new home. There are ups and downs, but most negative experiences are taken in stride. Homesickness begins at this stage, and the situation "becomes real." Conditions worsen during the next stage, "mental isolation." During this stage the Volunteer is struggling with withdrawal, adjustment, and dependency; confronting "the state of the world"; and missing American support and proximity. This is probably the hardest stage for the Volunteer as isolation and the full weight of their task becomes more apparent. This stage is recalled in the anecdotal account by Alan Weiss.

A Volunteer is posted to a village and finds it difficult getting through to the people. Like all of you, he experiences culture shock, or the queer up-in-the-air malaise which is the reaction to the absence of the unconscious signs of communication we daily exchange with each other. The normal cues, say of welcome, sympathy, or praise are missing. The loneliness and lack of intellectual stimulation take a severe toll on him, he desperately wants to talk to people who speak his language, he wants to see a movie or snap on the radio and listen to a baseball game. Frustration sets in, he curses out his students for their refusal to learn, when actually it is he who is at fault; he retreats more and more from village life, finding barriers everywhere. Finally his effectiveness has dwindled to the point where he is doing more harm than good. He becomes a liability. We may transfer him, into a city, say, among other Volunteers, but if he doesn't snap out of it we are left with no alternative but to return him to the States . . . (Weiss 1968: 33).

The final stage in the Peace Corps model of acculturation (Figure 5) is "acceptance and integration." It is at this point that the individual has made a niche for themself, has become comfortable socializing with their community, and can start to feel a part of it (PeaceCorps 1999).

RuKan Takidakashu, a host country counterpart in Ukraine, describes this outcome: "The great thing about Peace Corps Volunteers is that they live in and become members of the community they serve. When you're a member of the community it's much easier for you to exchange information and raise awareness on issues. This is a great entry point because it shows that volunteers care about the community's problems and would like to help solve them" (PeaceCorps 2008a: 4)

Language Acquisition

Interculturality is becoming an increasingly significant phenomenon as the world becomes more and more globalized. Cultures and ways of living are becoming more meshed and

intertwined thanks to the increased ease of movements of people and information. This

phenomenon is also helped along by the fact that more people are speaking more languages. The

Peace Corps demands that their trainees learn languages and dialects in order to become

Volunteers. By learning the language of the community, the Volunteer shows an active interest

in fitting in. Community members appreciate the effort even if it falls short. Even if the

Volunteer's peers in the community spoke English, the Volunteer's ability in the local language

would be important for good relationships with those new peers and other community members.

This ability allows the Volunteer to appear serious and knowledgeable, and it elicits respect from

the community (Fukuda 2006).

Host-Volunteer Cooperation

Cohn identifies other factors affecting relationships and cooperation: "decisions about the

age composition of Volunteers, their geographical location and living arrangements, their

training and job placements, all have important implications for the nature of the relationships

Volunteers form with people in host societies" (Cohn 1985: 171). Host-Volunteer relations are

highly dependent on both parties' flexibility. While Volunteers are heavily screened throughout

the application process, and then put though a rigorous training program, their experiences

abroad ultimately groom them for their new working and living relationships and circumstances.

Flexibility and understanding are both greatly valued and needed on the part of the host

community as well.

Avoiding the Ugly American Stereotype

Being a successful Peace Corps Volunteer entails successfully avoiding or combating the

Ugly American stereotype. Peace Corps Volunteers of the 1960s "personified the desire for commitment, the poignant individualism, the distrust of traditional diplomacy and politics, and the ardent faith in activism that came to define their generation" (Hall 2007: 56). This activism and interest in initiatives other than those that blatantly promoted American self interest and Americanism caused Peace Corps Volunteers to be given the benefit of the doubt vis-à-vis stereotypes of "typical Americans."

While the Peace Corps has served as a "symbol of American values"(Hall 2007: 53) it also continues to see part of its mission as serving to combat the Ugly American stereotype abroad. According to Peace Corps, "Whatever the reasons, our overseas services attract far too few of our brightest and best qualified college graduates…. What we need is a small force of well-trained, well-chosen, hard-working and dedicated professionals. They must be willing to risk their comforts and—in some lands—their health. They must go equipped to apply a positive policy promulgated by a clear-thinking government. They must speak the language of the land of their assignment and they must be more expert in its problems than are the natives" (PeaceCorps 1999: 138). Those selected as Volunteers are almost considered the poster children for American altruism and decency abroad.

Ending Peace Corps Service Early

There are four different types of reasons a PCV may not complete the full term of their service, according to the Peace Corps: (1) *Resignation*, in which a Volunteer decides that he or she does not wish to finish out their term. (2) *Medical separation*, when the PCV is unable to complete their service due to medical issues that would not be resolved in a 45 day time span. If a Volunteer has their service terminated due to this reason they are still looked upon favorably by the Peace Corps and may reapply once their medical issues are resolved. (3) *Administrative*

separation is the term that the Peace Corps uses for any situation where the PCV is asked to leave. Grounds for this dismissal include illegal drug use, ethical violations, criminal behavior, political or significant religious activity, inappropriate behavior or sexual misconduct, pregnancy or paternity, and other such infractions that could lead to legal action or could compromise the mission or reputation of Peace Corps, the United States, or any related individual or institution (PeaceCorps 2005). National-level policies are created for each country with the help of the in-country staff so as to properly address the appropriateness of certain kinds of behavior and so as not to break any social mores and local customs. The volunteers are taught during their in-country training what is considered appropriate and acceptable behavior for them during their service (PeaceCorps 2005). (4) *Interrupted service,* occurring when a Country Director or Peace Corps administrator in the US decides that a PCV may not be able to complete their service, typically due to an emergency where all in-country Volunteers are evacuated for medical, political, social, health, or natural disaster related reasons (PeaceCorpsWiki 2010). See Figure 6.

About one third of the volunteers who make it as far as their host community, will "ET", i.e., take an early termination from their service, under one of the various types listed above. Those volunteers that decide to resign from their service do this for a variety of reasons. The most common reasons for a PCV to separate themselves are difficulties in acculturation or conflicts with their program or assignment. Some of the acculturative issues that Peace Corps Volunteers should previously be aware that that they will face, but are still covered in their training are language acquisition, "differences in skin color, dress, diet, religious observance, and/or accent" (Hannigan 2006: 68). Though many would argue that if a Peace Corps Volunteer were not already accustomed to many of these characteristics, perhaps they are not the best face of America to present to the world.

In 2009 the region with the highest ET rate was Europe/Mediterranean/Asia (EMA), with 10.9 percent, compared to Africa's rate of 9.3 percent and Inter-America/Pacific's (IAP) rate of 9.9 percent. For Africa, the countries with the highest ET rates were South Africa with 22.5 percent and Ethiopia with 21.7 percent; for EMA it was Turkmenistan with 40 percent and then Jordan with 28.1 percent; and for IAP it was Tonga with 23.4 percent and Eastern Caribbean with 22.6 percent (PeaceCorps 2010b). See Figure 7.

Common Experiences of International Travelers

The Expat Experience Survey has been administered by HSBC Bank International for three years. In the 2010 survey, 4,127 expats from a variety of professions, ages, lifestyles, and nationalities answered questions on the advantages, disadvantages, hardships, and benefits of living abroad. "The survey provides an insight into how expat life differs from country to country, continent to continent and from an expats' country of origin. A sample size of 30 or more respondents from each country was required" (HSBC 2011b: 13). This dataset helps to reexamine issues commonly shared by people who go abroad for an extended period of time with the intention of settling for at least a portion of it.

According to the survey, "making friends is a key component in helping expats to deal with the challenges of moving to a new country and to settle into their new home" (HSBC 2011b: 10). This statement serves as a reiteration of what the Peace Corps attempts to instill in its Volunteers – that being able to fit in and make friends out of strangers will help them with the adjustment process. If those new to a society have difficulties fitting in and making connections, they will not be successful in their endeavors. With that said, a major difference between PCVs and expats is revealed by the survey: "expats tend to spend more time with expat friends, rather than making new local friends in their host country. Nearly three in five expats (58 percent)

agreed that they're more likely to go out with expat friends rather than local friends" (HSBC

2011b: 10). This is unsurprising, considering the reasons both groups move abroad in the first

place. Typically expats are moving abroad for business or a change of scenery; PCVs, however,

are moving abroad with a specific purpose, one that stresses intercultural exchange and

interaction.

According to the survey: "emotive worries such as re-establishing a social life (41

percent) and feeling lonely and missing friends and family (34 percent) were the top worries

amongst expats ahead of relocation" (HSBC 2011a). The Peace Corps addresses these issues by

training its volunteers many ways to fit in. On their website, they stress that PCVs will become

great friends and maybe even family to some of the community members they will live with or

near. One Volunteer featured on the Peace Corps website states:

> Before I became a Peace Corps Volunteer, thinking about
> wanting to help people and making a difference was more
> of an abstract idea, sort of a moral, good thing to do. But
> now there's a stronger reason behind it because now these
> people are my friends (PeaceCorps 2008b).

PCVs' success depends on how integrated and connected a Volunteer becomes; for many

PCVs, making friends is a first integral step to that end.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Symbolic Interactionism and Attribution Theory

Symbolic Interactionism is a foundational theory in sociology. It has three main premises.

First, individuals act in reaction to objects and persons due to their meaning and the individual's

interpretation of said meaning. Second, these meanings come from social interaction. Third,

meanings are social products. They can be understood or misunderstood, appreciated or taken for

granted, and used or ignored quite unconsciously in social interaction. This last premise forms a

basis for this study's theoretical framework. The idea that social interaction is based on shared

meanings and interpretations of actions, objects, and processes, and that these interpretations of a

situation can go quite smoothly or horribly awry for individuals interacting with each other,

demonstrates that we live precariously and often can misjudge the implications of our actions.

These risks are particularly significant in interactions between PCVs and their host country

nationals, as these shared meanings and interpretations are rarer in cross-cultural encounters.

Attribution theory augments symbolic interactionism's insights by addressing how people

explain their own and others' social behavior – their causal attributions or common-sense

explanations for why we do what we do socially. It focuses on how we experience events and

how we determine our courses of action from these perceptions. This theory pertains to my

thesis in that I am asking RPCVs why they acted as they did when they were abroad. How they

determine which course of action is appropriate if confronted with the Ugly American

stereotype, and why and how they chose to acculturate in general, are pertinent to my research

question. Attribution theory helps to explain the social forces behind our actions and will help

me theoretically organize my findings.

Daniel Riveiro's Blog illustrates the potential application of attribution theory for this

study:

> Something's been changing, slowly but steadily, but the
> night before last I was organizing files on my computer and
> reread my Peace Corps application essays. In them I talked
> about my desire to learn about a new culture, my ability to
> adapt. I realized that I haven't learned much about the
> culture other than the language, have barely adapted at all.

So last night I decided to just accept Ukrainian culture for
what it is. I decided to eat what I'm told to eat, dress the
way they want me to dress, do what I'm told to do. One of
two things will happen: I'll find I enjoy living the way
Ukrainians do and stop spending so much money, time and
effort trying to keep up American habits, or I'll decide it's
not for me and gladly get my freedom when I have my own
apartment in April. What I'm not going to do is keeping
getting annoyed at little things and what I'm not going to do
is live more than two years in a country without ever trying
to live like its residents (Riveiro 2005).

This PCV is explaining social behavior in terms of how he interpreted events and how he
acted in response to these interpretations. He is able to see that he has been reacting negatively to
certain circumstances, and he is actively taking the steps to change it. He has consciously and
systematically determined a new course of action based on outcomes of his previous courses of
action.

Group Mechanics

When sociologists study group dynamics they typically examine such aspects as
inequality and intergroup relations. These two themes are pronounced in group relations between
Peace Corps Volunteers and host country nationals, new neighbors, and community members.
When considering group dynamics from an individual perspective, it is important to take
membership, in-group and out-group mentalities, and solidarity into account. Each of these
sentiments exemplifies bond strength and cohesion, helping shape relationships. When in-group
and out-group members are in contention, issues may escalate, and the in-group/out-group
"distinction creates the atmosphere for stereotyping, in which out-group members are judged

more stereotypically than in-group members are" (Mannix 2006: 31). The greater the external threat to a group, the greater the internal solidarity within a group.

Another important principle of group dynamics is that if one can't follow the conversation one isn't a part of the group. This works both literally and figuratively. As I stated previously, Chie Fukuda studied the impact of language acquisition and its impact on community relations. If one cannot interact through language, one is significantly handicapped when trying to form bonds and enter into a group.

Group dynamics also illuminates interaction between groups. In particular, Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory states that interaction between groups can lead to positive outcomes. This theory also stipulates that four conditions must be met in order to optimize positive interactions and, consequently, feelings: equal group status within the situation, intergroup cooperation, common goals and attention to similar initiatives, and authority support (Pettigrew 1998). I will later relate these conditions to relationships among Peace Corps Volunteers, their in-country counterparts, and host country nationals.

Impression Management

Goffman's impression management concept refers to the conscious processes that a person uses to "keep up appearances." It is the "verbal and non verbal practices we employ in an attempt to present an acceptable image of our self to others" (Appelrouth 2006: 180). By controlling the information they reveal about themselves, people are able to keep control of others' picture of them. In "audience segregation," an individual reveals parts of their self to one group but not to another, effectively avoiding divulging a picture of their self to any one group. These understandings of self presentation provide key insights into the acculturation enacted by

PCVs upon arrival in their host communities. Individuals use impression management to receive a position within the Peace Corps in the first place through an application, an essay, and one or more interviews. They are selected partly because they present the best, brightest, and most socially acceptable sides of themselves. Once abroad, appearances must be kept up to make a good impression in their new home. By toning down or playing up certain aspects of themselves, they are able to save face and manage their impressions on others. These principles complement attribution theory in that social actors make claims and observers attribute conclusions. This ongoing process of give and take creates the social world in which we exist. We take cues from others on how they are acting and want to be acted upon, and we in turn act in response and convey how we wish to be acted towards.

Assimilation and Identity Work While Abroad

As mentioned before, identity work is a concept related to the unconscious labor by individuals to express or withhold parts of their identities in social situations (Smith 2006). Revealing or concealing facets of our identity depends on what the situation demands or allows. The ability to express or contain oneself is an integral part of assimilation. Certain situations may call for Volunteers to be especially outgoing, extremely reserved, exuberant, demure, helpful, giving, intellectual, accessible, hardworking, relaxed, calm, confident, or any combination thereof. The process of assimilation involves knowing what the temperature of the situation is and what identity facets it calls for. Peace Corps Volunteers must be acutely aware of their expressions and expressiveness while abroad. According to Hawkins, "identity formulation can be described as an ongoing negotiation between the individual and the social context or environment, with particular attention paid to operant culture and power relations… The

activities and contexts, however, are imbued with and represent specific values and ideologies (which privilege certain practices over others), and those shape the dynamics of the interactions" (Hawkins 2005: 59). For my study, these interactions would be those of the Peace Corps Volunteer and his or her host community. PCVs must delicately balance their own thoughts and ideas about how things should be done and how the community would feel about such actions. The clash of cultures, ideologies, and social, political, religious, and economic means of achieving ends must be carefully navigated and this responsibility falls on the Volunteers since they are outsiders who are also representing not only themselves but the institution of the Peace Corps and the United States as well.

Self-Reflexivity

Gidden's theory on self reflexivity is similar to Hubert Hermans's idea of the dialogical self, the idea that we have "the ability to put ourselves unconsciously into others' places and to act as they act" (Ritzer 2003: 346). This more holistic view of empathy defines what Peace Corps Volunteers must do in order to more fully understand their new surroundings and community. "It is by means of reflexiveness that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself [sic] that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself [sic] to that process, and to modify the resultant process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it" (Mead 1933/1962: 134)

Crisis Theory

One theory that is heavily stressed in the literature regarding the Peace Corps and adjustment issues is crisis theory (Arnold 1967). Crisis theory states that when a person is

confronted with an overwhelming situation they perceive as threatening, they lose ability to manage the situation. The Peace Corps emphasizes the elements of intervention and rehabilitation in crisis theory. In-country orientation addresses several such themes, one being the articulation of issues that Volunteers are facing. Another is culture shock, how important it is to acknowledge its impact on the Volunteer, and how to normalize the experience. To facilitate, Peace Corps staff stress the importance of group support networks – an idea rooted in Homans' "concept of interaction, activity, and sentiment as the schematic basis for group cohesiveness" (Arnold 1967:57).

Going Native

One option that expatriates and PCVs alike may consciously or unconsciously choose to take is that of "going native." In this process the individual fully sheds his or her former national identity, and many of the ideologies that come along with it, and adopts a new way of life that is like their new host community's. Going native is different from assimilation in that assimilation is more a blending of cultural values and norms and identities rather than a complete abandonment of them. This process of transformation and redefinition of the self is important to consider when deciding how to proceed in a new circumstance. It relates to Goffman's concept of impression management in that the individual may go native to make the way easier for themselves and they come to fully understand, appreciate, and accept the new way of life as being more suitable for their circumstance – and they fully adopt it.

Two important factors in overcoming prejudices and stereotypes are contact and proximity. When Peace Corps Volunteers integrate themselves in a society and get to know their new neighbors and community, they help break preconceived notions that they themselves had, and that others held against them (Cohn 1985). During their two year stint they become

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integrated and acculturated into the society in which they are assigned. Many develop a great affinity for their fellow community members, so much so that some reside there after their term of service has ended. The reasons they decide to stay and become expatriates are varied. In sum, these people have become so deeply connected to a community that they find it more desirable to stay rather than return to the US.

On the whole, non-professional and non-business-oriented American expatriates are not seen as the stereotypical "Ugly Americans." Typically they learn the local customs and ways of life, and successfully integrate. Anyone living abroad typically goes through the process of acculturation in order to learn their own and their new community's limits. Upon arriving in a new place, most people feel as if a "chameleon" approach is best: to give up blatant "otherness" and accept the new way of life so as to best fit in and not make waves. Once language, customs, and culture have been learned, many feel that they can ease up and let their personality and idiosyncrasies show little by little. Once someone is fully comfortable in a community, they can act more like themselves. Bird comments:

> I think effective expatriates intuitively realize when they are perceived as competent enough to allow themselves to express more of their eccentricity. By effective expatriates, I mean people who try to integrate, who learn the language and work at learning the culture, who do whatever it takes to be successful at work, and who try very hard not to offend. One day they look around and see that this effort has paid off – they have good relationships with the locals and they've done well on the job. They think to themselves "I've mastered this – I am perceived as competent, and now I'm going back to be more who I really am" (Bird 1999: 157).

2.7 Significance of My Research

Use to the Peace Corps

This study's findings promise to be useful in both professional and academic realms. My research may be of use to the Peace Corps as a set of externally collected reflections and may help in the organization better achieving its goals and more effectively evaluating its training methods and their outcomes. According to Berry, acculturative stress is a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation. It can manifest in multiple forms, but most commonly as depression due to culture loss, and anxiety due to uncertainties. As previously mentioned the Peace Corps has several safeguards throughout their processes of application, interview and screening, acceptance, pre-departure, and in-country training, to minimize acculturative stress and other problems Peace Corps Volunteers may have with adjusting. This adjustment process is my thesis' focus.

Use to the Social Sciences

The relevance of my research to sociology, psychology, and related disciplines is rooted in my application of those disciplines' theories. Areas such as the study of identity, identity formation and maintenance, interpersonal relations, group relations and processes, and inter- and multicultural interactions are social scientific concerns. The importance of being able to understand the actions of individuals and groups as well as being able to detect and predict social patterns is integral to our understanding of our social world. This research will also have applications in anthropology and ethnography though its critique of the Peace Corps training methods for integration into a different society.

Ethnography is an aspect of anthropology that involves researchers situating themselves in the place of those they are studying and living and acting as they do. Soyini Madison

emphasizes ethical considerations in the practice of ethnography – how communities studied in this fashion are helped or harmed, and particularly how researchers should plan to avoid causing harm (Madison 2005: 5).

This attention to the ethics of ethnographic studies also applies to PCVs while they are on their assignments. If the hopes, wants, and needs of a community are not addressed, then nothing will be accomplished by the Volunteers because they won't have support from the community they are supposedly serving. As mentioned previously, one method PCVs use to integrate themselves into their new culture is through acquisition of the local customs and language. Fukuda points out that without a working grasp of each other's language, an "exoticized cultural and linguistic Other" is formed, since a common understanding cannot be shared (Fukuda 2006:431). Kim reiterates this point and relates it back to ethnographic methodology by stating that "employing various qualitative research methods such as ethnography and rhetorical analysis, investigators have contributed significantly to deepening our understanding of the communication practices unique to a given cultural or subcultural community" (Kim 2005: 568).

Use to Other Disciplines and Professions

Multiculturalism is a huge concern within many institutions today. Businesses and schools, looking to provide their own members with an edge, boast of their commitment to diversity, multiculturalism and cultural sensitivity. Arguments in favor of these policies are that they produce well rounded and confident individuals capable of working with all sorts of people and in a variety of settings. My research on the training processes used by the Peace Corps to prepare individuals to be perhaps the sole representative for their nationality, race, class, education level, skill set, gender, or worldview is invaluable to many settings outside of

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international aid. The competency of an individual depends on his or her ability to express him

or herself and share information while simultaneously being able to listen and support others.

Selected Peace Corps Volunteers have the potential for these skills due to their specially selected

qualities and subsequent instruction in the US and in their host countries. My research and

interviews with those used to being in these difficult and diverse settings will provide insight into

their world of being the outsider, and hopefully will provide pertinent information on the

importance of understanding, tolerance, and integration.

Chapter 3: Methods

Qualitative studies are those in which an attempt is made to understand a phenomenon in a context-specific setting. As one of the main components of critical research indicates, all social action is historical and is governed by societal representations. These are the reasons that I have chosen to use qualitative methods to examine how different Peace Corps Volunteers react to the "Ugly American" stereotype and how it effects their decisions to defend themselves or acculturate completely. This research will be significant in that I am examining the social construction of identities, their meanings, and the impacts that they have on the individual. I will provide a background and basis for critique of the methods implemented by the Peace Corps in order to determine their impact on reducing tensions between the Volunteers and their host communities. By critically examining identity formation and projection, stereotypes, assimilation, and acculturation, I will be able to further understanding of the choices made by the Volunteers as to their paths of least resistance in acclimating to their new cultural surroundings.

I conducted eight in-depth interviews with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV's) from December 2010 through January 2011. I brought a recording device to the session to capture potential quotes and more detailed descriptions, and I also took hand written notes throughout as well. By inquiring about subjects such as national identity, Peace Corps training, assimilation techniques, expectations and actual experiences, stereotypes, and both positive and negative encounters with local community members, I used the information gathered to further explore my research question.

My research began with the research question "how and to what extent do PCVs respond to being accused of portraying the Ugly American stereotype by assimilating/acculturating with the local community, as opposed to responding defensively (i.e., defending American nationality

and culture-based behaviors and attitudes), and how does the training they received from the Peace Corps influence this?". This question assumed that the Ugly American stereotype was often present and posed a significant problem for PCVs. At least for my interviewees, this generally wasn't the case. However, the interviews did reveal other cultural obstacles PCVs encountered and (in varying degrees) adapted to. Therefore, as the study evolved, I increasingly asked and addressed the research question, "What problems did PCVs encounter in adapting to their sites, and how did they adapt?" This takes into account the cultural differences unrelated to Ugly American issue but nonetheless posing obstacles, and how PCVs adapted (if at all).

Qualitative analysis is less structured and standardized than quantitative analysis. Making sense of the data I collected from each of my interviews has been done after each. I utilized several theories and concepts related to symbolic interactionism, self reflexivity, identity, and group processes to distinguish common themes and draw conclusions from each interview.

3.1 Domain Analysis

Themes Anticipated

Domain analysis, according to Neuman's summary of the concept by James Spradley, is a method to analyze qualitative data through the researcher "describing and revealing the structure of a cultural domain "(Neuman 2006: 470). This means that the researcher categorizes experiences he or she has within a framework they construct based on the cultural context of the setting they are studying. This "cultural domain" they initially describe is built from these smaller subsets of experiences and situations and help to tell the story of their reserch. This method will be implemented in my research through my study of the contexts of each Peace Corps Volunteer's experience.

Within these frameworks of social interaction that I construct from stories relayed to me by the PCVs are potential themes that I expected to find. Through PCV's stories, I hoped to understand the following: the significance of the trainings that the PCVs underwent, different perceptions that each region or community had of Americans, repeated instances of exposure to the "Ugly American" stereotype, and methods the PCVs implemented to better fit in to their new society. I specifically asked the RPCVs about their methods of blending into the new culture and community, as well as how they were perceived by their new neighbors and community members. I asked what the general perceptions of Americans were so that I may gather a sense of the social and political climate that the Volunteers were in. I sought to gather significant background information about the Peace Corps training processes- both pre-departure as well as in-country; these would include cultural sensitivity training, acculturative processes and psychological preparation, as well as skills training and basic "what to expect" type briefings.

3.2 Overview of My Participants

My interviewees represent PCVs serving in three regions of the world: Asia (3 Volunteers), Africa (3 Volunteers), and Central and South America (two Volunteers). All served between the years of 1990 and 2010 and identified as Caucasian. These similarities, specifically the time period of a twenty year span, provides a certain degree of commonality among them, despite their very different geographical areas, in that each will have similar global, political, social, and economic conditions as well as other common factors, such as their race and Peace Corps training regimens, affecting them.

All of the RPCVs that I interviewed were in their twenties during their service except for

two, who were over the age of 50. Among the other six, the youngest began serving at age 22 and the oldest at age 26.

3.3 Cause and Effect: Factors Shaping PCVs' Actions

Causal research expresses the cause and the effect in situations as independent and dependent variables. My research is qualitative and therefore less causal and more about processes that connect events within particular contexts. In my study I am looking at the actions PCVs take to either maintain a significant portion of their American identity or the actions they take to shed it and adopt a persona appropriate for their new culture.

Various factors may provoke a change of behavior and or outlook by the PCVs: their lessons in the culture during pre-service training, the stories and cautionary tales they hear from other Volunteers, their own experiences, and their own general sense of personal adaptation and couth. The outcome of all these factors would be the spectrum of action the PCVs take in choosing how to respond. When confronted with a hardship, the natural physical or psychological response is to choose between fight or flight mechanisms. Fight or flight terminology is too extreme for my study as these terms identify the unconscious choices that people make while confronted with a hardship. These are the two extreme ends of a spectrum on which I anticipate my respondents may place themselves as this dichotomy is typically autonomic while the PCVs' actions will be ingrained in their Peace Corps training. In this study "fight" does not at all pertain to a violent confrontation but merely a self defense of one's native personality and culture and, in turn, the other option would be to consciously or unconsciously blend in and "go native."

As mentioned previously, the unit of analysis in my study is the individual, because I

examine the strain the Volunteers are under and the hostility they may have met and possibly overcome. The context is how hostile a stereotype the individual encounters as measured through the interviews I held. The degree of hostility is the amount of adversity for their nationality that the U.S. American faces from their host community during his or her work abroad.

The main questions I studied are the "how" and "why" of the encounters the PCVs experience as well as the responses they choose and the factors, such as Peace Corps training, that go into choosing how to integrate into a community and respond to any negativity faced while doing so. I used the interpretive approach, which Neuman 2006 describes as being used to understand and describe meaningful social interaction. Critical analysis of texts, theories, and personal accounts gained through my own interviews, are the primary sources for my research and analysis.

3.4 Interviews

Again, my research questions are: how and to what extent do PCVs attempt to fit in by assimilating/acculturating with the local community, as opposed to responding defensively to the Ugly American stereotype (i.e., defending American nationality and culture-based behaviors and attitudes) and how does the training they received from the Peace Corps influence this? My interviews were semi-structured and open ended to allow for a more complete and authentic picture of what the RPCVs experienced. In order to gain background information on my respondents I asked some basic questions about their individual experiences. Some of the preliminary questions that I asked included:

> --*What was your age during your service?*
> --*Where were you sent?*
> --*What years were you in country?*
> --*What was your level of education at the time of your departure?*

--What sector of the Peace Corps were you assigned to work in?
--What type of job or skills training pertaining to this assignment did you have prior to your departure?
--If you can remember, what was the application and interview process like for you?

From here I continued with questions pertaining to acculturation, assimilation, stereotypes, community response, and Peace Corps training. They included but were not limited to:

--What was your motivation for joining the Peace Corps?
--Please describe your pre-departure training given by the Peace Corps.
--Please describe your in-country training given by the Peace Corps.
--What was your level of connection or isolation from the US?
--What was your experience with acculturation like?
--What was your initial family stay like?
--Describe the host country's affinity or adversity to Americas both when you served and now.
--How much did you stand out as an American at first?
--What measures, if any, did you go through to attempt to blend in?
--Please describe your feelings on acculturation.
--Please recount any memories or stories specifically pertaining to your experience with the "Ugly American" stereotype and your response to it.
--Please recount any memories or stories that you remember your friends in the Peace Corps (in country with you or elsewhere) experiencing with the "Ugly American" stereotype.
-- Did you extend or consider extending your stay at the end of your service?

I had planned to formulate additional questions to ask if needed during any potential follow-up interviews. This however was unnecessary as I was able to gather the information I needed in the initial interviews.

3.5 Methods for Data Analysis

Narrative

Narrative analysis is a form of qualitative data analysis. This method is described by Neuman as "both a rhetorical form and a generic logical form of explanation that merges theorized description of an event with its explanation" (Neuman 2006: 474). This description sums up the reasoning behind why I will be using it as a primary form of analysis. I value the ability to both describe and explain a situation through the telling of a story or accounts of an event. I will therefore use quotes from the interviews held with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) as the basis of my examination of their experiences during their service.

I will analyze these responses using the interpretive approach to social research since the focus of this study is to examine the inter- and intra-personal meanings of nationality and self representation (Frisby and Featherstone 1998). Interpretive analysis is one that relies heavily on the researcher's conceptions of the given situation. Interpretations of the situation and data given are integral for the understanding of the experience as a whole and how it fits into the context of the larger narrative. Neuman describes this approach as being used to understand and describe meaningful social interaction. Through my critical analysis of texts, theories, and personal accounts given in the interviews I will interpret the situations and context of each of the RPCV's experiences.

Illustrative

Illustrative methodology is also a technique I will use in my analysis and entails applying a theory to the situation being researched. In this case I will be applying such theories as those previously discussed to the experiences of the RPCVs. These theories that I will be

demonstrating the significance of in relation to the experiences of RPCVs are: symbolic interactionism, group mechanics, impression management, assimilation and identity work, self reflexivity, crisis theory, and the ideas of going native. After completing my discussion of the results of my interviews, I will discuss how these theories apply to the experience of Peace Corps Volunteers.

Coding Methods

I have coded the responses to my interviews by taking relevant quotes and grouping them together by theme. Each section of my analysis corresponds to research I completed for my literature review and each piece together the experience of the Peace Corps as well as the idea of the Ugly American abroad. Each interviewee was asked similar questions though maintaining the flow and conversational feel of the discussion was more important than retaining a strict question and answer format.

3.6 Potential Problems

Some problems my study could encounter included: first the possibility that my interviewees experienced little difficulty acculturating; and second, whether or not the "Ugly American" stereotype existed in the community or country they were put into. As for the first potential problem, even if my interviewees did not experience particular difficulties with acculturation, they were still trained by the Peace Corps and still went through the acculturation process. They were guided through issues they may or may not encounter and they were put into the situation of being the outsider in a larger group or community. A third potential problem arises from my preconceived notions about how the world may view Americans. This pertains to

my proposed linkage between Peace Corps Volunteers acculturation practices and perceptions of the Ugly American abroad.

3.7 IRB Approval

Before initiating the interviews I applied for and received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of my project. The IRB is an ethics committee put in place to supervise social research in order to determine the ethical practices and credibility of the researchers and to protect the rights, safety, and general well being of the human subjects involved. IRB approval requires an application and review process for each research initiative before it may begin.

3.8 Limitations

Two potential limitations of my study are: whether or not the Ugly American stereotype even exists in the community or country in which the Volunteers were assigned to serve, and the second is that my data sources are limited to PCV's experiences only.

The first limitation pertains to the theoretical framework of my research and my preconceived notions about how the world views Americans. My research indicated that the idea of the Ugly American is a very European or Western phenomenon pertaining mainly to tourists. This limitation will affect my research in that it will exempt the respondents from even being considered Ugly Americans as they were neither tourists nor did they reside in the "West."

The second limitation is that my interviews only gather information from one source and one view point- that of the Volunteers themselves. No data was collected from the PCVs friends, neighbors, and counterparts while they were in-country. These narrow perceptions of the PCV's experiences impact my study in that my research does not get the broader perspective of what actually transpired over each Volunteer's two year span of service. By only asking the

Volunteers about their experiences and perceptions of their experiences, there may be opportunities for embellishment of positive experiences or underplaying negative ones. These inaccuracies may be intentionally fabricated in order to make the Volunteer appear in a more positive light, or they may be remembered incorrectly and therefore be more innocent under- or overstatements of actual realities.

In order to minimize discrepancies in my data I would have had to have interviewed individuals from the local communities that the Volunteers served in. This, however, was not possible. I do not believe that it completely discounts my data, though, as I was interested in Volunteers' perceptions and perspectives on their experiences while serving in the Peace Corps. The reflections on their difficulties in acculturation and the Ugly American stereotype were told from their point of view and therefore recount their own experiences.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 Overview of My Research

A primary point of my research is to examine the learned as well as inherent acculturative processes of Peace Corps Volunteers as well as their dealings with the Ugly American stereotype. The connection between social identity and stereotypes is integral to my thesis and thus was a focus of my interviews. The main questions I focused on in my interviews were the "how" and "why" that are involved in the acculturative process. Factors such as Peace Corps training that go into choosing how to integrate into a community and how to respond to any potential negativity faced while doing so were important to consider as well.

4. 2 My Study

Psychology of a PCV

The preponderance of white PCVs in their 20's in my study relates closely to a significant theme that recurred in the literature – the psychology of a "typical" Peace Corps Volunteer. While my literature review previously stated that there was no "cookie-cutter" personality for the typical Peace Corps applicant, my interviewees – albeit for a small, nonrandom sample – tend to show otherwise. In putting applicants through various selection and screening processes, the Peace Corps may include or exclude certain types of people in the pool of potential Peace Corps Volunteers. The organization is more interested in the success of each individual rather than whether or not they fit a socially constructed idea of a Volunteer "type." This insistence on not relying on a certain "type" however did not seem to carry through. In my research I found that while many types of people may apply to the Peace Corps, the organization certainly has its own selection criteria for its future Volunteers.

According to research done by Philip Himelstein, Peace Corps Volunteers typically "tend to place more value on doing things for other people and less value on economic and material gain when compared to college students"(Himelstein 1969: 151), based on PCV's scores on the "Worldmindedness Scale." This scale characterizes at the views and outlook of the individual who "favors a worldview of the problems of humanity, whose reference group is mankind, rather than Americans, English, Chinese, etc." (Sampson 1957: 99). The scale used to distinguish worldmindedness uses keywords, phrases, and questions having to do with immigration, world economic justice, race, class, world government, international affairs, standards of living, resource allocation, and international policing (Der-Karabetian 1992). According to Himelstein's research "it is reasonable to expect that those interested in the Peace Corps should obtain higher scores (i.e., be more worldminded) than those individuals with a relatively low interest in the Peace Corps" (Himelstein 1969: 151).

My interviewees demonstrated many characteristics measured by the Worldmindedness Scale, particularly a strong knowledge of international affairs. Several of my interviewees made statements expressing a worldminded point of view.

I knew I wanted to do something with people that would make a more immediate impact. (Libby)[4];

I wanted to travel, I didn't get an opportunity to study abroad in undergrad and I guess I felt really privileged growing up and wanted a change and to share that and I really just wanted to apply my education to real problems. (Lucy);

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[4] All interviewees have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity. See Appendix II for a list of Interviews with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

I wanted to get out of the country, see the world, volunteer. Why the Peace Corps? I

wanted to do something more long term- a real commitment. (Abby).

Training Experiences: Pre-Departure and In-Country

The pre-departure training that was given to all of the RPCVs that I interviewed seemed

trivial and inconsequential compared to what the literature had led me to believe. Peace Corps

documents and other research indicated that the pre-departure training was much more

significant than the RPCVs I interviewed considered it to be. Every single interviewee except

one claimed in uncertain terms that it was between one and three days of basic information about

their program, most of which they already knew. One even stated "Honestly, it's really hard for

me to remember! I was so caught up in meeting my other group members and just the logistics

of packing, getting vaccinations, saying final goodbyes on the phone that the training part is a bit

of a blur!" (Libby). The one volunteer who did think that the pre-departure training was

worthwhile stated that *"it was good we had a really great facilitator who got everyone pumped

up and excited. It was fun to meet everyone and we did a lot of activities like sharing our fears,

like what are you afraid of, what's reality like and it was great that everyone had the same

concerns going into it and the same hopes. You were really thinking about yourself and it really

took the focus off of ourselves" (Libby).

The in-country training was definitely a different story. All of the RPCVs stated that they

received language training; instruction on their field placements, immersion and culture training,

integration, technical skills and fun skills such as cooking and dancing so that they could

"survive socially"; and met and began their home stays with their host families (Christopher).

One volunteer stated "We did this for 3 months and it was sometimes frustrating, but you had the

security of still talking to others from the US. Once we got sent to our actual villages that ended" (Libby). Another volunteer echoed the same sentiment:

> They had some activities for us. Put together fun stuff for us to do, fun stuff, field trips. At the end they took us to our site and the first kick in the teeth, you're not going to get to party with your 30 best friends, and you go "oh, THIS is where I am." It was beautiful but a bit shocking because when we got to our placements [for an official first visit] it was a bit more rural so people didn't speak the language like we were used to. Where we were before people were more educated. But once we got there it was…it was the first shot, I've been learning this language for 6 weeks but I don't really know much. (Dane)

Many mentioned feelings of frustration and impatience throughout this training stage, despite seeing its importance to their success. One volunteer explained a bit of his own insight to get him through the particularly tedious patches; "some people were kind of itching to get going and get out there, really chafing under the structured team building stuff, but I looked at it like we have two years to be out there by ourselves so might as well enjoy this time hanging out and having less responsibility" (Christopher). Other emotions that interviewees mentioned experiencing during this stage were: homesickness, insecurity, helplessness, and loneliness. But Peace Corps trainers told PCVs that this was one of the stages of the acculturation process and that they would soon be over it. In order to help combat these feelings and make their transition smoother, each volunteer was put with a host family.

Home Stays

Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory illuminates the importance and helps explain the

success of host family home-stays. This theory postulates that with increased interaction come increased positive feelings, attraction, or general liking. This is especially important when considering the fact that Volunteers are placed into unfamiliar settings and are expected to get along with their new community members and find success within their new communities. Cohn explains that "volunteer living arrangements are particularly important: those living with host country persons reported the highest frequencies for all …types of interactions" (Cohn 1985: 169).

Many of the volunteers described being unofficially adopted by their host families. A few even referred to their host parents as "mom" and "dad" and used "brother" and "sister" for their host siblings. This transition into their new lives was made easier by the presence of a family atmosphere upon which they could rely. One interviewee's thoughts were that

> The training village and host family were a great transition period for me and a way for us to really put the language and cultural training we'd received to practical use. It was also a bit comforting to know we still came together as a training group several hours a day for our classes. We were still adjusting and needed to lean on each other for support. If we had been put straight into our villages, far from each other, I think it would have been much harder for us to make adjustments to daily life. (Libby)

These transitions into fitting in with the daily life were made much more smoothly with the presence and support of host families.

Immersion and Acculturation

Thanks to the help of the host families, PCVs were able to slowly immerse themselves in their new culture. They had the opportunity to observe the culture and ways of doing things, as well as listen to the language being spoken in a more informal setting. On top of all that, they

were able to interject questions and interact with the scenes they saw unfolding. For one RPCV, Lucy, it was the first time PCVs had been in the village where she was staying. She stated: "they were so interested in us and they laughed at us a lot. They help you and they laugh at you, but they know you're learning and that you're trying and you would have to do something pretty stupid to offend them. The Peace Corps had gone through and told them look here are some dumb Americans" (Lucy).

As mentioned in my literature review, Spradley states that there are five stages of acculturation. These stages are: experience, meaning, coping, stress, and adaptation. Through the understanding of each of these stages, PCVs form a greater bond with their host community and culture. Through the experience of difficulties, stress, setbacks, and other hardships, their perseverance comes as a reward.

> The scariest moment for me in my 27 months of service was when the Peace Corps Land Cruiser pulled away from my mud hut. No one in my village spoke English with any confidence. My language skills were minimal to begin with, but I quickly adapted and made good use of the dictionary I had been given by the Peace Corps staff. My neighbors were all extraordinarily welcoming and I felt very comfortable in my own village in no time.   The village festivals, weddings, football, not American football, matches, and dances were unforgettable. As my familiarity with surrounding villages and my vocabulary expanded, the village began to feel like home. (Jake)

One major factor that helped overcoming issues with immersion and acculturation was learning the language and becoming proficient in its use. Since Fukuda (2006) pointed out that not knowing a language causes the formation of the idea of an "other," a PCV's mastery of the local language is essential for both the PCVs to feel included and not to "other" the community

members, and for the host-country nationals to feel as if they can include the PCV in the community and not "other" him or her in return.

Each interviewed Volunteer went through strenuous language training to facilitate fluency in the local language or dialect, and more generally to become well adjusted to the culture. One RPCV recounts that "language instructors were also our cultural interpreters and people who helped us understand what we were getting ourselves into" (Christopher). This idea that they were "getting themselves into something" was a commonly repeated sentiment as well. Each RPCV indicated that they really had no idea of the enormity or significance of their projects and service, though they thought they had adequately prepared themselves as well as having been given ample "warning" by the Peace Corps itself.

> In my language group we switched houses every week as well as teachers so that we got accents from everywhere and some were more strict and some were more laid back. Another tricky part was not knowing the language too well at first made it seem like you didn't know what you were talking about. Like in an engineering field I would have to be describing things like a child would before I learned the technical word or term that wasn't covered in my language courses. And [host country nationals] are not big on correcting you – out of politeness – they just won't correct you and I wish they would've so I could've learned easier. (Abby)

> Obviously learning the language is a huge part of becoming one with the [community]; it was always a thrill when they found out you spoke [the local language] – no matter how limited your knowledge may be. If you could at least get through the greetings and basic getting-to-know you stuff you were much more accepted. You could tell they REALLY appreciated the effort you make to know their

language. English is the unofficial global language, so for
us to come in and speak their language is a big deal. (Jake)

Interculturation and Social Reception

As I mentioned before, though the Peace Corps does not target a specific kind of person

or personality, the selection process is quite rigorous and therefore tends to produce similarly

"world-minded" Volunteers. Those Volunteers that are more easily able to identify and

characterize both their home culture which they were socialized in, as well as their new culture

in which they find themselves as PCVs, have greater chances of success. Interculturation was

previously defined as "the set of processes by which individuals and groups interact when they

identify themselves as culturally distinct" (Berry 1997). These Volunteers that are able to

identify similarities and differences between the cultures, and are able to successfully blend

them, will be received much more favorably within their new community than those who find

this process more difficult. Two of the RPCVs that I interviewed, Samuel and Sandra,

specifically commented on this process: "[Our] neighbors and all the villagers knew that we were

there to help. [They] didn't have any problems with us being there and did what they could to

help us fit in. They were patient with the language and since we were married and older, we were

given a wider berth when it came to social and cultural faux pas" (Samuel).

One issue that was mentioned that did arise from matters relating to interculturation was

the overlap of certain aspects of power and authority. The Peace Corps Volunteers had the

expertise in their given field but also had the locally accepted characteristic of being wealthy,

bright, enthusiastic Americans which easily turns into an aura of the all-knowing Ugly

American. Though the PCVs and host country nationals are all contributing to similar projects

and hoping for the same positive outcomes, disagreements between the groups will inevitably arise.

Thanks to the resources available to them, PCVs may hold higher status (relative to the community) and therefore may be seen as superior to or more worth following than well-intentioned and better-informed local leaders (Pettigrew 1998). On the other hand, the host-country leaders and specialists had authority within the community and a mastery of the language that the PCVs didn't, as well as having the advantage of the community knowing that they would be remaining in the town or village once the project had been completed- adding to their credibility and authenticity. This dynamic was in constant flux and all parties involved had to find a happy medium or workable balance in order to accomplish anything and to maintain a sense of composure and progress.

> The fact that you're western that you're educated, it puts you in a power balance, give you a lot more respect, the people will listen to what you say and may even do what you say. So you have a lot of power....most PCVs don't think they have a lot of power, but you have way more than a normal 26 or 27 year old in that community and your project has money, so that's real significant power. You've got to be really careful about what you're doing and how you're doing it, you've really got to take an ethical framework about what you're doing. (Christopher)

This relates back to the section of my literature review on host-volunteer relations. Volunteers are heavily screened before being accepted to the Peace Corps for flexibility and adaptability in addition to their leadership and coordination skills. These are all important in maintaining a healthy balanced and mutually engaging role and relationship with the community. This PCV actually takes note of his potentially precarious situation and later indicates that this

was both his own instinct as well as a concept being reiterated in the Peace Corps training he underwent.

Perceptions of the Ugly American Stereotype

As I have mentioned in previous sections, although the Peace Corps does not target a specific kind of person or personality, the selection process is quite rigorous and therefore tends to produce the same kind of world-minded Volunteer. As one of my interviewees stated:

> I knew from an early age that service to my country was necessary to satisfy my conscience – we as Americans are so lucky to be citizens here and we should give back to our society through selfless service. As a youth, I decided to serve in the Army, but through university, especially after the invasion of Iraq, I started to look for other ways to improve America's image abroad through good works, instead of violence. (Jake)

This conscientiousness of his image as an American was one of the things that led to this interviewee's success as a Peace Corps Volunteer abroad. He was able to understand the way he needed to act in order to fit in as well as understand his community's perceptions of Americans.

A major issue related to my original research question is how each of these parts of the world where the RPCVs served viewed Americans. Surprisingly, none of my interviewees experienced negativity or hostility based solely on their nationality as Americans. Some of the previously mentioned obstacles as to how the PCVs were received were based on how they were viewed differently because of their race or gender, but none had any particular disadvantage when it came to their nationality. There were a few different reasons for this, but one factor minimizing negative reactions to the PCV's nationality, as stated by my interviewees, was that many of them were stationed in towns and villages so remote that their new neighbors and

friends, the host country nationals, had either never heard of America/Americans or had not had

any experience dealing with them prior to the Peace Corps Volunteer's arrival. The most

negative statement that a host country national directed made to any of the RPCVs, as reported in

my interviews was that "you all [Peace Corps Volunteers] are nice – for white people" (Sandra).

This statement was not a comment about nationality but about race, and had nothing to do with

the community's views on America per se.

Specifically related to the Ugly American stereotype, one Volunteer, Libby, explicitly

stated that nothing was said or done to her to indicate that the host-country nationals had any

negative opinions of Americans. She fully believed that they could have possibly had

preconceptions of her based on her being an American – of her being wealthy or especially smart

or better than them at something – but she said that such preconceptions they may have had were

quickly dispelled by her actions. She stated that she:

> I cooked over open fire, hauled water from the well,
> cleaned clothes and house by myself, rode to and from the
> market on my bike, etc. I did not have any special items in
> my house that would make me "spoiled" or "special." It is
> not my nature to be arrogant towards anyone, and quite
> honestly I can't imagine someone with that attitude even
> considering applying to the Peace Corps because that is the
> exact opposite of what we try to represent when in another
> country. (Libby)

This particular RCPV was quite in tune with the Peace Corps mission and approach,

describing it as "hands-on and work at making sustainable solutions to problems we see in the

country we are serving" (Libby). She also stated that she thought that many of the host country

nationals did not have a very high expectation for the level of her commitment and that perhaps

they did not trust her intentions, but that they soon came to see that she was living and working

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alongside them, taking joy in their success and distress in their failures, leading them to accept

her into the community.

Despite the absence of negativity based on nationality, there were still some delicate

situations that PCVs found themselves navigating. During their first days, weeks, and months,

many were stared at due to their race, gender, or basic status as an outsider:

> Even with all of our preparation and training, it was still a
> bit overwhelming for the first time on my own in my
> village. Especially since this particular village had never
> had a PC Volunteer, so for most villagers, I was their first
> experience with a white person or any contact with the
> world outside their village and/or country. In some ways I
> felt a lot of pressure as the lone representative of America.
> I wanted to make sure to dispel any stereotypes, yet still
> feel free to be myself. It was extremely important to
> immerse myself in their culture and for the most part follow
> the standard customs, etc. However, as a woman, I also
> wanted to show the girls and women in my village that you
> *can* have a voice, opinion, education, independence. It was
> a very thin line to walk when asserting my beliefs while
> still being respectful of my surroundings. (Libby)

As for being seen as Americans or even Ugly Americans, there were only one or two

incidences mentioned to me by one or two of the RPCVs. Each of the negative reactions or

situations, however, were experienced by friends, acquaintances, or even friends of friends of the

Volunteers that I interviewed, never directly by my interviewees though this could be due to my

small sample size.

According to the Peace Corps, Volunteers are allowed to discuss politics, religion, and

any other personal or potentially sensitive subjects with their in-country friends as long as they

explicitly state that the views that they express do not reflect those of the US Government or of

the Peace Corps. The organization does state, however, that Volunteers "should be aware that

public political expression overseas may raise issues of V/T [Volunteer/Trainee] safety and security if the issues could provoke hostility locally," and that if harm or foul were to come from such discussions or if they "endanger the safety and security of the individual V/T, or the post, or impair the effectiveness of the Peace Corps or the individual V/T, [there] may be grounds for administrative separation or other disciplinary action" (PeaceCorps 2005).

Aside from not encountering the Ugly American stereotype, the Peace Corps Volunteers that I spoke with did what they could to quickly dispel any myths they did encounter about Americans. As mentioned previously, they lived, worked, and participated in daily life with their community and quickly became community members themselves. As they became more familiar and accepted in their communities, they were asked more and more questions about life in the U.S. Several reported being asked questions about former President Bush and President Obama, or about Michael Jackson or various movie or pop stars. Aside from pop culture questions, one Volunteer said that:

> Many could not understand why I would feel compelled to assist in development of their country instead of enjoying my much wealthier country of origin. The jealousy or occasional disgust that other Western societies such as Australia, the UK, or Germany seem to hold for Americans was very uncommon in [country]. Most people were very glad to have us there, even if it was merely for the economic benefits. For example, I was the 3rd wealthiest man in my village, just because of my Peace Corps living allowance, a mere $255 a month. (Jake)

My literature review stated that different parts of the world view Americans differently, and this has most certainly been true of the three regions where my interviewees served. O'Connor stated that the Ugly American stereotype is "a series of criticisms and prejudices regarding America that have haphazardly been labeled anti-Americanism" (O'Connor 2004: 77).

These haphazard criticisms are all combined under the umbrella of the Ugly American stereotype and tend to play up the severity of the breadth and depth of the so called hatred found abroad for Americans.

Standing Out and Blending In

Another of this study's research questions was: "how and to what extent do PCVs respond by assimilating/acculturating with the local community, as opposed to responding defensively (i.e., defending American nationality and culture-based behaviors and attitudes) and how does the training they received from the Peace Corps influence this?" The RPCVs that I spoke to had a great deal to say on this subject. Many mentioned how much they stood out even at first glance. All of the volunteers that I interviewed were white, thus setting themselves apart immediately at their locations in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America on the basis of their skin color. Many also mentioned either being categorized with Europeans or with tourists and businesspeople. Those three Volunteers that stated this were either the first or one of the first Volunteers at their site or in their community and therefore had to repeatedly explain their purpose for being there, their development goals, the culture-exchange aspect, and their overall reason for leaving a place where they were clearly more affluent and advanced. In order to make themselves understood, many had to either cut back on their contact with other whites and/or Americans or had to segregate themselves from them completely. Dane, though stationed in a remote part of the Asia region, still saw a significant number of tourists and mentioned that other Americans (not affiliated with the Peace Corps) as being "a source of embarrassment" (Dane).

PCVs typically had to adapt, accept, or change many things about themselves through the process of acculturation. They changed the way they dressed, ate, spoke, acted, and looked at

others, and how they presented themselves overall. In order to fit in some of the volunteers also

(remorsefully) explicitly lied and changed their religion, their relationships status, their values,

and their outlook just to avoid some of the social and political discussions or debates that the

Peace Corps warned them about. "I told people I was Catholic, I didn't think the whole atheism

thing would go over well…but I was actually raised Catholic and went to 12 years of Catholic

school so I could pass" (Abby). Below is what another volunteer stated he and his fellow

Volunteers did to fit in:

> We drank with locals, ate gross or weird things. Eating and drinking were key. The language was key as well, they loved hearing it. They would laugh and rank us. Other [foreigners] would come and they could really speak [the local language] and they [the locals] would put them up higher and knock you down. Just being a part of the family…I lived with them for 6 months and loved it, I had the best [host family]. But then I moved to my own spot. Then I found a group of contemporaries, young professionals that were local. We hung out with them a lot. Hanging out with them you felt more at ease, you know? They didn't want anything from you materially. They were richer than we were. The host family didn't want anything either. There were others in the village were always like 'can I have this or that, or can you get this for me' and that's part of being an American there- the pressure and trying to tell them you don't have any money. They understood that we didn't have a whole lot, but still it was a bit more than they had. (Dane)

Though most Volunteers go through this period of adjustment and attempting to fit in,

after a while many also return to familiar ways of doing things. In his blog, RPCV Daniel

Riveiro stated, "I came to Peace Corps expecting to conform to their culture, but that lasted

barely two weeks before I was back to dressing how I wanted to dress, acting how I wanted to

act. Changing how you behave is a huge thing, hard, harder than I imagined it would be" (Riveiro 2005). He eventually discovered, however, that he needed to change some of his ways if he was ever going to fit in and accomplish what he set out to do. His emphasis on how slowly he took the acculturation process was apparent and was also completely different from how the RPCVs that I interviewed described their experience. Both Riveiro and my interviewees expressed how difficult it was, but none lamented over clinging to their personal ways of doing things. As one RPCV that I interviewed stated: "it was a huge adjustment period. However, I think this is what Peace Corps *should* be like. Not that you can't have some connection to the U.S. but if you remain completely self-absorbed and your mind stays in America instead of the new culture that you've been placed, I don't think you will ever truly get all that you should or GIVE all that you should to the Peace Corps experience" (Libby).

Incomplete Peace Corps Service

One of the Peace Corps' slogans claims that what they offer is "the toughest job you'll ever love." This statement, from what I've read, heard, and discussed with interviewees could not be more true. Navigating culture shock, acculturative stress, disheartening setbacks, poverty, disease, "backwards" thinking by locals, and homesickness, and overall a rougher lifestyle than any of them are accustomed, is sometimes the greatest accomplishment that many feel they will make in their lifetime – that is, if they are able to complete their service. As one RPCV commented, "slightly under half of our group returned home before completing two years of service even though we were in a beautiful paradise. We noticed some of the younger female Volunteers had a hard time accepting the cultural differences and [the female Volunteers] railed against them which interfered with positive relationships with the local people" (Samuel). The Peace Corps notes huge setbacks or impenetrable obstacles for their volunteers. Research shows

that 79 percent of Volunteers who do not complete their service resign of their own accord rather than leaving due to medical issues, Peace Corps rules violations, or having their service interrupted by social or political turmoil (PeaceCorps 2007). Among these Volunteers who quit on their own, 24 percent resign during their first three months of training, 47 percent during the fourth through twelfth months, and 29 percent during their second year (Sheppard 2008).

PCVs' Frustrations and Unmet Expectations

One issue that a significant number of my interviewees stated was their feelings of inadequacy during parts of their service. They either felt as if their skills weren't being put to good use, or that they weren't doing enough to actually make a difference. One woman mentioned her engineering skills not being taken seriously because of her gender and the machismo culture that she was placed in. Another mentioned having to downplay her experience and be content helping to garden and mend fences for the majority of her placement.

The mission of the Peace Corps is both development and cultural exchange. Hall notes that "although the efforts of PCVs to achieve specific project goals, especially those dealing with development, frequently met with frustration, PCVs often realized the latter two objectives. Much of the organization's legacy stems from this realization" (Hall 2007: 53). This realization, in combination with the seemingly insignificant outcomes of not getting much done physically, is enough to discourage the most tenacious PCV. It is especially frustrating and disheartening due to the perception that they can take on the world's problems and make a significant change for a community, village, or even an entire group of people affected by the same shared inequality – and many Volunteers fall victim to this ideology. Hall comments on this fallacy by the Peace Corps stating that "[their] emphasis on youth, emotion, personal commitment, and

person-to-person diplomacy over the tangible outcomes of specific projects fostered an organizational culture that utilized individual idealism as a way to rise above glaring contradictions in domestic and foreign policy" (Hall 2007: 56). In other words, these stereotypically idealistic and young Peace Corps Volunteers think that they will be changing the world so significantly and so profoundly that they come to be inevitably disappointed in even the most ambitious and fruitful of their undertakings.

One volunteer described his service as being "professional but pretty unstructured." He had his initial projects but they didn't take up significant portions of his time and he wasn't able to devote more to them due to the slow and easy going culture (both at work and in less formal socializing). He stated that he "wasn't quite busy enough to be fully occupied…. But I wasn't bored enough to go and look for more intensive projects," he continued, "I would go and do little things but then my second year I was like 'I need a secondary project to fill my downtime between my other responsibilities'" (Christopher). Several other volunteers echoed this sentiment as well. Many had secondary and even some tertiary projects that they were working on simultaneously on their own during their free time. They set them up and took on community partners or partnered with other communities in order to accomplish more than they were actually assigned by the Peace Corps or by their in-county counterparts. Many also stressed that during their searches for independent projects they had to balance their enthusiasm and work ethic with the idea that they weren't in charge 100 percent of the time. This same volunteer specifically stated that he "didn't want to be the 'overenthusiastic American.' That's one of the cool things about Peace Corps, there are relatively few times you're in another country and you're not in charge" indicating that he enjoyed having the knowledge and expertise to contribute but that he also enjoyed the fact that others were involved in the leadership process

(Christopher). For many projects, community members will utilize the Volunteers skills and

energies and will thank the Volunteer for them, but will maintain the methods of doing things,

the time schedule, and the pace that they would have regardless of the Volunteer's participation.

The first half of the last quote seems to show some awareness by the RPCV of trying to avoid

Ugly Americanism, the second half seems steeped in it. Many RPCVs also seemed quite proud

of themselves for being mini-entrepreneurs in their free time endeavors – despite then also

feeling unaccomplished. This brings us back to my alternative research questions dealing with

the cultural obstacles that the PCVs faced.

Despite creating extra chores and projects for themselves, many of the RPCVs had a lot

to say in regards to this theme of feeling inadequate or unaccomplished during their service in

spite of this near self-importance.

> Every PCV and everyone who does some international
> experience spends a good time asking themselves [what did
> I accomplish?] and obviously I benefited from it way more
> than I contributed and I learn a lot of lessons, professional
> skills and way more about myself, and that's invaluable and
> then I contributed modestly, you know? Would that village
> have a school if I wasn't there? Probably not, but you
> know… (Christopher).

Many of my interviewees seemed to offer words of advice and encouragement to

potential or future volunteers. By taking on a positive attitude and expressing it to others, they

were both convincing whomever they were speaking to (in this case me) as well as themselves.

Sometimes by "psyching themselves out," by reminding themselves of their mission, goals, and

reasons for their service, they were able to get through rough periods of time and carry on with

their service. In the latter part of his interview with me, Dane reiterated this sentiment: "you've

got to be cut out for spending a lot of time by yourself unstructured, picking up trash doing your own thing. But yeah, the first six months is rocky. Once you stop beating yourself up for not being productive, that's the American part you bring with you and people [host-country nationals] at your office say 'Relax! Have a shot! Whatever! We're going to fiesta today and get in a government vehicle and get to drink and eat for the whole afternoon that's just how you do it" (Dane). This optimism and taking life as it comes and rolling with the punches was a sentiment that all volunteers expressed and encouraged. Each also articulated that they looked back on their service fondly and expressed that they had created a lasting bond through their experience, whether it was with the projects they worked on, the people they lived, worked, and interacted with, or an affinity to the culture, language, and country in general. Even with the frustrations of feeling inadequate, homesick, or culturally incompatible at times, the Volunteers expressed positive feelings and fond memories. Despite these positive reflections however, not many choose to extend their service.

Theoretical Application

Throughout my analysis I used illustrative methodology techniques. This method involved applying a theory to the situation being researched. The theories that I discussed in my literature review encompassed symbolic interactionism, group mechanics, impression management, assimilation and identity work, self reflexivity, and the ideas of going native.

Symbolic interactionism allows one to assess what is gained by individuals participating in different situations. Participants' perceptions of what goes on during an interaction set the scene for further discussion and future interactions and relations. Thus, since PCVs are new to their communities, much is at stake when they interact with their new neighbors and community

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members. Differences in language ability and cultural nuance cause many misunderstandings. These are aggravated by the newness of the situation to both parties, especially if the community has not yet had a Volunteer and therefore does not know how exactly to interact with them. Additionally if they have had PCVs before there could be already established scripts that the PVC is expected to conform to. Such scripts might limit the PVC's personal agency. Peace Corps Volunteers are taught how they should act and express themselves though they are told that they must be patient and flexible and must stress that they are new and willing to learn and adaptable. This conflict was something that many of my interviewees mentioned- being both constrained by the Peace Corps instruction on acculturation as well as being encouraged to be flexible and blend in how they feel appropriate in their individualized experiences.

Group mechanics also help us understand Peace Corps Volunteers' insertion into in their new communities. Membership in each group – Peace Corps or community – comes to connote certain things about individuals – whether it is in their language, mannerisms, outlook, demeanor, or other socio-personal characteristics. The initial interactions between each of these two groups are important to consider because they help establish a starting point for interactions over a two year period. The evolution of these relationships was dependent on how each learned to be flexible and patient with the other – PCVs in terms of the information and experience exchange and host community members in terms of teaching local customs and socially acceptable means of achieving ends. Impression management was integral to this process.

An impression management approach helps each group or individual selectively reveal certain aspects of themselves at certain times in order to maintain certain appearances. This process is especially important for Peace Corps Volunteers because they are literally

outnumbered in their new society and have to conform in order to fit in. They must restrain from

being the Ugly American that knows everything and is there to impart some mythical "western

wisdom" on the community that they are serving. They must remember that they are there to do

just that: serve their communities. They must learn to hide certain aspects of themselves in order

to better make themselves understood. This is evidenced in a story told during one of my

interviews. One volunteer mentioned how sarcastic she was back in the States and how she had

to completely drop that aspect of her personality: "Sarcasm was hard also, I had to get rid of that

and I am a very sarcastic person. So they probably just thought I was crazy when I would say

things that clearly weren't true" (Abby). Thus she had to manage the impression she gave to

others. This helped the Volunteers to better assimilate and acculturate and manage their

identities.

These processes of determining how best to fit in to new societies are all integral for

Peace Corps Volunteers to consider. Another practice that they may use more consciously than

the others, though, is self reflexivity: placing themselves in the shoes of their counterparts. They

look at themselves and their situations through the eyes of their new friends, coworkers,

community members, and host country nationals and eventually begin to think like them as well.

This initiates a process through which volunteers "go native," choosing to deeply immerse

themselves in their new society's way of life. They decide that they prefer these methods and

outlooks to those that they previously employed in the US and decide not to set themselves apart

as much by maintaining parts of their American identities or even just American ways of doing

things.

4.3 Conclusion

In this study my research questions were: how and to what extent do PCVs respond by

assimilating/acculturating with the local community, as opposed to responding defensively (i.e.,

defending American nationality and culture-based behaviors and attitudes) and how does the

training they received from the Peace Corps influence this? Where my interviews started out as

question and answer sessions, they quickly turned into story-telling and nostalgia sessions for the

RPCVs. I asked questions of the RPCVs as to why they acted as they did once they were abroad.

I inquired as to how they determined which course of action was appropriate if confronted with

the Ugly American stereotype and why and how they chose to acculturate in general. These

questions were answered, though certainly not how I expected them to be. My alternative

research question reads: "What problems did PCVs encounter in adapting to their sites, and how

did they adapt?" This takes into account the cultural differences unrelated to Ugly American

issue but nonetheless posing obstacles, and how PCVs adapted (if at all)," and this ties directly

into how the focus of the interviews always shifted to difficulties that the PCVs faced while

serving, but nothing directly related to the Ugly American stereotype.

I expected for Peace Corps Volunteers to be treated just as hostilely, if not more, as

Americans traveling abroad for pleasure. I thought that these would be my findings due to the

literature on the subject conveying that this was the perception held by much of the world: that

Americans seem to think that they know best, and thus, American volunteers abroad would be

working towards demonstrating this to the communities that they are serving in. This was not the

case however. After completing eight interviews with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, I found

that most of the communities that the Volunteers served in were more than happy to have PCVs

there. If they had even heard of Americans they certainly did not hold quite the negative stereotype that some of the literature claims that much of the world holds.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 The Bigger Picture

My study, though containing a very small sample size, is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the experiences of anyone living abroad for an extended period of time. The Ugly American stereotype is an idea that many Americans are warned about before going abroad. My study was motivated by my personal experiences with the stereotype and an interest in determining how Peace Corps Volunteers deal with such a hostile label. I asked questions of the RPCVs as to why they acted as they did once they were abroad, how they determine which course of action was appropriate if confronted with the Ugly American stereotype and why and how they chose to acculturate in general are of interest to my main research question. The fact that my study indicates a more positive view of Americans than previously thoughts results from multiple factors.

Four factors that appear to contribute to a much more positive reception of Americans in the Peace Corps than anticipated were: PCV's sensitivity to the existence of the stereotype internationally, Peace Corps training regimens, remoteness of locations served, and Peace Corps efforts to sensitize Volunteer sites to Americans. Each of these helps contribute to a different and much more positive view of America within the communities served. The fact that my study did not find the stereotype as prevalent or severe as I expected is hopeful for the future of Americans traveling abroad as well as the rest of the world's perception of the U.S. This can teach anyone

living abroad for an extended period of time about what to expect and how best to acculturate/assimilate.

A driving force behind the rigorous Peace Corps training techniques is to develop and impress upon the PCVs a certain sensitivity to the existence of the Ugly American stereotype. This stereotype, as mentioned previously, depicts Americans as strong-willed, boisterous know-it-alls who rarely listen to or act upon how they are received internationally. They are seen as having a particular disregard for ways of doing things that are not their own, and a sense of entitlement and reckless abandonment while abroad.

Peace Corps training regimens enacted to discourage or combat this stereotype have been revised and corrected over the past fifty years. Today PCVs are given six months to gather the social and cultural skills and tools they need to survive in their new surroundings. While these are given to them by an array of sources, the in-country training is specifically designed for them to learn what they need to in order to succeed in their three main goals of "Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women, helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, and helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans" (PeaceCorps 2003a).

As mentioned previously, the main reason for the shift in my research questions is due to the fact that of the eight RPCVs I interviewed, none had encountered the Ugly American stereotype directed at them, contrary to my original expectations. A significant contributing factor to this result is the remoteness of locations served by the PCVs. All of my interviewees served in areas that were far too removed from the political spheres to hear much of the negatives associated with American foreign policy. The ideas that the host-country nationals had

about Americans typically came from the Peace Corps itself, as this was the only real contact they had with Americans.

The Peace Corps' sensitization efforts in communities where it operates is another significant factor in my analysis. The final goal in the Peace Corps mission statement is "helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans," and from my interviews it looks as if they are accomplishing just that (PeaceCorps 2003a).

5.2 Applying Theoretical Perspectives

Symbolic interactionism argues that individuals and groups create shared meanings through their interactions, experiences, and circumstances. Interpretation of these situations comes to help define not only future interactions but the individuals and groups themselves i.e. their collective identity. Collective identity, or collective consciousness, is defined by Durkheim as the "totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society" (Appelrouth 2006: 262). One level of these collective identities is a national identity.

Our experiences in one place over time shape who we are and how we define ourselves in relation to others. By attaching oneself to a greater conception of a group or type of people, we generally take on the baggage of any associations and assumptions that others make about that group. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, by identifying their national background as American, or by considering themselves American, PCVs have the potentially difficult task of separating themselves from the negative associations and stereotypes that come with this identity.

As they settle into their new environments for the next two years, successful PCVs must simultaneously drop old habits and pick up new ones. They must cope with the loss of certain aspects of their American identity and gain others rooted in their new experiences and shared interactions with the new community. They must also actively work on establishing themselves and gaining new identities rooted in newly-recurring experiences and interactions with others. They learn to fit into their new society by learning the language and the culture, and eventually they shift to seeing themselves as one of their community, not as an outsider. They are capable of shedding former identities in order to obtain new ones, or, in the very least, blending the old and the new to create a hybrid identity for themselves. The training they receive from the Peace Corp helps them through this significant process.

PCVs' understanding of what they are in-country to do is reiterated to them many times throughout their training. Before completing the training they must fully comprehend that they are there not only to work on selected projects for the betterment of their new communities, but also as ambassadors of the U.S. and American culture. As the U.S. Ambassador to Mali, Ambassador Milovanovic, stated in April of 2011, "They are the best that America has to offer the world. I salute their courage, their enthusiasm, and generosity. I cannot imagine a better way to show the American people's collective commitment to working hand-in-hand with the people of Mali"(PeaceCorps 2011c).

5.3 A Public Relations Effort Inadvertently Creating a More Global Citizen

The Peace Corps has three main goals as mentioned previously. They are: "1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women. 2. Helping

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promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served. 3. Helping

promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans"(PeaceCorps 2008a).

Each of these goals reflects an effort to make the world a better place, but they also

reflect self-serving U.S. public relations and face saving efforts. The first goal enables

Americans, through an American organization, to extend a hand to poorer countries. Such acts

transform the negative, self-centered image of Americans abroad into one of selflessness and

altruism. The Peace Corps presents itself as a partnership between willing and able young

Americans and a self-selected nation-state in need. As one of my interviewees, Jake, stated:

"Many could not understand why I would feel compelled to assist in development of their

country instead of enjoying my much wealthier country of origin" (Jake). This clearly shows

incredulity on the part of host country nationals and a sense of awe and wonderment as to why

someone would give up so much to help out those "less fortunate," and illustrates the

effectiveness of the Peace Corps' public relations effort.

The latter two goals of the Peace Corps refer to the cultural exchange between the PCVs

and their host country's nationals as a way to promote mutual understanding. This can also be

seen as self-serving on the part of the Peace Corps. Their efforts greatly benefit American

society, but this begs the question: what about those societies that the Peace Corps and their

Volunteers serve?

The Peace Corps also benefits American society through the PCVs' "marketability" upon

their return. As Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory proposes, the more contact one has with

someone who is vastly different from themselves, the more understanding each has for the other.

This may lead to PCVs' acceptance of differences among people other than just those they

served abroad. Thus, RPCVs often are more appealing to potential employers because of the widespread push for multiculturalism, experiential learning, and free and open exchange of ideas.

RPCVs are also encouraged by the Peace Corps to share their experiences whenever possible upon their return to the U.S. to increase this sense of cultural and experiential exchange and to encourage others to decide to have similar positive experiences abroad. One could argue that the Peace Corps promotes nationalism-based progress. Americans are assisting and developing poorer parts of the world and, in the process, bettering the perception of Americans there.

But these positive experiences and marketable traits of RPCVs simultaneously depict an idea somewhat at odds with efforts to improve the United States' image abroad: the idea of the Global Citizen. This type of person, as stated previously, is an intelligent participant in, or at least advocate for, world peace and the reduction of inequality. Global citizens are well rounded, well educated in many different areas and well versed in the ways of the world. They are conscientious and would score highly on the Worldmindedness Scale. While this idea does tend to describe Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, it may be in conflict with many PCVs' sense that they have left tasks uncompleted at the end of their service. As stated previously by Christopher, "Every PCV and everyone who does some international experience spends a good time asking themselves [what did I accomplish?], and obviously I benefited from it way more than I contributed, and I learned a lot of lessons, professional skills and way more about myself, and that's invaluable – and then I [merely] contributed modestly, you know?" (Christopher). The

Peace Corps seems to take the stance that individual interaction, friendship, and interpersonal cultural exchange are more important than completing a project for an impoverished village.

5.4 Relationship of this Research to Intercultural Education

My analysis of expatriation, acculturation, and identity among PCVs is relevant for multicultural education and study abroad or exchange programs and is particularly relevant to: cross cultural psychology, sociology, anthropology, human development, and policy. As Berry remarks: "public education… can promote an appreciation of the benefits of pluralism, and of the societal and personal costs of prejudice and discrimination to everyone. National studies of knowledge about and attitudes towards multiculturalism and specific ethno-cultural groups among all residents can assist in monitoring progress towards these goals. Institutional change, involving increased diversity in education, health, and social services, has also been advocated" (Berry 1997).

Anyone spending a significant length of time abroad gains valuable skills in language, diversity, interpersonal communication and interactions, cooperation and collaboration, and overall cross- or inter-cultural adaptability. These are all areas in which Peace Corps Volunteers' training and experience make them excel. Their example can inform efforts to strengthen multicultural education and study abroad programs, and this thesis helps illuminate their example. From their international experiences the PCVs learn to adapt and be flexible, later bringing these skills and skill sets back to their lives in the United States. The Peace Corps does for its Volunteers what many study abroad programs try to do for their students: to provide experiences abroad that will benefit students in their future interactions at home as well as in the broader global context (AIFS 2007) and as Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory suggests, a more

diverse and multicultural workforce will lead to more open-mindedness and acceptance in the

larger society.

Appendix I: List of Interviews with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

Alias	Age During Service	Region	Gender	Interview Type	Interview Date
Abby	Mid 20's	Central and South America	Female	Face to Face	01/2011
Christopher	Mid 20's	Central and South America	Male	Face to Face	01/2011
Dane	Mid 20's	Asia	Male	Face to Face	12/2010
Jake	Early 20's	Africa	Male	Email	01/2011
Libby	Mid 20's	Africa	Female	Email	12/2010
Lucy	Mid 20's	Africa	Female	Face to Face	01/2011
Samuel	Late 50's	Asia	Male	Face to Face	12/2010
Sandra	Early 50's	Asia	Female	Face to Face	12/2010

List of Figures

Figure 1: Profile of U.S. Travelers Visiting Overseas Destinations: 2009 Reasons for Travel

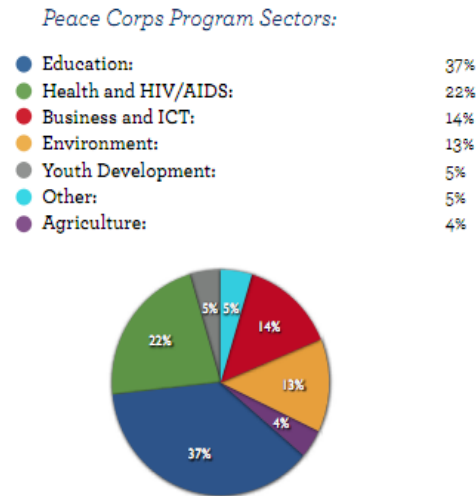| U.S. Resident Traveler Characteristics	All U.S. Travelers	For Leisure & VFR	For Business & Conv.
Total Number of Travelers **	30,300,000	25,876,000	6,424,000
Main Purpose of Trip:			
Leisure/Recreation/Holidays	40%	47%	7%
Visit Friends/Relatives	37%	43%	9%
Business	16%	6%	75%
Study/Teaching	4%	2%	1%
Convention/Conference	2%	1%	8%
Religion/Pilgrimages	2%	1%	0%
Health Treatment	1%	0%	0%
Purpose of Trip*:			
Leisure/Recreation/Holidays	56%	66%	26%
Visit Friends/Relatives	49%	57%	26%
Business	19%	10%	92%
Study/Teaching	6%	4%	5%
Convention/Conference	3%	2%	13%
Religion/Pilgrimages	3%	2%	2%
Health Treatment	2%	1%	1%
Type of Accommodations*:			
Hotel, Motel	58%	55%	72%
Average Number of Nights	9.2	9.0	8.8
Median Number of Nights	7.0	7.0	6.0
Private Home	48%	53%	33%
Average Number of Nights	19.4	18.3	20.6
Median Number of Nights	11.0	11.0	10.0
Other	6%	6%	7%
Mean Number of Nights	21.8	17.7	23.5
Median Number of Nights	8.0	7.0	10.0

(OTTI 2010)

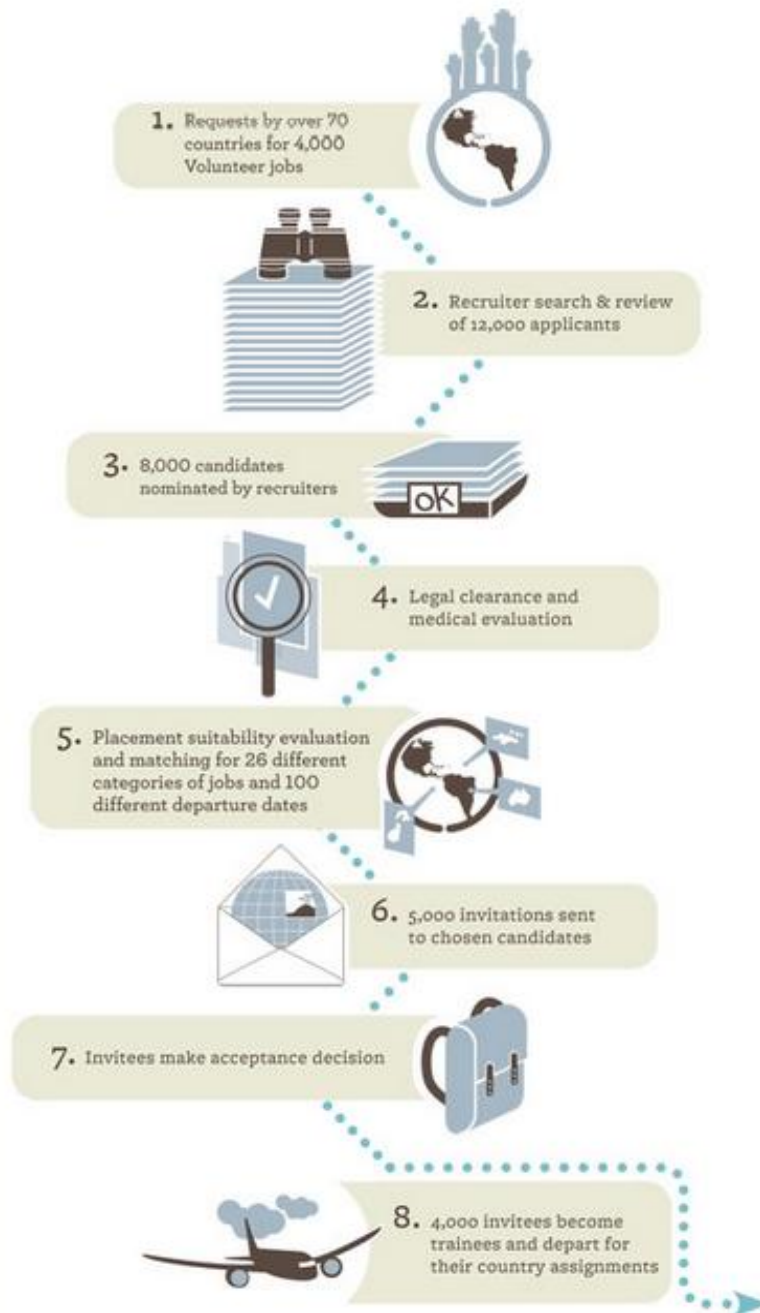**Figure 2: Where in the World is the Peace Corps?**

(PeaceCorps 2008c)

Figure 3: Peace Corps Program Sectors

(PeaceCorps 2011b)

Figure 4: The Application Process

1. Requests by over 70 countries for 4,000 Volunteer jobs

2. Recruiter search & review of 12,000 applicants

3. 8,000 candidates nominated by recruiters

4. Legal clearance and medical evaluation

5. Placement suitability evaluation and matching for 26 different categories of jobs and 100 different departure dates

6. 5,000 invitations sent to chosen candidates

7. Invitees make acceptance decision

8. 4,000 invitees become trainees and depart for their country assignments

(PeaceCorps 2009b)

Figure 5: Stages of Psychological Adjustment

Stage 1
Preconceptions regarding host country culture
excited
wait and see
ill at ease

Stage 2
Coping with 3 problems
-Other peoples' behavior does not make sense
-Normal behavior does not produce expected results
-Not knowing how to respond to the demands of a new culture

Situations change and return to

Stage 4
Recovering behavior

Dysfunctional reactions	Functional reactions
Flight (daydreaming, etc.) Aggressiveness Dependence (i.e. drugs, alcohol, etc.	Temporary withdrawal Assertiveness Adjustment

Stage 3
Confrontation with the new cultural environment
Embarrassment
Disappointment
Frustration
Anxiety
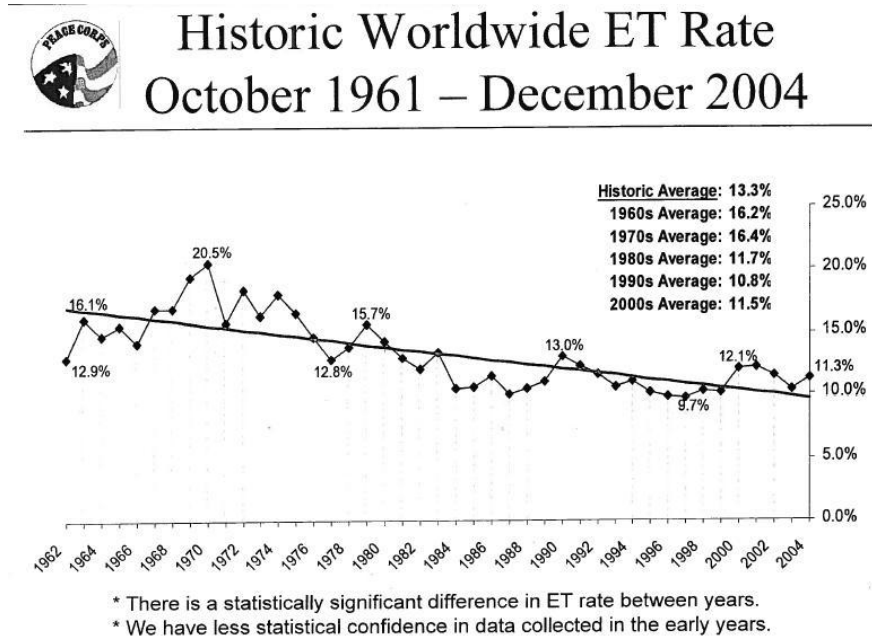Identity problems

(PeaceCorps 1990)

Figure 6: Types of Early Termination Worldwide (FY 2006)
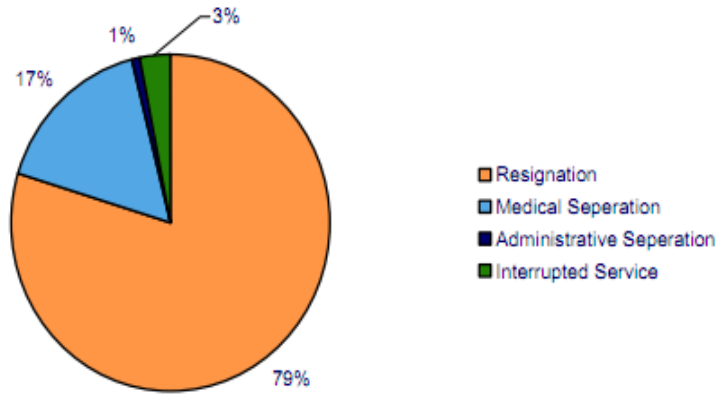
(PeaceCorps 2007)

Figure 7: Historic Worldwide ET Rate October 1961- December 2004

(PeaceCorps 2004)

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