

OVERSEAS VOLUNTEERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY
OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AND
PERCEPTIONS INVOLVING COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND
ITS REDUCTION

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Paul C. Winther
1964

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ABSTRACT

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by Paul C. Winther

What kind of an individual enters an overseas program such as the Peace Corps or International Voluntary Service? Who are they and what kinds of problems did they encounter overseas and upon return to the United States? How were these problems handled?

Eleven ex-Peace Corps volunteers and three International Voluntary Service veterans were interviewed on the campus of Michigan State University during the month of April, 1964. They served in twelve countries in South America, Africa and Asia. The interviews were recorded on tape and later analyzed. Analysis was carried out utilizing theoretical concepts of the W-Curve hypothesis (Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn), The Third Culture (Ruth H. and John Useem, and John Donoghue), The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Leon Festinger), and Reference Group Theory (Robert K. Merton and Alice S. Kitt).

The volunteers entered their respective programs out of a sense of adventure, a need to get away from . . . , dissatisfaction with their then present occupation, and idealism.

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Paul C. Winter

The problems they encountered overseas, analyzed in terms of cognitive dissonance, stemmed from cultural differences in friendship behavior, living with other volunteers, and the observation of western institutions functioning in a non-western environment.

Other volunteers provided the chief means of "letting-off-steam" in the host environment. The volunteers reported a much more difficult time readjusting to the United States. They reported extreme dissatisfaction with the indifference met on the part of the American people. They are all characterized by a sense of restlessness with some degree of alienation present. This is gradually being mediated through the passage of time.

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by

Paul C. Winther

A THESIS

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I am indebted
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To Ann Bak
her encouragement
initial stages.

Finally, I
Peace Corps and I
their patience and
this study would not

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To Ann Baker, a fellow student, a word of thanks for her encouragement and enthusiasm concerning the topic in its initial stages.

Finally, I would like to thank those members of the Peace Corps and International Voluntary Service. Without their patience and willingness to talk about their experiences, this study would not have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this exploratory study is twofold:

(1) To gain insight into the characteristics, motivations and expectations of individuals who spent two years overseas and the consequences of such an experience and, (2) To record their perceptions overseas and since returning with the aim of defining the stimulus situations provoking feelings of cognitive dissonance and the subsequent means of dissonance reduction.

Theoretical Framework

In this investigation I shall use as the point of departure for questionnaire and category construction plus hypothesis formulation information pertaining to the W-curve phenomenon and aspects of the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. In addition to these the third culture and reference group theoretical concepts have been utilized in presenting the findings.

The U-curve hypothesis has been largely formulated by research dealing with the acculturation of foreign students in their host cultures. After an initial period of optimism regarding interaction with their hosts, feelings of depression were reported. The Gullahorns state the reasons: "As they

actually become involved in role relationships and encounter frustrations in trying to achieve certain goals when the proper means are unclear and unacceptable, they became confused and depressed and express negative attitudes regarding the host culture. If they are able to resolve the difficulties encountered during this crucial phase of the acculturation process they then achieve a modus vivendi enabling them to work effectively and to interact positively with their hosts."¹

What happens to individuals returning from an overseas sojourn? The Gullahorns say that they " . . . will undergo a reacculturation process in their home environment similar to that [experienced abroad]."² This is the extension of the U-curve hypothesis: The W-curve. It characterizes " . . . the temporal patterning in individual reactions to foreign settings and subsequently to their home cultures."³ The Gullahorns elaborate and thus, " . . . we may note that the problems encountered by the cross-cultural sojourner are those of marked cognitive reorientation involving changes in

¹Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, "An Extension of the U-Curve Hypothesis," The Journal of Social Issues, Vol. XIX, No. 3, pp. 33-34.

²Ibid., p. 39.

³Ibid., p. 39.

feelings as well as overt behavior."⁴

The Useems have defined the third culture " . . . as the behavior patterns created, shared and learned by men of different societies who are in the process of relating their societies, or parts thereof, to each other."⁵ Those individuals interviewed were members of the third culture and this study attempts to explore the "process" mentioned in the definition.

The theory of cognitive dissonance will be elaborated upon in detail later in this study. The same will be done concerning reference group theory.

Methodology

The population studied was returned Peace Corps volunteers and International Voluntary Service members enrolled in Michigan State University. The total number on campus is fourteen and four respectively. They served in twelve nations in South America, Africa and Asia. For uniformity only those who had not had more than two previous cross-cultural experiences of two months or more were contacted. This reduced the sample to sixteen. Two other volunteers were not

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ruth H. and John Useem, The Job: Stresses and Resources at Work in the Third Culture, Michigan State University, p. 1.

available for interviewing and thus the sample used was eleven Peace Corps volunteers and three International Voluntary Service veterans. These two organizations were selected because of the availability of its members (being on campus), their uniformity in respect to length of service in the host country, separation dates, purpose of organization, selection criteria, and to a great degree, the mode of living in the host country.

The Gullahorns declare that "unless the new or old patterns of behavior or belief are of deep emotional significance, the depth or duration of the depression in the U-curve may be trivial, but probably exists."⁶ They also state that "when one is seriously engaged in creative efforts or is deeply involved in a learning experience of emotional significance, the U-curve appears."⁷

What the Gullahorns call "emotional significance" and its consequences for the presence of cognitive dissonance, third culture characteristics, and the existence of the W-curve would constitute a study beyond the scope and purpose of this paper. "Emotional significance" is a very ambiguous term. However, I hope to gain a superficial insight into what the cross-cultural experience meant to the individual.

⁶Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, op. cit., p. 34.

⁷Ibid.

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This will constitute the first section of the paper. It will be mainly descriptive in nature. The theoretical background for this will be largely concepts from the Gullahorns' W-curve phenomenon and the Useems' and Donoghue's ideas concerning the third culture. The subheadings concerning Part I will follow closely the sequence of questions asked in accordance with the interview schedule found in Appendix I.

Other questions were asked referring to perceptions overseas--upon arrival and over a period of time. If responses implying the presence of cognitive dissonance were given, an attempt was made to isolate the elements involved. Finally, the means of dissonance reduction were investigated. Perceptions upon arrival and over a period of time after returning to the U.S.A. were sought and like the above, the means of reduction were ascertained. A sample interview question sheet will be found in the Appendix.

The interviews were recorded by use of a tape recorder. A non-directive interview schedule with open-ended questions was used. The investigator is an ex-Peace Corps volunteer and many of the situations described and feelings reported are familiar. This raises an important question. It concerns the danger of the interviewer, by virtue of his own cross-cultural experience, of seeing the data he wanted to see. It is believed that this was kept to a minimum by

strict adherence to the interviewing rules formulated by Roethlisberger and Dickson. These rules are found in Appendix II.

Hypotheses

1. Volunteers were individuals who had not yet "found" themselves in their own society.
2. Characteristic of individuals in sample will be their motivation for joining for reasons other than idealism, i.e., idealism is but one factor (and sometimes minor in importance).
3. Individuals in a cross-cultural situation will perceive aspects of that society which will induce cognitive dissonance. The existence of this will lead to action oriented toward dissonance reduction.
4. Upon returning to the U.S.A. and over a period of time since coming back, the individual will perceive aspects of his own society which will induce cognitive dissonance. The existence of this will lead to action oriented toward dissonance reduction.

PART I

CONSEQUENCES OF AN OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER I

WHO ARE THE VOLUNTEERS?

Self-description

Every interview began with the question, "Describe yourself as an individual before leaving?" The response given the greatest number of times and which was usually the first was similar to the following:

I wanted to see other parts of the world.

or

. . . wanted to go overseas with some organization.

Only one individual had specific ideas as to what he wanted to do overseas. This was to teach. If we discount short trips to Canada and one week spent in Mexico by one volunteer, only four of those interviewed had had previous cross-cultural experiences. Of these four, three had spent a summer in Europe touring. The remaining volunteer had spent six months in Mexico studying in 1957 and one and a half years studying and traveling in Spain and other parts of Europe. This occurred approximately four years ago. It is interesting to note that this volunteer made the following comment:

. . . whereas when I was in Mexico when fifteen years old, I wrote home telling my folks about things they didn't have--like hot water, central heating--and I didn't feel this way in _____.

The reason why the same feelings were not evoked might be due to maturity on his part or perhaps it may have implications for the Useem's characteristics of discernible generations of members of the binational third culture. As a "first-time-outer," the volunteer perceived differences and voiced his reactions through writing whereas in _____ as an "old foreign hand" he did not see these differences or they just were not important.

All but two were in college either on the graduate or undergraduate level. Of the two employed, one voiced discontent about the job she held before leaving:

I majored in International Relations as an undergraduate and then had a job as a librarian. It was just a job. It was fairly unsatisfactory because I did not have any international contacts or people who were interested in what was going on in the world. This was less interesting than things I had done before.

The majority of those in college voiced feelings similar to that expressed by one:

. . . not sure of where I was going or what I wanted to do in the future. I had ideas of going overseas but nothing concrete.

Another feeling expressed was that of:

I had been in school for five years straight; and that is long enough for anybody.

and,

I was frankly tired of school. I just wanted to rest my mind. I wanted to dig ditches and build roads in _____, frankly! I didn't want to do any thinking.

It was found that the interviewees who said they had had previous contact with minority or ethnic groups prior to their overseas experience claimed to have had no negative stereotypes of such groups. Those that had had no such contact expressed the same. There was only one exception:

. . . accepted the Negro intellectually but didn't always feel comfortable with them in social situations.

The volunteer was sent to a country with an entirely Negro population. At no time during the interview did this volunteer make reference to ever having felt uncomfortable with Negroes in any situation.

Another felt that he was a

. . . confirmed atheist; fairly leftist in foreign policy and very socialistic.

Motivations for Joining

I had what might be called "burning altruism."

This was the declaration of one volunteer and it was an exception. The remaining responses were similar to:

There was a certain amount of idealism involved.

or,

. . . to help a country, no matter even if it was in a small way.

Most of the volunteers were motivated to join by a desire to get away from the U.S.A. for several reasons.

"I thought it would be great to travel," was the expression of several and the others were typified by the

following:

. . . feelings of adventure. I just wanted to get away from the American way of life.

The same volunteer continued with:

I felt frustrated! Here I sat reading about events happening over the world. I just wanted to get actively involved in the "revolution."

Or, as another volunteer put it:

I was particularly interested because of a sense of adventure. Getting to know people from a quite different perspective.

This "getting-away-from" sentiment was voiced by another volunteer but for different reasons. This volunteer joined because:

. . . of an intellectual need to be critical of my society.

This venture served as a test for several of those interviewed. Consider these:

I wanted to work in a government agency abroad to see how it operated and functioned.

I wanted to see if I would like this overseas type of work.

Perhaps one volunteer expressed the general sentiments of all because each made some reference to aspects of the following:

I had this idea of helping someone. I wanted to expand my scope of knowledge and become more aware of some of the world's problems first-hand. I was young, didn't have any obligations to anyone and decided this would be a chance to go overseas and help at the same time.

Expectations

Responses ranging from high expectations to caution were given. Typical of the former were statements such as:

I saw myself involved with people in projects which would produce something very tangible. In a very short time I could say, "Here is what I have done."

I just had plain high expectations.

We were so hot to get there it was unbelievable. Just great to be there. We wanted to do something because we were pretty well motivated in training.

I expected to find people waiting and welcoming a chance to progress.

What the last volunteer actually encountered was illustrated by his following remark:

Even though as we learned the reasons why things were the way they were, there was a basic apathy and indifference greater than we expected to run into.

An equal number of volunteers looked forward to their forthcoming overseas venture as something in which they

. . . were to be able to at last learn something about these other cultures. I certainly hoped to make some kind of contribution and this special opportunity of getting out and living with the people gave me the chance to do so.

Another stated strongly:

I looked forward to the two years as an educational experience only! The fact that they were black, yellow or white didn't make a damn bit of difference to me.

Two volunteers were on the other end. They exhibited a cautious anticipation to the coming sojourn.

. . . had few illusions as to what I was getting into. This was the result of good training. We thought it

would not be a grand adventure, but hard work and little glamour. Going to training in the states was the harder of the two (going to the country was the other). It was in the former that you made the commitment.

The Gullahorns state that,

particularly for those who have not yet "found" themselves in their own culture, the resolution of their identity conflict abroad meant that they had zealously converted to new values . . .⁸

If any conclusions can be drawn from the interviewees thus far, it is that these volunteers had not yet "found" themselves. Almost all had ideas as to their long-range goals, i.e., international relations, working abroad, and so on, but few had any concrete ideas as to the means to the ends. Combine this with a persistent desire to travel and some amount of idealism and perhaps you have a composite picture of the volunteers. This opportunity of overseas employment was a respite, a "break" for almost all involved and a chance to get away from the U.S.A. for various reasons. Whether or not they were "zealously converted to new values" will be commented upon in a later section of the study.

⁸Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, op. cit., p. 40.

CHAPTER II

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OVERSEAS

What Was Learned?

Learn!! I learned everything!! I learned the language and learned, I mean really learned, what another culture was like in depth.

Everyday you learn something new, every minute. No matter where you look, you learn something. You can't help but do that!!

From these emphatic answers something more specific was obtained. To state the presence of trends in so small a sample as this is hazardous, however. What they learned could be subsumed under three headings.

Self-revelation

These responses all indicated an increased awareness of oneself. They were unspecific, i.e., "I learned about myself," with the exception of three statements:

If anything, I learned to be more practical . . .
and,

The greatest value was in the development of an ungodly amount of patience of which I had some before but not as much as now.

One volunteer realized that in order to perform a job,

I had to learn to be first and foremost myself. I learned very soon that _____ can't be fooled. What they lack in sophistication of culture they make up for in being canny. You can't fool them, you have to be honest and that meant be as I am.

This corresponds closely to that which the Useems and Donoghue have said about individuals in the third culture.

"Now you are taken as a representative of your country, whether you like it or not. I have on me a new self-consciousness of my self-identity."⁹

As time spent in the country lengthened, one volunteer realized and accepted the experience as:

This was a test. I never had a job for two years. What sort of a teacher would I be? A test again to see how much accustomed to a country I could become that was radically different as it was. By accustomed I mean ability not to become lonely, depressed or despondent or changing values radically.

The Useems and Donoghue define the third culture as being

the behavior patterns created, shared and learned by men of different societies who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other.¹⁰

The same volunteer exhibited cognizance of this when he stated:

Being the only American there most of the time I felt I was a filler between the two cultures. I filled a gap which the British did not. When other Americans were there I felt as though I wasn't the only one filling the gap.

The above statement indicates the realization of the

⁹Ruth H. Useem, John Useem, and John Donoghue, Men in the Middle of the Third Culture: The Roles of American and Non-Western People in Cross-Cultural Administration, a Paper given to the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 5-8, 1962.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 3.

informal function the individual played while overseas.

Isolation played a part in the process of self-awareness of one volunteer:

I think I grew up there about twenty years. Because when you spend a great deal of time by yourself, you tend to become very introspective about things, analyze why I did certain things. This is, I guess, a form of self-psychoanalysis that I underwent.

. . . there was nothing to do. I thought it was an excellent opportunity to mature, and I did while I was there.

I didn't have many distractions to keep me from doing things like this. By this process I got to know myself very well.

Learning About One's Society

Responses oriented toward learning about one's society were rather few in number (eight) and five were negative. The most positive statements concerned an increased pride in being an American and becoming more objective about the U.S.A. The remaining statement was:

I did feel in _____ that I did not appreciate the amount of equality we did have in the U.S.A. until I discovered the amount of inequality there. There are definite categories of human beings there.

The negative responses were directed to American patterns of behavior regarding conformity.

I think that too many Americans would like to do things but don't because it is no longer acceptable.

The same volunteer criticized American patterns of friendship:

I think Americans work more under a facade that is engendered by the society than _____ do. I think that Americans use relationships more as a means to an end and not as ends in themselves.

Besides this critical attitude toward American social patterns several volunteers voiced their opinions about representatives in their respective countries:

Those of us who could get together actually thought there were some A.I.D. personnel that really weren't pulling weight. This is very truthfully speaking. Not for myself. But for a lot of fellows who were there-- a certain amount of dead wood there.

Another volunteer voiced his opinion as such:

I think a lot of fellows in A.I.D. are high-paid bastards that really don't do the job they are supposed to. This is not a pre-conceived attitude but based on the people I knew over there.

Another criticism was this:

About the government and foreign aid. I had heard and was confirmed in my thoughts that there is a tremendous amount of waste involved.

Learning About Host Society

There were thirty-six responses directed toward what was learned about the host society. In their book, The Western-Educated Man in India, the Useems describe levels of understanding. The minimum level is " . . . absence of strident ethnocentrism and but little more."¹¹ The moderate level has " . . . presence of both respect for the values of another society and a fair degree of awareness of the social

¹¹Ruth H. and John Useem, The Western-Educated Man in India: A Study of His Social Roles and Influence, (New York: The Dryden Press, 1955), pp. 138-139.

patterns of that society."¹² The highest level is " . . . ability of the individual from one society to interpret realistically the means why the people in another society act in a specific way."¹³ Interpretations are based upon reality and may or may not be approved. This level of understanding is indicated by a perception of the

. . . backbone of a foreign society--its cultural traditions, the social, economic, and political forces that shape its decisions, behavior common to its national character, nation's anxieties, aspirations, and so on.¹⁴

There was no test given to determine the interviewees' level of understanding of the host society. However, these individuals' responses to the question, "What did you learn?" implied more than the minimum level of understanding. Not only did the interviewees attempt to tell briefly the nature of certain aspects of the host society, but fully two-thirds of the responses dealt with the reasons why the society was the way it was. Let us consider the following:

As far as why the people are the way they are, I'd be apathetic too if I had been brought up the way they were. Although complex, it is difficult to imagine how conditions will change.

The experience reinforced my beliefs that the reason why these people are the way they are is because of lack of opportunity. I feel this more strongly now. I think what holds true for most countries that are underdeveloped holds true for _____.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

How tremendously important circumstances are to the way they live.

In general, each man is out for himself, regardless of the state of the nation as we know it.

The average man has a great fear of the government and he feels they are trying to exploit him.

The way people can be completely different because of their culture.

They live on a subsistence level economy. This hand-to-mouth business. By and large I don't think they want to make a great amount of money or produce a great deal of rice. If he makes or produces a lot, his family or the government will move in and eat up the profits. In one village I was visiting, the government moved in and took 1400 one-hundred pounds of rice. They really are not gung-ho on having big farms

They do have this problem. The more they raise, the more is taken. The wealthier they get, the more people move in with them They are not overly ambitious. This is due partly to the climate and "What is the use!!" attitude.

In addition to why things are the way they are, several volunteers were more specific in what they learned about the host society.

I realized that the system was at fault in about six months.

I think I would know how a _____ would react in situations because . . . in many situations I found myself reacting in the same way.

This concept of continuing loyalty to your boss. You don't quit. If you want to leave you do things and try to get people to fire you because it is awful to quit . . .

I am convinced that when someone did something over there, they did it with a purpose Here at home, you would dismiss it but over there you wondered what they meant by that? Every once in awhile I thought I was going paranoid. It was one of those things that

really made it interesting over there. Really trying to figure out what was going on. I did this often.

Cultural differences encountered by the volunteers were perceived as a challenge. As good volunteers and as good Americans how did they meet these challenges? A good volunteer must be flexible and a good American will attempt to solve a problem he encounters. Thus, meet the problem head on and try to solve it! Compromise, negotiate, bargain if necessary, but an attempt should be made to alleviate the trouble. The volunteers did this and one means was perceiving the similarities between people.

Another interpretation would be that given by the Gullahorns. They state that

. . . the constructive interaction leads the sojourners and their hosts to perceive each other as more similar in important areas and thus increases their tolerance and acceptance of differences in other areas.¹⁵

They further suggest that

. . . with slight dissimilarity of attitudes a mutual assimilation seems to be produced, converting originally disparate attitudes into common values, resulting in an increase in positive feelings.¹⁶

Let us consider some of the responses pertaining to the above:

That people are much alike the world over in their basic needs.

¹⁵Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 41.

. . . pointed out that there are basic similarities in the developing and developed countries. It made me aware of the difficulties of the former.

Many ways they are similar in terms of basic personality traits.

I think it is as easy to like an _____ as it is to like an American.

I don't think that because a person is _____ or American this necessarily sets them apart in values or the way in which you would get to know them.

I tried to figure that out. This difference between them and us. We are all human beings. They laugh the same way, they talk about sex like we do, they drink alcohol as we do, and so on.

Perhaps the best illustration of this process was given by another volunteer when he said:

The similarities are in the people. Cultures are extremely different. I didn't feel there was any difference in getting along with _____ than with Americans.

What can be summarized from the interviewees' responses? Numerically, the majority fell within the category of learning about other societies. The volunteers gave evidence of a high level of understanding of the host society; they sought to find out why things and people were the way they were. There were tones of mediation and a sympathetic tendency toward the environment in general. Areas of criticism were directed toward the omnipresent "system" or government but rarely toward any host national(s).

That which was learned about their own society was negative, in content. Representatives of the American government and general government behavior bore the brunt of this criticism.

You think you are going to change them but in the long run they change you.

In essence, what the individual has said is that he has taken on aspects of a new identity. Attitudes and values have been questioned by his exposure to a different culture. What specific attitudes and beliefs have been affected may or may not be known by the individual consciously. The process is subtle and the results may not be apparent until the person returns to his native society. Overseas, he is usually aware of the fact that something is different about his thinking.

What is the nature of this change if in fact there has been a change? What is the extent of this change and just what has been changed? It was found that implied in the self-descriptions given, most of the volunteers had not yet "found" themselves, i.e., they were unsure of their future. Thus, according to the Gullahorn's, " . . . the resolution of their identity conflict abroad often meant they had been zealously converted to new values, . . ." ¹⁷ How much of a new identity did they develop, if any at all? The questions asked now were designed to gain some insight into this phenomenon.

Because of disgust with what he experienced with Americans abroad, another interviewee consciously sought to avoid contact. This was again a criticism of the American

¹⁷Ibid., p. 40.

community abroad.

I made an attempt, if at all possible, to associate with non-Americans. For one thing, the Americans lived in a world all their own. They did not want to associate with the _____, only if it was for business purposes. I felt here was an excellent opportunity to explore a brand new world.

Characteristic of the majority of friendships with nationals that the volunteers developed was that mentioned by one:

Generally speaking, the nationals with whom I interacted or came into closest contact were educated, superior students who were "western" in their thinking. They had been in the U.S. and we were there, in _____, and we could meet.

There were some of my fellow teachers who were willing to experiment . . . they went to certain schools where they were exposed to more liberal types of education. They were not as narrow in their viewpoint and were extremely talented people.

A more unusual friendship was described as:

. . . it was amazing! Here we were, in the middle of _____ and along comes this _____. He turned out to be our best friend. My partner and I could talk to him about anything. He knew more about the U.S.A. than _____ and I put together. We would discuss philosophy, politics, everything. We thought he was pretty westernized when we met him. He was Americanized when we left him! A really wonderful guy!

Several met difficulties in the establishment of more friendships with nationals. The host society itself hampered interaction for one volunteer.

Although I had a lot of interaction with nationals through my job. It was difficult to enlarge upon it because in _____ society there is no role for a single female.

An environmental situation provided an obstacle for

one volunteer:

I was not as close to the people as I thought I would be and this was far below my expectations. I thought I would meet people outside the office like at social gatherings, neighbors. I expected continuing contacts.

There was little contact because of being situated

. . . way on top of a hill or mountain. All the volunteers housed together. There was no transportation available and we were very isolated from the local people.

We did not have any contact with host nationals in depth. Only in the work situation was contact provided. If we had lived in town, I'm sure we would have gotten to know more host country nationals and better.

The Gullahorns once again state in reference to the "W-curve",

. . . a sojourner in the involvement phase of adjustment to a foreign culture or of readjustment at home frequently encounters . . . cognitive dissonance¹⁸

Pertaining to the adjustment overseas this is the U-curve.

After some time in the host culture, the individual will experience feelings of frustration and a sense of "What's the use?"

They continue by saying,

In order to reduce his dissonance, while remaining in the cultural context, he might maximize the negative component in his ambivalent feelings towards others in his environment and withdraw as much as possible from interaction with them.¹⁹

An example of a physical environment providing a means of irritation was given by the same volunteer:

At first we wanted to have much contact with host but

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

then later on . . . some volunteers became quite disillusioned to the point that they reached a point of no return! It would have been hard then to change an environment. Living there had advantages. It had water and space, and was cool, quiet and isolated. Other Americans were around constantly to support or talk to you. Eventually we grasped at these advantages and forgot about trying to move out.

Social Interaction Overseas

With whom did the volunteers associate? Most interaction with host country nationals began on an operational basis or as the Useems describe, a "functional" type of bi-national group. In reference to India, they suggest that functional groups are

. . . composed of Indians and Americans with complementary interests converging around work roles, professional affiliations, organizational loyalties, or other salient values.²⁰

Being able to speak the language native to the host society is highly desirable and in most cases a necessity. Language training in most Peace Corps training programs occupies approximately one-half of the total time devoted to academic orientation.

In the host society language proficiency performs several functions. Probably the most important is that of communicating effectively with nationals in order to perform a job. This is especially true if an individual is located in a place where English is not generally spoken or understood.

²⁰John Useem, "The Community of Man: A Study in the Third Culture," The Centennial Review, Vol. VII, No. 4 (Fall, 1963) p. 492.

Even if an interpreter is available, much of what is to be conveyed will be lost in the ensuing translation. Subtle points will be missed, different meanings given to words, and so on. This will be lessened if the interpreter has a good command of both languages but the fact remains that something will still be lost.

Another function of having some command of the native language is that it implies respect for the host society itself. You have enough interest in the country and its people to attempt to learn the language. Many doors are opened for the volunteer who can say a few words, regardless of his fluency, in the other man's language. Host nationals may smile, they may laugh, they may even ridicule. Whatever they do, they will be aware that you are trying. This is a primary step in creating rapport.

The following individuals said their non-fluency in the native language was a barrier to further friendship development. The first said this was accentuated because of the isolation of his living quarters.

The farmers I met were primarily on a business basis rather than on a social basis.

Most of my association was with nationals because we had a job to do.

Many of these functional relationships blossomed into deeper friendships:

I had hoped I could spend some time with some national. I did this and spent fourteen months with a very fine guy and it was a very rewarding experience.

and he continued,

. . . working with this native. I wanted to be a benefit to him and this did happen. He couldn't speak any English but when I left he could speak some.

and,

It was a good friendship. I heard from some people that he told his brother that I had a good way. When a _____ says that he means it. He wouldn't tell me because they don't show affection at all. It is hard to put into words the feelings that developed between this native and myself. I miss him a lot and had a damn good time with him.

Because of his work role, another volunteer commented:

I associated mainly with lower-class people. The laborers. I found them most receptive. They just liked me and we got along very well. Four-fifths of the people we got to know were of the very lowest class.

For almost all, most interaction was with fellow volunteers, when and where they were present and available. These were usually volunteers living or working together or both.

When there were no other volunteers in the vicinity, interaction normally would be with host nationals and sometimes other Americans who held common interests.

I associated with several _____ and A.I.D. personnel. With the A.I.D. personnel I shared an interest in _____ and living with the people.

Only a few interviewees mentioned interaction with persons other than Americans, volunteers or host nationals. Of those reported, the association resulted from the job and the people involved were British. They took two extremes--either a very close and strengthening friendship or one of antagonism

resulting from a feeling expressed by one volunteer:

The British there resented me and what I was doing. They thought that the volunteers were taking jobs away from them . . . , if they liked me as a person, they didn't show it.

The host nationals mentioned were initially potential third-culture members. They had an interest in and were knowledgeable about the western world or the North American continent. They spoke some English and several had been educated in the U.S.A. or Europe.

CHAPTER III

VOLUNTEERS' COMPARISONS BETWEEN AMERICAN AND HOST SOCIETIES

Feelings About Being At Home In _____

Reactions to this enquiry were all an emphatic "yes" with but one exception. It was a qualified "yes" in that the volunteer

. . . felt at home where I lived. I didn't know if I felt at home in the country. You were made at times to feel like a guest in social situations rather than like a person living there.

The remaining volunteers were divided in their opinions concerning the length of time necessary for them to feel at home. There was little uniformity as to the length of time it took. For example:

Yes, very much so. Almost the entire time and I liked it very much.

Another volunteer said:

The _____ are a fairly close community. They don't accept others too well and it took a great deal of time to get a really good relationship, about eight to ten months. After that I felt very much accepted and at home.

And for another it was a little longer:

Certainly after the first year. I don't think I would have stayed two years if I couldn't have made some kind of adjustment.

The interviewer endeavored to find out why the volunteers felt at home in a strange society. It was not an easy

question for most to answer.

That is a good question. It is a difficult question to answer. Because I was working, I had a job, and I thought I was contributing in some way. I can't answer that. I really don't know.

For one, it was a little easier and his explanation was:

. . . because I got into the swing of the life.

One volunteer gave this interesting reply. This was a volunteer who described himself as feeling inferior to people. His response gives evidence of the security he had found in his new environment and of the rejection he might have felt before joining.

I felt very much at home in _____. It was a way of life that I liked.

One reason I liked it was because there I was a person with authority. People listened to me. I was looked up to. I liked this but I don't know the reason why, I just did. Perhaps it was because of my background, . . . I don't think many people have this respect in the states. I was given this respect because of what I knew and represented.

Two volunteers gave indications of attitude toward westerners and more specifically, Americans.

I felt I could be more myself around _____ than Americans.

I wonder if he meant he could be more _____ around _____ than Americans because of his fellow countrymen's possible disapproval of his "going native"?

The other volunteer stated:

Let us say that when other westerners were not around I was not as conscious of being European as when they

were around. I was more native in my attitudes than either American or British.

Thus, with one exception, all the volunteers eventually felt at home in the host country but the length of time it took varied. A minority felt so much at home in their attitudes they perceived other Americans as being foreign. It would have been interesting to know if the one volunteer who enjoyed the respect given to him was an exception or was merely more truthful in explaining why he "felt at home."

What Was Missed the Most From the U.S.A.

"I finally figured it out. I didn't miss much."

"There was no glaring thing that haunted my memory."

These two statements characterize the general responses to the question. The things most often cited as being missed at all were material things. Foods were missed on some occasions with ice cream being in the forefront. Nostalgia for something "American" was voiced by two volunteers:

Once in a while I would sit and think how nice it would be to be able to go down to the corner drugstore for a hamburger and coke. Periodically, this would come to you.

Of course, like any Americans, there were times when I missed greatly the amenities of American life. The hundreds of little things, the week-end date especially.

To see a face you think pretty or to smell perfume or to see a girl wearing lipstick does something to an American

male, regardless of age. It reminds them of femininity, of warmth and love. The absence of this will affect most American males. Some will dream of a girl, either real or ideal. Others will try to forget what a female represents and involve themselves deeply in some other activity.

In American society dating is a cultural pattern thought desirable for the selection of a mate. It is an experimental endeavor in which one finds what is wanted or not wanted in a marriage partner. That individuals do engage in this activity is accepted as normal. Not to do this when possible is usually regarded as strange. In the case of the volunteer who mentioned missing the weekend date, it was a situation in which it was culturally and geographically impossible to form any relationship with a female from his own race and culture. It is doubtful that this volunteer felt the loss of a means of self-validation as a male because of dating. He was merely homesick for a pretty face and a friendly smile. It was not a case of feeling like not being a man but rather one of feeling like a lonely man. He did not doubt his manhood. It was the opposite. He became very aware of his manhood. The absence of dating as a means of proving their manhood did not cast doubts in any male volunteer's mind.

The family was mentioned as being missed only once. Probably resulting from past frustrations, one commented:

. . . missed being able to rely on someone when they said they would do something.

No other behavior patterns native to the individual's home culture were cited. The radio was mentioned twice as a means to alleviate the sense of isolation.

. . . missed the radio. We didn't know what was happening in the world.

and,

. . . missed being out of touch with the major events.

Feelings About Leaving _____

Different answers were given to this question but all implied one thing--a change was desired.

I wasn't that anxious to get home as to just get out of _____ for awhile.

A mixed reaction characterized the volunteers' feelings when they realized they were to leave. First there was reluctance. When they made up their minds to go, they were anxious to do so.

I had mixed emotions . . . was glad to get out of there and have a change in pace.

He continued:

On the other hand, I liked my job and didn't like leaving it and had a lot of _____ friends.

When I realized I might never see these people again I cried. Then I had second thoughts about leaving.

Once I decided, I was anxious to go.

Although the volunteers were glad to leave they now

say:

In the right conditions, I'd go back now whereas when I first came back I thought it would be two or three years before I'd be ready to go again.

And,

I haven't been away for a year and now I am quite anxious to get back again.

This feeling of wanting to go back or just wanting to go was said explicitly or implied throughout the interviews.

Feelings About Returning to the U.S.A.

The volunteers were not unanimously enthusiastic about returning to the U.S. and some were not clear as to what they were coming back to.

It was a process of trying to remember what it was like. I had a hard time remembering.

And,

I didn't know what to expect. I didn't have a specific job to come back to.

More than one-half were blase about returning. The following was typical:

As far as actually coming back, I could have taken it or left it.

One volunteer voiced his sentiments as such:

. . . didn't want to go. Because it is on the other side of the world I had my doubts as to whether or not I'd ever come back again.

Only two had unequivocal positive feelings about

returning to the U.S.A.

"Things" Perceived in _____ as Being Desired
for Adoption by the U.S.A.

This is a question that drew many responses. Regardless of where the interviewees were stationed, there was a uniformity in their responses. These followed three tendencies: attitudes toward life, personality characteristics, and ideas about the family. Let us consider a selection of responses from each category:

Attitude Toward Life

I think a slower pace. Americans should slow down and live more comfortably.

I don't like our way of living by the clock. This constant pressure and the competition from our business world. They don't give a damn about time over there. I think this feeling is stronger as a result of my experience overseas.

The happy-go-lucky attitude toward life and their sense of humor.

With the country and village people . . . the way they live day-to-day. They are not worried about status symbols and so on.

The free and easy attitude of _____ toward other people. I talked about suspicion but that is so short-lived, . . . it isn't lasting and is not deep-rooted. Prejudice, which is so deep-seated in our society, . . . is something _____ don't comprehend.

And another commented:

There is more good will toward people of different backgrounds and cultures, and colors This is

true even though there is less education and the literacy level is so low.

Another volunteer said:

. . . this natural attitude toward life itself. Americans tend to take life and sex much too seriously.

One volunteer perceived an emphasis upon acquisition in our society and had this to say about it:

Americans believe that material possessions can be the ultimate in happiness, the key to success. In _____ you could see a man walking up the street with a smile on his face, owning nothing but the clothes on his back and you wonder why he is so happy. I really think Americans are burdened by the things they are doing.

This is something I think Americans can learn from _____. To be really satisfied with the basic things in life.

Personality Characteristics

Personality traits which were seen as favorable and which volunteers would like to see imported or adopted by Americans were such things as:

I like their frankness. They were not hypocritical. and,

They are less inhibited than Americans. There isn't much reserve toward many things.

More specific examples of how this uninhibitedness was displayed were given:

Their celebrations!! Everybody lets himself go. There are specified times in which an individual can go hog wild. It has a very good effect psychologically.

. . . the spontaneous reaction of _____ to dancing and music.

And he continued:

. . . at American and British parties everybody is trying to have a good time, a facade, a falseness. At the _____ parties, this was the first impression I got. The tremendous spontaneity. No matter what you said, they enjoyed themselves. You enjoyed yourself immediately. None of this fakeness and phoniness. Here, form has become more important than substance.

A variation of this latter statement was given in greater detail and in greater length by another volunteer.

Consider this:

Uninhibitedness!! One thing I detest about Americans is that they are so beautifully two-faced!! They will say one thing and then turn around and do the opposite as soon as they turn the corner. I didn't think I felt this as much before leaving as I do now.

He became aware of this from what he saw of Americans' behavior overseas. He saw many things that were hypocritical. This led him to state:

Let us be more truthful!! Let us stop holding to our midwestern or puritanical value systems which are completely outdated and which were not meant for others. These are not for other parts of the world and we have no right to impose our value systems upon other people. They may have something to teach us in living a much more fuller life and one which might be more meaningful. I'm not thinking of materialistic benefits but something that goes a little deeper than that.

Family System and the Sense of Belonging

The feeling of belonging was sensed by several volunteers. This was also the type of answer given most often. This means of identity was commented upon with statements such as:

. . . their close sense of community and their grace in receiving people in their homes, very excellent hospitality.

More specifically,

I liked very much the closeness of the _____ family.

Other volunteers made similar comments but they all were cognizant of the difficulties of family pattern maintenance in an industrialized society.

. . . this sense of community I mentioned before. I think it is good but I don't think it goes along very well with advanced technology.

The extended family although difficult in our industrialized society. I like the closeness and responsibilities which each member has to another member and a very secure position within the family. It is the security . . .

I was impressed with the family system. It is much more intimate and binding than ours. In one way I feel this is a detriment to economic development because they try to keep everything within a family and are not willing to unite talent across family lines to develop commerce and industry. For myself, I like this feeling of unity more than the cooler system you get in western society.

I would now like to present the interviewees' comments to the question: "What would you like to see adopted by _____ from the U.S.A.?" and then compare the two.

"Things" in the U.S.A. Perceived as Being
Desired for Adoption by _____

The western institution of education as a means to an end was mentioned often. Such sentiments were voiced as:

Emerging nations should enlarge and upgrade their educational systems. I think that only through education can they solve their own problems. A lot of times I don't think they know what the problems are because they don't know anything different.

. . . more educational opportunities for their people to become nurses and doctors.

. . . greatest problem lies in unification of the country. This can be done only through education. More money must be spent to continually educate the people and not into the pockets of individual politicians.

. . . resolution through education between traditional nepotism, gift-giving and industrialization.

Other things mentioned as desirous of having in the host country were somewhat opposed to things the volunteers would like to see imported to the U.S.A. Let us consider the following statements:

I guess efficiency and I say that only because it takes great time and effort to get things accomplished.

They need an efficiency expert.

Certain techniques and fundamentals are good throughout the world and this is good and should be introduced.

. . . would be nice if they did show up and keep appointments . . . but just a little more seriousness about the work they did or have to do.

More than anything else, if they can't do something instead of being such a good guy and saying, "yes, I'll do it," just say "no, it is impossible."

Little more fluidity in the social structure. It is a little too hierarchal. They need a little more competition and a little better atmosphere for capitalism.

Western European and American attitude toward sacrificing now . . . for a future goal.

Perhaps the most concise declaration was:

They should have what could be called the enterprising spirit. The "let's-get-things-done" attitude. There tends to be a lethargic quality to the whole society.

One-third of those interviewed were either opposed, non-committal or hesitant to comment upon possible importation of attributes of American society:

I think that _____ should remain _____ and the U.S. should remain the U.S. but that improvements should be made in both.

I wouldn't want to impose westernization upon others. If they want it, O.K. Otherwise, no!!

I don't believe in the idea that what is good for the U.S. is good for other countries. I think this is a big farce.

And in conclusion:

There is one thing I don't want to see and that is the westernization of _____.

The latter response was said very emphatically. The volunteer proceeded to enumerate the merits of both eastern and western societies.

If we compare the answers to both questions, it is found that non-material things implying a 'state of being' or qualities being ends in themselves were most desirous of being adopted by the U.S., such as personality traits, easy-going attitude and attributes of the family system.

Things implying a "means to _____" or pragmatic connotations were those which were thought desirable of exporting to the host country.

Only concerning the family did several volunteers mention the conflict which might result from the introduction of westernization to their respective host cultures. The "let's-get-something-done" attitude is not necessarily compatible with the slower pace of life desired.

CHAPTER IV

THE AFTERMATH

Changes in Individual and Career Plans as a Result of the Overseas Experience

The overseas experience has changed every volunteer in some way. For a majority it was a crystallization process in career plans. It brought into focus goals that before were thought of as being ambiguous or very far away.

When I graduated, I had some idea as to what I wanted to do. Now I want to be a foreign student advisor.

My interests have merely crystallized. I developed an interest in _____ in my junior year in college. While here I developed my own set of friends who thought as I did and I can't say my friends have changed.

Yea, huh! When I went to _____ I thought it would satisfy something within me. I didn't know what this was. Nuts, it was like pouring water on a fire. I want to go back all the more now.

There is a type of adventure in this work and there is a need for it. There are outfits that send people to do this type of work and huh, I'm just mercenary enough to be interested in this.

It has given me a set of guidelines by which to operate.

I am more directed now. I know this type of work is what I want to get into.

I know now that foreign work is my dish.

Even though the goals have been crystallized, only one gave explicit evidence of just how to reach the goals.

The means to this end was academic in nature:

I'm definitely more interested in developing areas. It has crystallized but I don't know what I'm going to do except that I have an interest in _____ studies, area studies and developing regions.

For others the overseas experience reinforced their previous desires:

By the time I had been there for six months, I was sure I would be going into _____ studies. I had thought this before but now I was sure.

It has reinforced my desire to work abroad rather than here.

I am more convinced that I should go back in the foreign service than I was before I went over.

. . . to work in the field of international development. If anything, my experience has entrenched my desire to return and work in the field.

For two volunteers the experience changed and formulated goals:

It has definitely changed my field of interest because now it is in the field of education of women.

And,

I didn't have any definite plans when I went in as to what I would do when I got out. Now I want to work on educational programs in culturally deprived areas. First in the states and then overseas.

The Gullahorns have stated that,

. . . in many subtle ways their patterns of expectations and indeed, some of their values have changed as a result of their exposure and adjustment to a new social system.²¹

²¹ Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, op. cit., p. 40.

According to several of those interviewed, their values have indeed changed:

I am now more engrained with a certain set of values which are so alien. That all the people are created equal regardless of the color of their skin. That the world is shrinking at a much faster pace than people realize. The enjoyment of travel and living with people under their conditions. The excitement of living in a part of the world where so-called twentieth-century facilities are not available.

In the case of another it was not so much the taking on a new set of values but a critical questioning of modes of behavior.

I'm more apt to go against certain conventions of society than I was before. Perhaps due to my experiences and age society will not look so askance upon me if I do. Or perhaps I don't hold as closely to some previous conventions as I did before.

Another commented:

I'm not as guarded in my speech and how I look as I was before. Conventions which are superficial as to what sort of clothes and when, do you put your hair up at nights, and so on.

This volunteer then said that as a result of her overseas experience, she now tries to work out both sides of a problem. She compared her reactions prior and post with reference to a motion picture such as "Inherit the Wind." Now she would be more critical of Darrow's handling of the case. Before she would have sided completely with Darrow. Now she said she was dissatisfied with the way

. . . Darrow twisted and construed passages from the Bible to destroy their beliefs.

Not only did volunteers become more certain of what they wanted but also the converse, what they didn't want.

Typical was:

I dislike the regimentation. I could not go back and get a job in a company. There is no sense of satisfaction.

He continued:

My satisfaction would come from doing something I thought important for somebody else. Like teaching, and so on. In other words, being involved with life. Not a job or one company. That is too little an aspect of life.

In a similar vein was the following:

Before I left, because of my middle-class background and morality, I thought there were certain things I had to do. Now I don't feel this way. I feel that in the final analysis, I don't have this burning desire to be a success as I did before. I'd rather be happy with a mediocre job than unhappy with a high status job. Now I'd rather have peace of mind rather than do the right thing that is expected or that is expected of me or that is the socially right thing to do.

And another volunteer said:

I did not fulfill my parents' expectations . . . they wanted me to become part of suburbia which I had no desire for. I feel that working like I did has given more meaning to life and I wish to return to it.

An increase in awareness was also mentioned as a change:

Basically, I realize more clearly and am much more aware of the problems of social change, human development, changes in people, attitudes and values.

I was made extremely aware and especially aware of the things we have.

I became more conscious of and then interested in reasons for people's attitudes, perhaps became more empathetic or sympathetic to people's ideas or problems than I was before. I mean people in general.

Lastly, one stated that the experience had given him more self-confidence coupled with

My character was weak before I left. Now I feel as though there isn't a big enough challenge for me.

What can be said with regard to the change mentioned by all? The volunteers indicated a growth in awareness of the self in reference to vocational aspiration. This was shown in different ways, i.e., crystallization, reinforcement, change of interest and the establishment of goals. They were sure of the goals but not of the means and most were explicit in what they didn't want.

Feelings About Being Back in the U.S.A.

A subtle sense of restlessness is implied in the responses to this question. It is a vague feeling for some in that

It is a kind of hodge-podge of things you really can't put your finger on or can't express.

This volunteer became very restless shortly after coming back:

It was good to be back and to see Mom and Dad. I should have been glad but I was ready to go back in two weeks.

The first two weeks were bad. Just walked, couldn't read. Felt as comfortable as a whore in church on Sunday morning! I'm restless! I want to go back and that is all there is to it!

Another volunteer voiced his reason for wanting to go back:

I'd like to go back overseas because I don't think there is anyone here who really understands me anymore.

Only one was specific about what he had seen or heard that gave him this feeling of dissatisfaction.

Well, it is hard to say but I think that people here are just not doing things that are meaningful and that in _____ most people's major problem was one of just where they are going to get enough food and where is it going to come from and they have really nothing to combat this problem with other than their two hands. In America, getting enough to eat doesn't really bother anyone anymore. Now it is the other car, the stereo set, and so on.

Volunteer's Sense of Feeling at Home in the U.S.A.

More elaboration was gained by asking this question. Generally, the feelings expressed were between a "yes" and "no." It was a very hesitant and reluctant "yes." For some it was a qualified "yes." Witness:

I feel at home somewhat when I can live like I am now . . . more so than if I was living with my parents.

And another said,

a-a-a-a-a-ah, yes?

This was more a shrug of the shoulders than an answer and was followed immediately by:

I would like to leave again.

When asked "to where" the person said something which was typical of most volunteers:

Anywhere, just would like to go . . . but be able to get back in again, however.

No volunteer felt at home upon returning. Let us consider some of their statements:

I didn't feel at home coming back. This was due mainly to the pace and I just can't wash out my past existence.

No, not particularly, I guess . . . because my interests are in comparative cultures and not many Americans are interested in this sort of thing.

Concerning a cross-cultural sojourner's return the Gullahorns stated that,

Those who were able to become involved in creative work immediately on return reported less intense feelings of isolation and alienation.²²

One volunteer gave a clear example of this phenomenon when he stated:

I feel better now. I didn't at first because I didn't have any plans. I led a scattered existence. I didn't have a job and no plans for finding one. Nothing to do.

This was followed by:

I felt a little frustrated in that I couldn't plunge into something headlong.

The "creative work" or perhaps just activity was described as being good in that

. . . this twilight zone lasted about a month, . . . until I got a job and was able to work.

Other support of the Gullahorns' assertion came from the fact that most volunteers felt better about being engaged

²²Ibid.

in some activity which was helping them to reach their goals.

"Things" Missed Most From _____

There I felt as though I was doing something. Here I get the feeling I'm not doing anything, accomplishing anything. I'm not giving anything. You get used to giving but you can't give here. It is so rough and there it was so natural. I was so tired of giving that I was glad to come back but even after two months I was ready to go back overseas.

And another,

Just a feeling of going out and accomplishing and coming back and saying, "I've actually done something."

These feelings of being of benefit and doing something constructive overseas were voiced by several volunteers. However, the majority mentioned attitudes toward life as being the things missed most:

. . . casualness about life. No time schedules, deadlines to meet, relaxing, don't really worry about getting something done.

The easy going. People in _____ are very easy going. Here it is hustle and bustle, moving, get going, get out and earn a buck. That is all there is to it. I just can't get back into the swing of things. Make money and get a big car. I could care less now if I have a big car.

In _____, I was aware of quietness. Everything slowed down. No cars, busses, and so on. It was a relief to get away from it.

Many volunteers mentioned in addition to the above the "openness" and "frankness" of the people with whom they came into contact.

Thoughts About Experience and Their Significance

All but one of the volunteers said they still think of their experiences often. The one exception said:

I don't think of them often but they are still of significance to me. I still find they have an impact on what I think or what I want to do.

Not only was the experience of significance but it also acted as an incentive for most volunteers.

Yes, they are still of significance to me. Because I wouldn't have continued to do graduate work to prepare myself for going back overseas.

Writing to people in the host country provides these volunteers with satisfaction and reminiscing while going through written material.

I think of _____ often. Just think of _____ in general. I look back over articles I have from there and these bring back memories. I tend to remember the small things rather than big occasions.

And,

I still go back over my old diary with great pleasure. I do this often.

Reaction to Idea of Reunion with Fellow Volunteers

This idea was not unanimously acceptable to the volunteers. "It might be interesting" was voiced by some and for others a reunion was desired only with selected volunteers. One said, ". . . the idea of a sentimental get-together would not be pleasing to some of our group."

And another:

No!! I wouldn't want a reunion with all the volunteers. Only at government expense then. I would only be interested in a few.

The following comment by one best sums up the general feelings of all:

We would probably talk about what we are doing now. It would be hard because what held you together is officially past. It would be hard to find the same degree of closeness we once had. At a certain point we would wind up reminiscing in a way.

Repetition of Overseas Experience

There were varied answers to this question. All believed that the basic idea was good but as to doing the same thing again, the following was elicited:

I was glad to have done it but I would not want to do it over. In short, I don't want to revoluteer.

Another said:

I wouldn't like to do the thing over. I'd like to go over again but as independently as possible or as a Peace Corps representative.

A different attitude was expressed by:

I don't regret going to _____. It was a very enjoyable experience . . . what I contributed was negligible.

Yes! Can't think of a better way two years could be better spent.

The same attitude and the reason why was given by another when he said:

Yes. It was a wonderful experience. To me, it is very

important to understand these people. To understand what makes these people tick. I think this is one of the purposes of the Peace Corps and other programs of this type. To have people come back and explain different ways of living, and how different ways of living do not necessarily have to be bad. They are different. Different values but their values can be just as worthwhile. I don't think I can get it across to many people.

All believed in the aims of the Peace Corps or the International Voluntary Service. For the majority the two years were something they would repeat and for others going overseas in a different capacity or as an independent agent would be desired.

PART II

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS, DISSONANCE AND DISSONANCE REDUCTION

CHAPTER V

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS AND DISSONANCE STIMULI

When an individual is placed in a foreign environment there are things which he will perceive as being different. Some of these might be physical such as food, clothing and so on and some may be non-physical, i.e., attitudes or behavior patterns. What the individual perceives as being different depends upon the environment he comes from and his own personal idiosyncracies. Robin Williams has said, "And it could be argued with some force that to resign from one's culture is, in many circumstances, as difficult as to resign from one's racial category."²³ These volunteers did not resign from their own culture. Granted, some of them have mediated and changed aspects of the values they once held, but they are still of the original mold. If this is so, we should be able to find some similarity among the various situations over the two years which produce dissonance. Concomitantly with this is the belief that there will be similarities by which the dissonance was reduced. As Festinger says, " . . . dissonance is the presence of an inconsistency

²³Robin M. Williams, "Racial and Cultural Relations," Review of Sociology, ed. Joseph B. Gittler (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. and Co., 1957), p. 425.

or psychological discomfort."²⁴ He continues, and

. . . a fairly wide variety of situations in which dissonance is nearly unavoidable. As soon as dissonance occurs there will be pressures to reduce it.²⁵

The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.²⁶

Consonance here is described as the presence of consistency. Those things or situations reported as producing dissonance will be investigated to determine the means of reduction.

Overseas

Upon Arrival

Upon arrival physical objects were perceived most often with little or no dissonance indicated. The reason for few volunteers having only slight psychological discomfort was due to low expectations as to what they would see and,

I don't know. The first few days . . . weren't very important. With the past training we were just anxious to get out to our jobs.

One volunteer did have expectations and expressed it as:

I perspired because of fear and what I was getting into. It was not because of the hot weather.

This is what bothered me. I thought I was going to see dead people all over the streets. I didn't know

²⁴Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson & Co., 1957), p. 3.

²⁵Ibid., p. 5.

²⁶Ibid., p. 3.

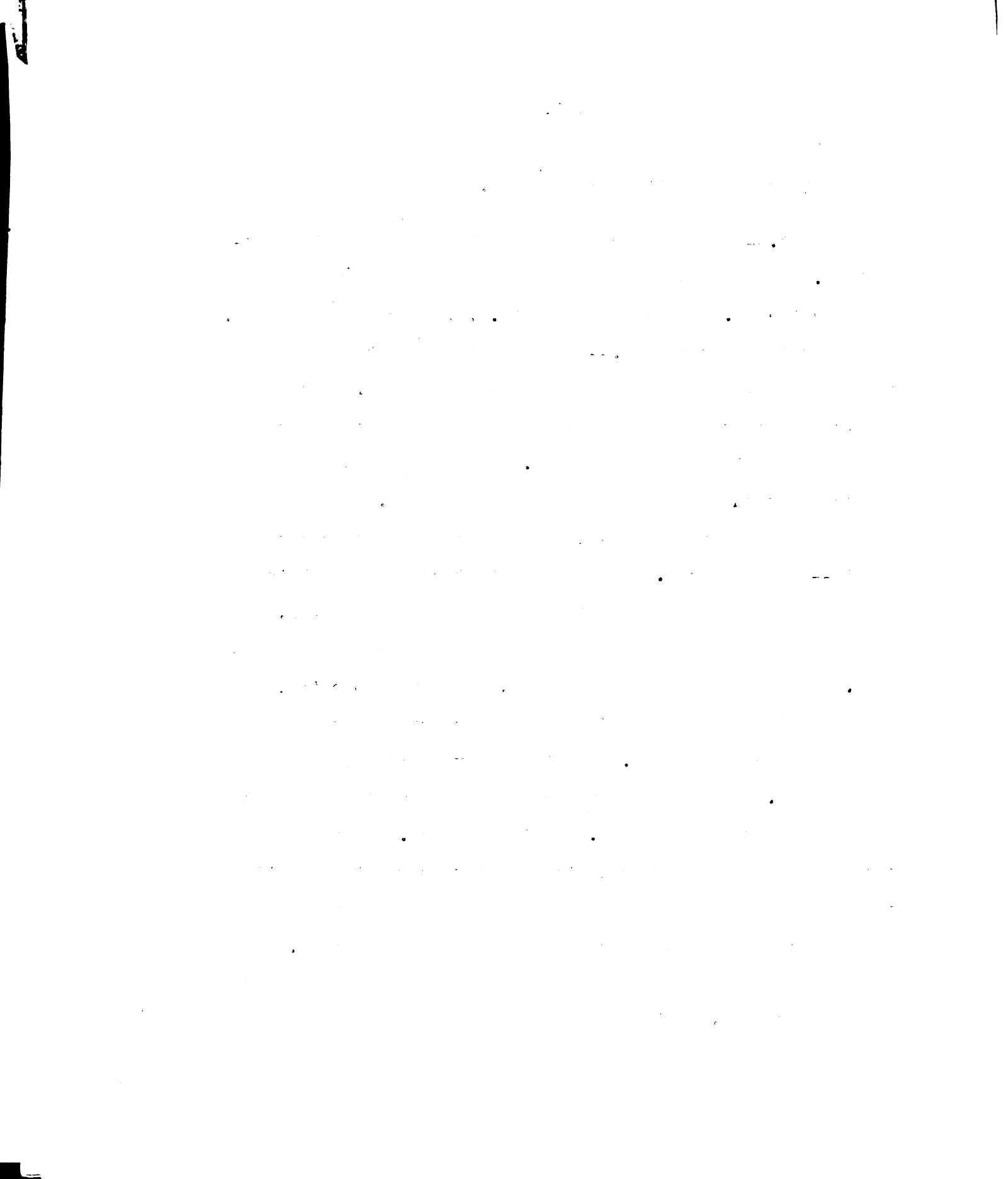
what I would see in the next glance and I was looking as much as my eyes would permit. It wasn't as bad as this but it took some time to overcome.

Heat.--The heat was the most often cited initial perception. It did not make people psychologically uncomfortable, only physically. "Feeling the heat . . . very uncomfortable."

Hygienic standards.--We have all heard at some time the old adage, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." For many people the saying has an air of quaintness and an outgrowth of our old heritage of Puritanism. Adherence to the message has no doubt undergone considerable moderation.

Americans are generally thought of as being clean people--clean of body. Cleanliness is thought of as being good and uncleanness as being something not desirable. One should look clean and neat when he goes for a job interview. All other things being equal, the person who is clean and neat will receive the job before the person who is unshaven and looks unkempt. Americans have a preference for cleanliness. It is conducive to health and uncleanness to disease and other disorders. It is not good. Many visitors have noticed this especially in regard to our eating habits and American tourists overseas are sometimes very reluctant to eat foods unless they know how it has been prepared.

In our society the excretion of body wastes is regarded as a private act. Not to regard excretion as a private act



and to behave otherwise is frowned upon. Witness the mild surprise or comments when an American tourist sees outdoor urinals in France for the first time. It will undoubtedly catch his attention.

If an individual defecated or urinated in full public view he would attract attention and also a policeman if there were one in the vicinity. The individual would probably be violating some public law. What else would the person be demonstrating?

He would be demonstrating to those aware of his act that he is behaving like an animal for only animals do that kind of thing. He must be a pervert or some kind of deviate for normal people just don't behave that way. In any case, there must be something wrong with the person. People might feel sorry for him if they thought he was mentally unbalanced or disgusted if they thought him drunk. The point is that the act would not be viewed passively and that there would be definite reactions.

Upon arrival in the host country some volunteers were immediately aware that no longer was excretion of body wastes a private act but a very public act. There was little or no concern given to the behavior by host country nationals. Even those highly educated did not seem bothered by it. What is wrong with them? Two opposing knowledges are involved here and for some volunteers it created dissonance. Typical

of their statements was the following:

. . . hygienic standard of defecating in the streets. It kind of got to me at first. It didn't bother me but I noticed that this would be a good problem to work on.

Other perceptions mentioned by the volunteers were concerned with hygienic standards connected with eating. These did not foster dissonance but just a realization that this was not the U.S.A.

Our language instructors told us about this wonderful restaurant at the airport. We walked in and almost died! Everybody looked at each other, looked around, saw one servant for every person. We all sat down and ordered tea--nothing else! Then the Peace Corps official who met us at the airport said, "I think I'll have some toast with butter and jam, please." That broke the ice and we all ordered it, too. It was just the costumes of the waiters and their sheer numbers in that restaurant. The greasy tablecloths. It just wasn't like a restaurant back home.

Another volunteer in a similar context commented:

On the train ride, eating in the dining car. The dirty dishware and the porter using dirty towels to wipe the dishes . . . that's when we realized we were finally in _____.

Poverty--Associated with the above but on a wider scale were general conditions of poverty and crowded conditions. If combined, their number would constitute the greatest impressions made. One example was:

Shortly after being there, the dark, dingy places in the "college town" impressed me and it stunk terribly . . . the various smells and general uncleanness of the country.

Most volunteers assume the information they are given

in training is for their benefit. They assume that what is being given them is honest and thought essential by those in charge of such instruction. In a teaching situation we expect our instructors to be telling us the truth--for truth is a means to knowledge.

It is further expected that during training they shall be given the "lowdown" on the particular country, regardless of who is teaching them. Honesty is essential for the good of the program. It prepares one for the reality of life in such and such a country and enables one to ascertain beforehand what may or may not be accomplished. This was the belief (a knowledge) of one volunteer as he arrived in his country. Reality fostered the growth of dissonance. The belief mentioned above was in opposition to what was experienced shortly after arrival (a new knowledge). They were in opposition. Witness:

. . . into the city and the filth and squalor. The nationals we had in our training were not really truthful and honest in the way they presented their country to us. It was too idealistic and I would have appreciated a little more realism.

Untruthfulness and dishonesty on the part of the nationals in training is implied. This attribute lead to disillusionment for the volunteer.

Smells.--One "thing" that was mentioned as an initial perception and continued to be perceived over a period of time was the various smells. These did not stimulate

dissonance. According to one volunteer:

. . . the various smells. Man, it stunk terribly!
And man, I mean it stunk!!

Another commented:

I think one thing impressed me at first. I seem to have remembered it. That must mean something. The smells were different than anything else before.

These just seemed new. There wasn't anything negative felt about them. It was just different. The smells should have been bottled and sent to a museum.

Another broad category implied by the interviewees were responses stimulated by: (1) physical features shown by host country nationals, (2) behavior shown by host country nationals and, (3) behavior or attitudes exhibited toward the volunteers themselves. Let us consider a representative sample from each category.

1) Physical features shown by host country nationals.

There were many people meeting us at the airport. There was a big mixture of all types of peoples--all Negroes.

I found that the fact of being in a country that was entirely Negro was different in itself.

Another thing that impressed me. I don't know why. We arrived at night. The lights fell on elaborate robes and yet complete blackness around the robes. I couldn't see any people--just robes.

It gave me a chill to see people dressed the way I had read about.

2) Behavior shown by host country nationals.

I noticed the formality and British atmosphere on the part of the welcoming officials.

I was surprised at the feelings of national pride exhibited.

One of the first things I did was to go to a dance and I saw the _____ for the first time, which I thought was quite exciting. The complete spontaneity of the dance and the people themselves.

3) Behavior or attitudes exhibited toward the volunteers themselves.

It seemed as though I was treated with great respect and reverence by the people.

The spontaneity of the people and their open, really open friendship toward us.

The people were very friendly. For awhile we were just unable to make a decision about them. None of us could speak the language fluently and most people, when they found out we were in the Peace Corps, were very friendly and hospitable to us.

The newness of being in a foreign country, many for the first time, led the volunteers to perceive things with a general feeling of optimism. They were glad to be there and thought their training had prepared them for what they were to see.

Over a Period of Time

Group Living.--The situation of living together with other volunteers in a group was cited as being dissonance stimulating as well as reducing. We shall consider its dissonance reduction character in a later chapter. It provoked ill feelings among those living together, i.e., personality conflicts between the various individuals and also acted as a reinforcement vehicle. As one volunteer noted:

You get more than two volunteers together and inevitably in that group of three or four or five who do

so somebody is not happy about something. If there are no host nationals there, immediately a bitch session will start. It feeds on itself or else feeds into someone else and before long it is all bitch session. I've seen sessions turn into three or four hours of constant bitching.

Problems they had on the job and between each other were intensified and not necessarily alleviated. For other volunteers, living in a group situation meant a difference socially. It fostered isolation from host nationals.

. . . we looked to each other for social engagements and we didn't bother to find host country nationals. We did at first but because of the transportation we forgot about it.

This volunteer believed that making friends and getting to know as much of the host society as possible was one of the purposes of being sent there. Off the job this volunteer had little contact with host nationals because of living conditions--isolated, far away, and no transportation. He experienced some dissonance. The belief mentioned above was being opposed by the fact that he was not meeting and associating with the nationals outside the specified job.

Americans are firm believers in teamwork. It involves two or more people cooperating in order to accomplish a given task or purpose. The goal, whatever it might be, tends to foster a sense of unity. Also, when two individuals are placed in a setting over which they have no control in selection (concerning others chosen for same locality and in selection of the locality itself), it is expected and hoped

they will interact to "make life bearable." They will accept each others faults and communicate in order to get a job done. If differences arise, it is best to talk it out and clear the air. This is even more true of a small group of only two individuals. The reverse of this was experienced by one volunteer and he described it as a personality conflict. It was intense and of long duration and would have existed in any setting with the same individual. The volunteers involved were of similar cultural backgrounds and yet so far away from each other.

The volunteer felt that teamwork was essential and comprising teamwork was the flexibility in overlooking incompatible personality differences. Added to this was the individual's image of what volunteers should be and how they should behave toward each other. "We have a job to do. Let us make the best of the situation. We do not have the best of conditions in which to live so let's not make it worse." Examine the following for it implies the existence of two opposing knowledges: That teamwork and interaction is necessary, especially in an alien culture and the knowledge that the situation is not such.

My partner, another volunteer, and I didn't get along. This of course was a tremendous burden.

When we got up-country we had nothing to talk about. I tried and tried. This continued the whole time we were there. This was horrible: the biggest problem of all. I didn't know who to talk to about this. Funny

thing about it, there wasn't any conflict. Nothing was said! That was the trouble--nothing was said! It was just negative. The infuriating thing about it was that I could talk to anyone except him and everybody could talk to him except me. We would walk into town together and play tennis together with some nationals, but never a word. Just talked about very small things. I felt as though I had run out of things to talk to him about. I never thought this way about anyone before and this was amazing. Just no communication.

After we had been there a year I approached him about this. All the things I had thought were a figment of my imagination were true. It was an amazing kind of shock to me. He agreed with everything! I didn't offend him. He just didn't like me.

I had never been in this kind of a situation before and it was frustrating. He just said I rubbed him the wrong way. My mannerisms bothered him. He didn't have anything against me personally, wished me lots of luck, but he just didn't want to be around me because he was uncomfortable.

I didn't talk to anyone before about this until the new volunteers arrived. This was a big mistake; I should have.

The volunteers expressed some degree of idealism although it varied for each individual. They all have some conception of what they thought they should be doing and how they should behave. As far as this self-concept is concerned, an open mind and a general willingness to try to understand why things are so and why people behave the way they do were thought essential. Thus, the volunteers believed one should develop a high level of understanding and become a member of the third culture.

The volunteers were particularly sensitive to the actions of others as they tried to relate themselves to the host environment. Behavior exhibited by others that is incongruent with what a volunteer should be displaying is quickly

noticed. It is condemned if the volunteer doing it does not agree with or pattern himself after the other person. Dissonance was involved when this belief was opposed by the cognizance of behavior and attitudes displayed by a new volunteer. "A good volunteer doesn't exhibit this kind of behavior or have these attitudes"

A seasoned volunteer reported he was anxious to have someone to work and live with but it only added to his dissatisfaction. The individual who arrived was, according to the interviewee, lazy, cynical and hated the country and its people. Apparently others thought the same thing because the new volunteer was asked to leave the country and the Peace Corps. In the words of the interviewee, "This helped a lot!"

One other volunteer had something negative to say about the results of group living. Apparently the negative feeling concerned the reinforcement of bitter feelings resulting from job frustration. It was described as:

We saw some of the volunteers about once a week. We talked about common problems but we didn't like it too much. We were rather coolly accepted each time we went there. It was as if the other fellows were jealous of our work.

It bothered us to have the other volunteers jealous of us. I think they disliked us because we had concrete jobs and were accomplishing something. They would say jokingly, "Get the hell out of here," but all the same they said it.

There was hardly any conversation. It was like pulling teeth. They were very dull-minded. I mean one guy would only talk about chickens

Sometimes we would talk over a technical problem but that was all.

This volunteer strongly believed that this group of Americans, considering their number, location and material comforts, should provide him with a "chance to get away from it all" and be with fellow American volunteers. Americans, by virtue of their living abroad and their common nationality, should be friendly and sympathetic toward each other. They should be a means of social support. When the antithesis of this was experienced, it provoked bitterness and dissonance. He thought, "They are really not friendly but hostile. We are doing our jobs as we should and they resent us because of this." Here we find two opposing knowledges present: (1) belief that fellow Americans should help each other in any way possible in an overseas environment and, (2) the knowledge that certain Americans could help but did not want to do so because of attitudes unbecoming for a volunteer.

The Job.--A job existing on paper only; a job estimated in one's eyes as not being worthwhile; the lack of a role in the host country were some of the situations encountered by the volunteers. Some expected these difficulties and thus were prepared for the worst. For others, finding a place in the host society was a persistent difficulty and was described by one as follows:

In order for me to do anything in working with women I had to have legitimate status. There is no role in

society for a single female. This posed a lot of problems to all I had to make a role for myself as a single female that would be acceptable to them. So there was this continual byplay in that I had to put myself in a position acceptable to them and yet still be an American.

In the U.S.A. the women have more than one means of validating their self-images. It may be through the role of a mother and homemaker and through the world of work outside the family. Women have access to legitimate status in both capacities. Because of her capabilities and regardless of her sex, she can find a place in our society in various ways . . . she believes in its worth. This is not found throughout the world and especially not in the society where the above volunteer was placed. The women in this society, according to the individual, are regarded as being incapable of any endeavor outside of that delegated to them by tradition and associated with the family. The attempt to make a place for herself in the host society was a source of dissonance. As time passed, dissonance was reduced through an understanding of why this was so and her successful endeavor to establish legitimate status.

Another source of dissonance was common: It stemmed from an initial period of exuberance displayed both by the volunteers and host nationals involved followed by a loss of enthusiasm exhibited by the nationals and consequent disillusionment of the volunteers. Let us examine the elements involved.

Americans have a general dislike for hypocrisy. We regard groups who say one thing and do another as being "all wind and no substance," a phony or just a lot of talk. We like people to be honest and not to say things they don't mean. We admire people we can "count on" for getting something done. They are reliable. A common source of dissonance resulted from this western or North American trait. Many volunteers were led to believe that the initial enthusiasm exhibited by host country nationals was indicative of a strong desire to "really do something." The syndrome was as follows: An initial period of exuberance displayed by both volunteer and national(s) and consequent disillusionment by the volunteer. It was at this time that volunteers would voice the comment that "actions speak louder than words." There are incompatible cognitions involved here, i.e., "Reliable people don't just talk and make a lot of promises. They back up their promises with action. These people don't--they are just a lot of wind!" The volunteer was using his native society's definition of a reliable person in judging the behavior of non-Americans. The primary reference group, here being American society, had fostered a belief that a certain kind of behavior should follow from promises that were made. The expected behavior did not follow. Witness these three statements by one volunteer:

In the beginning classes would be filled and then as time went on there would be decreasing membership.

Night school teachers would begin enthusiastically and then taper off.

Groups in the cities would be enthusiastic about helping but when it came to the asking of help from them they wouldn't show up for appointments . . . all big talk but no real honest effort.

We believe in the individual's ability to learn if he is not mentally retarded. The individual's native ability will determine what, how much and how rapidly he will learn. Our philosophy of mass education implies everyone is capable of learning and therefore everyone should be given the opportunity to learn, at least until the age of sixteen.

Concomitant with this is the belief that if presented with information obtained by scientific methodology, an individual will critically examine the facts, come to a conclusion and either accept or reject the given information. This is the basis of western science. We expect the individual to see beyond the confines of his immediate environment and to realize that what he sees is but a small part of the world in which he lives.

We attempt to teach our young the process of thinking-- not merely learning the facts. If we learn facts they are merely aids in building a foundation upon which more "facts" will be discovered. The thinking process is still there. It is essential for mental growth. Without it we are merely regurgitators of words.

With this belief, most of those engaged in teaching experienced dissonance. Inductive and deductive reasoning

were foreign to many of those taught. Let us examine three individuals' comments concerning their encounters with the actual teaching situation.

Trying to break through this barrier of culture in teaching. I found out almost a year later that half of the schoolboys didn't believe the world was round. Four of us got the boys together and talked and talked. Outwardly we were calm but underneath we were furious. We were so frustrated because we had been there a year and my god, here are half the schoolboys saying they didn't believe it! They would say, "Look outside. It is not round. You can't see it. It is flat!"

It was things like that. Using every analogy possible, physics, everything. The works! And this barrier, that kind of thing that makes you want to bash your head against the wall, walk away and say good-bye.

The second volunteer said:

I tried having them think things through

This to me was startling at first. I thought these people could learn but couldn't think and I tried to get them to think deductively and inductively but I wasn't too successful. I don't know why not. I think because of the pressures of the exams and the feeling that they have to learn "osmosis is such and such" by memory. Plus the fact that many of them never thought in this area before. It was kind of like an impossible task for me to do.

And the third:

I had to combat the idea of students learning by rote. It was kind of a conflict to me that it violated every principle of learning.

After approximately five or six months the volunteers stopped trying to fight the realities of life. They accepted job difficulties and realized things would not be easily changed. However, they could not accept intellectually its validity or worth.

Social Interaction.--It was difficult to find a title encompassing the different responses that were finally categorized under this topic. They were varied and some will overlap with other categories. The title is relatively unimportant; let us investigate the content.

1) Western patterns of friendship behavior in a non-western environment and subsequent experiences.

The Gullahorns have stated that a major area of adjustment was perceived by Americans abroad in the " . . . general area of cultural divergences in definitions regarding the rights and obligations involved in friendships."²⁷ It was borne out in this study. The display of affection and friendship between members of the same sex drew various responses from both male and female volunteers. It also produced different results. One reaction over a period of time was:

I had trouble until after six months getting used to seeing members of the same sex holding hands. At first you are repulsed by it, and then you learn to accept it, and then, depending upon your attitude, you start doing everything they do--to a very limited surface extent.

Some never could accept the difference from the beginning and felt repulsed by it:

There were a lot of things I could accept but I couldn't accept that.

Why were these volunteers repulsed at first and

²⁷Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, op. cit., p. 36.

unwilling to accept this behavior? In North American society, as in every society, there are definite modes of behavior toward members of the same and opposite sex which are acceptable. In our society, members of the same sex holding hands is condoned if one or both of those involved are very young, i.e., grandfather and young grandson or father and young son. If two male teenagers are seen holding hands we wonder what they will become, and if two older males are seen doing the same we wonder what they have become. This behavior implies homosexuality; many will condemn it, some will forgive it, and if nothing else, it will attract attention. Normal people don't do this sort of thing but yet the people I saw in this country do this--are they homosexual? The reduction of the dissonance stemming from these two opposing knowledges was implied by a behavior change of one volunteer and its continued existence by another. It was interesting to hear the hurried explanation of the first volunteer when he said he engaged in such behavior but only to a very limited surface extent. He seemed to be apologizing for the behavior.

Several female volunteers reported situations regarding their relationships to male host country nationals. These fell into two categories; misconception by male members regarding expected American female behavior in reference to dating, and cultural misinterpretation of friendship behavior shown by the American female to host national males.

In some societies the behavior shown by any female will be interpreted by their own cultural standards. It does not necessarily result from conceptions fostered by foreign movies, magazines and other forms of mass media.

It has been said that Americans are very friendly but very difficult with whom to make friends. People from other lands say we are superficial and our friendships transitory. Some will go even further and say we are hypocritical because we express initial warmth but usually nothing more. They are right and yet wrong. It is relative--we have different friendship patterns. For in our society we expect all to be polite and superficially friendly. If the person does not perform in such fashion we usually think, "Now, just who does he think he is!" This is not a question, but a declaration tinged with indignation. If this initial ritual blossoms into a deeper friendship, it stems from mutual attraction on the part of the two initially interacting. The major point is this: Friendliness on the part of an American is not necessarily indicative of a deeper commitment to that person to whom the friendliness is displayed. Anyone who does otherwise is generally regarded as being presumptuous. We do not like individuals who make demands upon us beyond a certain point in time, money, influence, friendship, and so on, unless we specifically invite them to do so.

This is not true of many other societies. Most volun-

teers were not aware of this when they went overseas. Their conceptions of friendship obligations and behavior were found not to be universally valid or applicable in their host societies. For in these countries signs of initial friendship carried a different meaning. They were signs of a deeper commitment of the self. The volunteers felt they were being exploited, their privacy invaded; they disliked being used. Some became angry because the friendship was thought to have been initiated only for the purpose of getting something from the volunteer. Thus, the volunteer's belief in displaying friendship as any normal American should, especially being overseas and there with the purpose they had, conflicted with the consequences of such action.

Nice people don't react in this way to my friendship. I'm trying to help but these people take advantage of it. I think this is rude, very bold and unfair. Yet, most of them do it. I feel hurt and insulted!! What is wrong with them? They all can't act like this, can they?

Let us look at two sample responses from this category.

Another thing I can't understand is [that] whenever I extended a helping hand or courtesy they felt by doing this I was taking upon myself the responsibility for the person, and therefore [he] had every right to come back again and again demanding things of me and therefore would be very hurt and disappointed when for some reason I turned them down.

. . . you find the top party people coming to visit you. They want to be friends superficially but you find out they want a transistor radio or want to go to an American university and want you to help them; they want something. As soon as they find out you are not going to help them, well, they leave. This is good. I don't

like this kind of person. This happened to me many times over the whole two years. Oh, I'd say probably one-third of the people we came into contact with wanted something.

2) Lack of privacy.

For several volunteers a general lack of privacy was mentioned as being uncomfortable under certain conditions, i.e., the elimination of bodily wastes in public areas, and the complete lack of privacy for one volunteer while living with a host national family. For some the former lost its disturbing nature and they later became zealously converted to the particular mode because it was convenient and they developed a feeling of "Nuts, they do it and don't feel funny-- why shouldn't I?"

Consequences of Education.--Americans believe in the concept of education as a means to an end. It is a tool; something by which every man may better his lot in life. Education has a utilitarian flavor. The amount of education an individual possesses is a sign of his capacity and potential worth. It is not the sign, meaning that it alone is not the only sign. He must still prove himself. If an individual does not prove himself, i.e., become a success in his field of endeavor, we wonder about the value of the type of education he received, the individual himself, and the institution at which he received the education.

Ideally, manual labor is not looked down upon in American society. We believe in the dignity of the individual.

A blue-collar worker should be treated equally with a white-collar worker, be he clerk or corporation president. Abraham Lincoln was a man Americans admire. He is a national hero. By his own efforts, he raised himself to achieve that most hallowed of all American political offices, the American Presidency. We admire the "big man" who digs ditches, who is not afraid to get his hands dirty. "He is one of us--a real down to earth fellow." What the man does is symbolic of a belief that regardless of his origin, a man may rise to great heights in his chosen work. The act symbolizes the belief in socio-economic mobility.

This belief in the worth of the common man in our society as well as in other societies was a factor in the interviewees going overseas. They wanted to help the common man. With this hope, they also brought with them concepts of what the function of an education is. This expectancy, when contrasted with reality, provoked dissonance.

Several volunteers mentioned the characteristic of educated or semi-educated nationals regarding themselves as an elite. Perceiving themselves as members of the elite, they did not want to dirty their hands by engaging in manual labor and felt they should not do so. It was beneath their dignity. They believed that since they had an education, it freed them from such types of work. They had proven themselves by virtue of receiving a degree. To possess an

education meant you were better. It was not necessary to prove oneself. Having this degree was indicative of superior capabilities and education was an end in itself. The thoughts of the volunteers were probably similar to those which follow:

These individuals are educated and they say they want progress. The only way to progress is to work hard--physically and mentally. Where is the sense of national unity? They are not using their intelligence to help others. They are interested only in themselves. I don't like this. They are lazy and hypocritical.

Political Realities of Life.-- The holding of public office in the United States symbolizes a trust in the individual holding such an office. We expect him to behave in an honest and efficient manner for the good of the public. We tolerate infringements of this but once in awhile someone will overstep the boundaries of permissible deviance and then we have a scandal. Corruption, once exposed, is condemned. As long as it is concealed and the amount is not too great, public wrath will not be invoked. We like to think of our government, regardless of the level, as being honest. Idealistic? Yes, but we still wish it to be so. Each man is equal in the eyes of the government as well as the law and the government should be sympathetic and just. These were the beliefs or attitudes the volunteers had before they left.

The adoption of western institutions, i.e., educational facilities, law and the courts, and others by a

non-western society often produces curious results. For many volunteers these were more disillusioning than curious. The institutions were a facade, a blanket that barely, if at all, covered traditional, time-honored patterns of social behavior. The continual discrepancy between the ideal and reality led to criticism of the "system." The graft, corruption and nepotism existing and perceived by the volunteers provoked one to say:

Basically, a thing that continuously bothered me was the refusal on the part of the trusted government officials not to use their offices for the enhancement of their own personal wealth. It has reached a point that to do anything in the interior had been completely lost. If a man produces more rice, the more the government will take from him

In a similar vein another volunteer said:

They have a tremendous amount of graft and corruption. Everyone gets paid off come election time. Money gets paid left and right. This was just so incomprehensible to me. This is what bothered me. When you became a politician, you are not in there to serve the good of the people. It is known . . . that you are going to better yourself. Here in _____ they do it, it is expected and they do it openly.

And still another voiced his feelings:

I found it difficult to accept the amount of nepotism and corruption in the government which did extend to the schools. Never got to the point where I liked it. This bothered me. It irritated me.

The Useems have said in regard to India,

The focus in Indian society is not so much on the imposition of deprivations to the disadvantaged, but rather on assuring extra privileges to the advantaged; that is, it is not so much discrimination against as it is

preference for.²⁸

I would suspect that this is true of the countries considered in this study. Implications of it were found and have been given. It is again illustrated by the following:

The granting of scholarships to those students who didn't need the money. It bugged me! Especially when I became involved with some of the poor but very capable students.

Perhaps the situations described above can best be summarized by the Useems' statement:

Here he sees what looks like familiar bureaucratic structures and technological systems but the way they actually function is confusing. He meets people with professional training similar to his own but who do not always act in their work roles as expected . . . yet he depends upon them for getting the job done. Frustration becomes part of his everyday language if he finds no way to achieve fuller understanding of why things which look alike do not perform as they are supposed to.²⁹

Government Operations - American and Host Country.

Government operations received recognition as being a source of annoyance for many volunteers. The American government in general, and the Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps specifically received the brunt of the criticism.

Bureaucratic organizations are frequently criticized for being too big. They are impersonal and lack feeling for

²⁸Ruth H. and John Useem, The Western-Educated Man in India . . . , op. cit., p. 85.

²⁹Ruth H. Useem, John Useem, and John Donoghue, Men in the Middle of the Third Culture: . . . , op. cit., p. 18.

the individual. A more gemeinschaft relationship was thought to exist between the Peace Corps administration and the volunteer when the latter entered service. The organization was young, and it needed advice that would come as a result of their experiences in the field. They were the pioneers. For the good of the program in general, for the present and future volunteers, the administration should be open to criticism. It should be taken as constructive. The administration cannot have a closed mind or inflexible policies. Experience in the field will necessitate changes. These were the elements involved in dissonance stimulation. "The Peace Corps should not be this way! It is wrong. They lack empathy. This behavior is not realistic. They really don't know how to do things or they don't care." Consider the following statements by several volunteers:

There was an ongoing conflict between Peace Corps administration's concept of the volunteer and the volunteer's saying that the image was not important. The area in which an impression would be made and one of lasting value would be in the job.

And,

I felt antagonistic toward the Peace Corps administration mainly . . . , didn't understand or make much effort to understand what went into putting volunteers into the field and general field support.

"Red tape" displayed by the American government agencies and the host country government was the major source of discontent when dealing with government.

Pertaining to the host country, many showed their understanding of the reason or reasons behind the "red tape." For the American agencies only criticism was stated. Let us look at some of the explanations of "why?"

It took me thirty days to get some material from the education department . . . you'd walk into the office and see row upon row of people just sitting at the desk, some sleeping, just passing the buck, just completely uninterested in the work they were doing, not willing to accept any responsibility. Thus, everything would go up to the Secretary of Education. One man can't possibly do all this.

And another:

. . . they always seem to have to revert to the top man for practically all decisions. You just can't seem to get a decision out of the lower man.

Seems like some of the minor problems that could be solved by the local officials just weren't. But invariably they would say, "We will write to the central government about this and find out." I think there is a fear of making the wrong decision and getting canned.

A lot of their problems are not met with foresight and they wait till the last minute--till the problem is staring them in the face and then they say, "Oh my gosh, what shall we do?" They write to the central government.

I became aware of this "fear" in about three or four months after dealings with several agricultural agencies and officials.

In a strange cultural environment with limited access to channels of dissonance reduction; frustration, dissatisfaction, discontent and other manifestations of psychological discomfort sometimes become greatly magnified. One means to combat this is to find a way of blowing off steam and finding a scapegoat--a "something" on which to place the blame for

your discontent. For many the "system," be it Peace Corps administration or otherwise, might have performed this function. It was implied by the following volunteer when he said:

The Peace Corps administration received it mainly, which I'm willing to say might or might not have been justified or warranted.

Cultural Differences in Concept of Time.--In India when agreeing on a time to meet, one frequently will say jokingly, " . . . that will be nine o'clock, Indian standard time?" It is often said in fun, but it does have a basis in reality. For in India and it is thought in other countries as well, the fact that you have committed yourself to see an individual is more important than the punctuality displayed. It is interesting to note that of the "things" the volunteers mentioned as wanting to have imported or adopted by the U.S.A. were manifestations of this difference in concept of time. The slower pace of life mentioned overseas was voiced several times as being a major area of difference. Actions provoking this were constantly being encountered. Let us glance at a few statements:

It was just hard to get things done. Americans should realize that things don't move as fast and they can't accomplish much rapidly. That just doesn't work.

In The Silent Language, Edward T. Hall makes this observation concerning American society:

. . . if two men have a business appointment in the

middle or late morning and one of them is five minutes late, there is no serious difficulty. A simple apology usually suffices. Though the formal system in our culture says that one must be punctual, it also provides for a certain amount of leeway. The norm can be violated in two principal ways: first, by going way beyond the permissible limit, so that it is obvious that you are deliberately flying in the face of custom; second, by ignoring the permissible informal leeway, becoming overly technical, and demanding an apology if someone is only twenty seconds late.³⁰

One volunteer said in reference to the above:

Idea of appointments not being important. This took some effort getting used to.

For this volunteer the individuals who were late violated the formal structure of the volunteer's native society by "going way beyond the permissible limits." The volunteer was cognizant of the leeway usually granted. In fact, he even extended the period of "grace." Nationals gave their word they will be there and the volunteers assumed they would show up not too late. If it was extremely late, the volunteers regarded it as an insult. One volunteer described it as follows:

This thing of people being late. If you are late it definitely means that you are saying that the person for whom you are late is inferior to you. And sometimes they just don't show up. This means you are tremendously inferior.

Other Americans in Country.--Americans (such as people

³⁰Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1959), p. 104.

in A.I.D., missionaries and others) were a help to some volunteers. When criticism of other Americans was reported, it was stated strongly. Witness these statements:

I didn't like the many Americans' attitudes of treating _____ with paternalistic attitudes or like animals.

And,

It is a funny thing about Americans abroad. They are very gossipy and must gossip about something. They don't associate with the host country people except on a very businesslike level; and when it comes to actually socializing, it is on a very high, diplomatic level; but in dealing with the people they have isolated themselves. I don't approve of this.

And toward the American married female overseas:

My greatest bitch was with the A.I.D. wives. If anything I have no respect for the American woman overseas. She has been so inculcated in the American way of life that when she leaves the comforts, she is lost.

A unique case elaborated upon in detail by one volunteer might also be classified under superordinate-subordinate relations. It concerned the antagonism existing between the volunteer and his team leader. It took this individual four months to become aware of the future personality clash. At that time the volunteer resented the "father-son" relationship desired by the team leader, i.e., " . . . didn't like having to account for all my activities every single day." According to the volunteer the team leader talked continuously behind his back and yet when confronted would deny ever having said anything. This was discouraging to the volunteer

and since he was not able to defend himself because of his location 250 miles away he was unhappy.

The basic complaint against me was that I was too conscious of the indigenous arts and crafts, . . . and this was interfering with my work. But he refused to accept the idea that I had one of the largest and most successful adult literacy classes.

It was this volunteer's belief that he should try to do a job and what he did with his free time was his own business. He thought he was doing things during the non-work day which would facilitate the overall aim of his job. He thought it a private affair to determine what means to use to attain the goals he set for himself. He believed that it was not enough to work eight hours a day at a specified task. He wanted to get involved with the people and their culture as much as possible, and he thought it necessary. After all, this was one of the purposes of the organization. He thought it unfair that his supervisor could neither understand nor accept the motives for his behavior.

Host Country Nationals.--Two volunteers described incidents resulting from individualistic behavior on the part of the host national(s). When the incidents occurred they were intense in feelings displayed. The volunteers later regretted the action they took and it was thought of as being an educational experience. One said:

One unfortunate experience. This was trouble with a chief of a village. It resulted from continuous thefts

from our house. It would have been a fine feather in our cap. This is in reference to the project being completed. We were being hit hard (stealing) and often. This happened only a week before we were to leave. The chief begged me to stay. I said "no" and I meant "no!" I had to burn down my house because of its unsafety. Doing this I also burned some coffee trees. The chief was mad as hell. If you burn a house you must also kill a cow and I didn't know this. However, the chief did not hold any resentment and he gave me a bag of nuts. This was to signify that everything was O.K. I was sorry to leave that way after putting so much effort into the school.

If I had to do it all over again I'd never have pulled out. I learned that this is the way people are. It is not wrong to rouge [steal] but it is wrong to get caught. I learned a lesson. I can't react like that.

A different volunteer described his incident as building up over a period of time. It was in reference to his cook.

I never remember focusing so much hate on an individual in such an extended period of time as I did on her. I hated her! She was robbing us blind!

Environmental Physical Conditions.--There was one thing mentioned and it was by female volunteers. For one it was merely noticed and nothing more and for the other it was a continual source of discomfort.

The smells lasted forever. Some of the food smells were hideous; they made you sick! I guess it was one of the only things that I didn't particularly care for. Everything seemed to have a smell to it.

Widespread poverty and disease provided continued dissonance for another volunteer. He was the only one to mention a dissonance stimulating situation resulting from the physical environment other than smells. It should be mentioned that

this volunteer was very isolated and in a destitute village and the area had much disease, especially the one he mentions.

Over the two years, the only thing that bothered me persistently was to see a leper. I felt very sick when I saw them. This was the only thing that bothered me. I couldn't accept lepers and extreme poverty. It seemed so inhuman and you can't do anything about it. You have to see it to believe it. You feel as though you have to do something but you can't.

The volunteer who made the above statement believed that every man has a right to a living which provides for the basic necessities of life, i.e., food, drink, shelter, and so on. He also believed that sickness is bad and should be cured. To induce it or do nothing about it is wrong. As a volunteer he was imbued with a sense of idealism--to help others to help themselves in whatever way possible. To see something that so obviously needed remedy in his eyes, to know that this is what he was there to do and yet not be able to do anything about it was not a pleasant thing to bear. He felt he had his hands tied. What made things worse was the nationals' seeming indifference to that around them. It did not have the same emotional significance for them as it had for the volunteer. Here were two opposing knowledges: First, the humanitarian instinct of desiring to try to alleviate human suffering and, secondly, being conscious of the indifference shown by the nationals; their acceptance of it as being inevitable, fate or God's wish.

Return to the United States

Two years in a different social system often affects an individual's feelings as well as his behavior. For those interviewed it was an educational experience, and one that led them to perceive similarities in people regardless of cultural background. Again refer to the Gullahorns' statement,

With slight dissimilarity of attitudes a mutual assimilation seems to be produced, converting disparate attitudes into common values, resulting in an increase in positive feelings.³¹

The volunteers did this out of necessity in order to live day by day in the new environment and because, to some degree, they wanted to. The change, be it values, beliefs, and so on, is not easily discarded or lost upon return to the home environment. The purpose of this section is to describe the initial perceptions of the volunteers upon arrival in the U.S.A. The same will be done with reference to perceptions over a longer period of time; from coming back to the time of the interview. If dissonance stimulating situations are indicated, an attempt will be made to describe these or the objects in addition to the means by which the dissonance was reduced. Again the sample is too small to allow wide-

³¹Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, op. cit., p. 41.

scale generalizations. However, it is believed that there will be some traces of uniformity in the findings.

Upon Arrival

General Feelings.--Similar to that felt when the volunteers first arrived in the host country was the general feeling of "It is great to be back." It seems as though before leaving the host country an initial feeling of reluctance to do so was felt. This was followed by feelings of eagerness to go, once the idea was accepted. Their general feelings upon arrival were exemplified by the following volunteers:

It was good to be back!! America is your country and I walked through customs and the customs fellow said, "Welcome back." It made me feel good.

I was happy to see the North American continent again. It was a feeling of happiness. I felt like kissing the ground. When I saw the Statue of Liberty I felt it represented a lot of things that you don't realize until you are away. Americans don't realize how lucky they are.

Let us again refer to the Gullahorns. They have said that a

. . . sojourner tends to acquire expectation patterns compatible with his new social system.³²

and thus the person might feel

turn.³³ . out of phase with his home culture on his re-

³²Ibid., p. 39.

³³Ibid.

For some volunteers this was the case immediately upon arrival.

We knew something was wrong. We were way out of it. All those big buildings, six-lane highways, and people speaking English. We were just flabbergasted--carpeting on the floors, amazing!

Another was hungry and liked what he ate.

The first thing I had was a hamburger, milkshake, and some french fries. That made me feel good. I expressed these feelings to a waitress and she thought I was crazy!

Several volunteers were reluctant at first to tell people where they had been or what they had done.

I actually thought that being in the Peace Corps people would think of you as being a kook. We didn't tell people. I don't know why I didn't tell people. I got very embarrassed. I felt odd and I don't know why.

This volunteer was conscious of his possibly being out of phase and of being thought of as an "odd-ball" because of his association with the Peace Corps.

The Change of Pace.---The volunteers' reactions to the change of pace in living was amazing to some and bewildering to others. Some thought it funny and one was skeptical.

I felt I was back in the western world again. I don't know if I liked it because it was all rush-rush again.

Another had skepticism about being back because the change of pace meant a return to an environment characterized by "hurriedness, aggressiveness, discourtesy and materialism." By the latter term, most volunteers meant the emphasis upon acquiring things, status and material objects. Representative

of the responses were the following:

I remember the busy corner in N.Y.C. It was cold and windy. Six lanes of traffic both ways and me trying to get across the god-damned thing!! I felt just like a man coming out of the bush. Just like the hill people coming down to _____ and seeing a car for the first time . . . I really felt like a small boy.

I just felt this dynamic or electric thing in the air, mass movement and energy and fast pace. Everything has to be done right now.

. . . even though I did travel before coming back, I did think what I had seen was not quite so dynamic as it is in the U.S.A. especially. Reminds me of an anthill. Millions of people moving around like crazy--everyone going someplace. The sheer mass of people and vehicles moving around is a sight to behold.

Everything was moving so fast. There was no time to think. Everybody was pushing and shoving and in a hurry.

Reactions to the Products of Western Technology.--A

common first perception was that of seeing cars.

. . . technology, super-highways and buildings. The fact that everyone has a car. It didn't surprise me but just seeing it again was impressive. More so than ever before.

I didn't recognize any cars on the freeway. I mean it. All sorts of cars. It was all strange again.

Big cars!! These were kind of a surprise. I saw these enormous monsters on the road. They were so big and there were so many.

For one the multitude of the products of an industrialized, highly developed society had this effect:

I noticed how many places there were to go and how many things there were to do. I felt it was kind of extraneous. It was not a feeling of "too much" in the

sense of badness but just a feeling of bewilderment. Can these people find time to do all these things all the time?

And for another a sense of alienation felt immediately upon arrival was implied in reference to what he saw.

More chrome, more spit and polish. I guess I was pretty much in a derogatory fashion in that I wondered what sort of place all the little shiny things had in our culture. I had the feeling that like the world's fair, everything is being run by industry and no longer is there any American culture.

Native Language Used.--To hear English being used continuously was another perception mentioned by numerous individuals. Some could describe their feelings and some could not. It did mean, however, that they were home.

I saw an advertisement in English. I felt great about this.

To hear the American slang again really hit me on the head. It wasn't a shock but I noticed it right away.

When I arrived in N.Y.C. it was like my ears opening for the first time. All this mumble-jumble of foreign languages--it was all gone. I could hear other people talking. This was fascinating. I felt as though I was in a different world.

The language was different. This affected me in some way I don't know.

Attitudes Expressed by Americans.--Responses in this category were mentioned the greatest number of times. Specific situations were mentioned and generalizations to a wider population were made.

The attitude of the taxicab drivers. They displayed a quite clear case of cultural and racial ethnocentrism

and almost complete lack of knowledge of _____.

And thus:

The taxicab driver to me represented the unintelligent American. Content with his own society, looking upon everyone else as pretty much inferior and yet my first reaction was to tell him about it. What it was like and to teach him. It simply seemed a shame to let such ignorance go uncorrected.

The other example was followed with a generalization that was voiced by many volunteers in response to other questions.

Of all the places to arrive in the U.S.A., I can't think of a worse place than N.Y.C. I think N.Y. bus drivers are the worst people in the whole world. This bus driver was rude to everyone. I noticed the rudeness of the N.Y. bus drivers.

The generalization mentioned was " . . . impersonality and smugness of Americans was something I disliked very much. Most people here are rude."

Insincerity of people with whom interaction was held and other references to impersonality and impoliteness were mentioned as provoking irritation.

The change in pace, cars and the English language being used were the most frequently perceived objects or things mentioned by the interviewees. For some, it was seeing these things for the first time from a different perspective. The attitudes perceived initially were disturbing, developed in intensity and also were felt by more volunteers as time passed.

Over a Period of Time

Ethnocentrism.--It has been suggested that individuals who return from an overseas sojourn will feel " . . . annoyed and frustrated by American practices they had previously accepted."³⁴ The volunteers interviewed followed the same pattern. Definite negative reactions were invoked with regard to attitudes perceived. Over one-third commented strongly about the ethnocentrism exhibited by Americans.

No other country in the world is as ethnocentric as we are, so nationalistically smug. This smugness here in the U.S. bothers me. I thought about it before but since I have been overseas, I call it smugness. By smugness I mean complete self-satisfaction and completely convinced that their way is best for improving things and there is no other possible way. Therefore, any other way is wrong. These feelings are a result of coming back.

I found narrowmindedness! People still didn't accept the idea that there were places in _____ that were just as modern as many cities in the U.S. Stereotypes of savage natives, steaming jungles and bleating tomtoms have been so successfully engrained into the American concept of _____ that it is a very unsavory place. There is much to be desired not to go there. The question of race came up often. People would ask, "How could you live with these people?"

More specific were these:

I was extremely irritated after coming back when I was asked, "Now tell me, after you have been away for two years, don't you appreciate everything in this country more?" I wanted to go into a long tirade but then I decided to say what I thought she'd want to hear.

³⁴Ibid.

But everybody was talking about . . . puny little things about which I didn't give a damn. Like the girl last night, the new car

These are indicative of the existence of cognitive dissonance. The U.S.A. is generally recognized as one of the leaders, if not the leader, in world affairs. This country is industrially highly developed and wealthy. This did not just happen. It came about through hard work and the introduction and acceptance of new ideas--socially and technologically. A cultural environment conducive to change was created and helped immensely by the unsettled vastness of the country. It is a land with an accent on youth, fresh ideas, movement, change, innovation, invention; a land where almost any man could literally start a new life and reach for the moon. This is the heritage of which all of us are aware.

The volunteers entered service with the belief that most Americans would be encouraging them. These volunteers thought they represented most Americans in curiosity about other lands and other people.

When the volunteers returned they were either appalled, disgusted or surprised at the widespread indifference or ignorance concerning areas which to them had taken on so much meaning.

How could the U.S.A., claiming to be a world leader, ever foster such self-centered, stupid people, so utterly unconcerned about the real problems of most of the world?

How can we maintain our position of claimed leadership if this is what the system is producing? Slobs who are only superficially interested in what you say and more worried about the latest happenings of Yogi Bear and Peanuts than the millions of other people who can't even find enough food to keep them alive. It makes me mad, really mad, when I think of this. I shudder to think of the future.

I believe in what the U.S.A. stands for, but the people comprising reality are sure showing me something different! Good luck, U.S.A.!

Such might have been the thought processes of a volunteer.

Unconcern.--"Nobody is listening to me!" was a sentiment expressed by most volunteers. It was thought that the Americans' unconcern stemmed from contentedness with their own society and preoccupation with their own small world. It has been a continuous concern for the volunteers although its intensity has been mediated by the passage of time.

The volunteers were skeptical of the interest shown by people when they were asked about their experiences. They wanted to talk but,

Despite an initial attitude on the part of the American concerning _____, they soon tire of it or rather, they stop listening.

And others voiced similar feelings:

You go and try to talk to your friends and there wasn't any grounds for discussion. When people talked to me about _____, I would try to feel them out to see how interested they were. If they were, then I'd try to go into a subject in more detail. If they asked me a question, I wouldn't go into a travelogue.

I would talk to people about my experiences only to a certain extent because I found that people will listen

to you only up to a certain point. After a few minutes, you either bore them or stop talking.

It was hard for me to accept a lot of the conservative attitudes people had . . . this provincial thing . . . they are so unconcerned. They will half-heartedly listen, that's all.

I did very little talking to people because I thought they weren't really interested in where I had been and done and what happened and . . . they really aren't!! By and large they don't give a damn, they really aren't interested. They will ask you questions because they think they ought to. They always ask, "Oh, I bet you had some fine experiences." But they are really not interested in detail so I didn't tell them.

Several volunteers were not aware that this would be encountered when they returned. It is interesting to note that even those who were aware of this before returning still thought it enough of an irritant to warrant mentioning it.

Individual Perceptions.--Four volunteers mentioned situations which were reported by themselves only. Two of these were seeing things from a different perspective.

I perceived the Negro community of my home differently than I had before. I thought that in some ways the African was more fortunate than the American Negro. I still haven't figured out the why yet. I felt more close to the African than to the American Negro.

I'd look at a steel mill and see it differently. I'd see how much had gone into that from the ground floor. I'd seen a low level of technology and how far you had to work from there to get to where we are today. I felt somewhat shocked

The "shock" mentioned in the last situation did not provoke bad feelings. According to the volunteer it gave him a sense of admiration.

There were three situations which were reported as being extremely irritating. Let us consider them.

Different things irritated me. I got extremely upset when I would see a woman in a store with her hair up in rollers. I think I even made some nasty comments. This is the outgrowth of my conception the American has overseas. What a horrible image of the U.S.A. you would have.

People chewing gum. I felt what the hell is the matter with these people, why do they have to chew gum? I now detest people who chew gum. It is just a waste of energy. This chewing of gum upset me because I never saw anyone chewing gum for the past two years. I didn't think this was typical of the American but I guess it is.

I worked as a waitress for the summer I came back. I had one traumatic experience which brought back memories of one of my little boys fainting in class from lack of food. It drove me nuts to see all the food being wasted, even at home.

This struck me tremendously. The difference between what everyone in our country has and what everyone in _____ has. It was irritating to think that everyone in our country has equal things . . . and in 98% of the world only the elite has these things.

The first response probably relates to some negative image the individual perceived Americans to have overseas. Perhaps he had read the Ugly American?

Dissonance was implied by the volunteer working as a waitress. It made her indignant because of the injustice of the situation. She believed that all people should have at least an adequate nutritional intake to keep them alive and healthy, regardless of the country. She was very much aware of this and it was the primary reason for her joining the Peace Corps. Her overseas service entrenched the belief.

Coming back home she experienced something which intensified her sense of injustice. This was the incident of remembering the little boy who fainted because of lack of food.

Americans have so much amidst a world of poverty. This is not good. It should not be so. To see so much waste. It makes me sick! It isn't that Americans shouldn't waste food. Rather, if they can afford to waste so much, why shouldn't they give more to those who need it?

The Role of Creative Work.---"Those who were able to become involved in creative work immediately on return reported less intense feelings of isolation and alienation."³⁵ A variation of this was the volunteer who had something creative or interesting to look forward to. The waiting produced restlessness.

At this time I tentatively had a job with A.I.D. to go back and work full time in the program. This was a period of biding my time . . . I really had something to look forward to. But with nothing immediate at hand I became restless, nothing to keep my mind occupied. Suddenly with nothing to do I felt out of sorts. I wanted very much to get back into doing something.

General Feelings Since Being Back.---For almost every volunteer the "reacculturation" process has not been enjoyable nor has it been easy. Their difficulties overseas were largely operational, i.e., the desire to get a job done through a cultural matrix foreign to them. Familiar institutions did not function as they were expected. The volunteers

³⁵Ibid., p. 40.

learned to live with this. Indeed, it seems as though some had "found" themselves in the host environment. For several, coming back meant:

I didn't feel so bad about coming back at first. You have the excitement of coming home to family and friends. You are aware of the differences at first but they don't bother you. It is after awhile you become disgusted by them. I'd say about two months.

Back at home I was very uncomfortable for the first few weeks. I had just too many things to do. Actually I had become accustomed to the leisurely pace of life of the last two years. I felt as though I was running around like a chicken with its head cut off.

After some time this would occur:

I felt pretty much alone. I had no close contact with people. It was so impersonal and I felt bad at times.

And resulted in the declaration of

No! I don't feel at home! I just don't think it has much meaning. It has nothing that I would or could get involved in. I could take it or leave it.

Awareness of their state of mind was shown by the following:

I realized when I was extremely frustrated that I was caught between two cultures.

And it continues:

I felt I was the ninety-ninth wheel for three or four months. It took a much longer time readjusting here than it did in _____. I went to _____ because I wanted to; coming back was something I had to do. I didn't want to come back.

The hypothetical syndrome has an element of truth in it. Every quotation was taken from a different volunteer concerning their perceptions from being back over a period of

time. Every volunteer had referred to some aspect of the above. It is not applicable to all in its entirety nor is it not applicable to any. Perhaps the feelings of the majority were voiced by one:

I thought there would be a great cultural shock going to _____. I never really had this. The greatest shock I had wasn't going to _____. It was coming back to the U.S.A. It was a greater adjustment for me.

CHAPTER VI

DISSONANCE REDUCTION

Dissonance, or psychological discomfort, is a common everyday experience. Festinger says that the dissonance may arise from logical inconsistencies, cultural mores or past experience. Another source may be the inclusion of a specific opinion in a more general opinion, i.e.,

. . . if a person is a Democrat but in a given election prefers the Republican candidate, the cognitive elements corresponding to these two sets of opinions are dissonant with each other because "being a Democrat" includes, as part of the concept, favoring the Democratic candidates.³⁶

Perception of reality by the individual determines the existence of dissonance or consonance between cognitive elements.

If, considering a pair of elements, either one does follow from the other, then the relation between them is consonant. If neither the existing element nor its obverse follows from the other element of the pair, then the relation between them is irrelevant.³⁷

Perhaps an illustration will clarify this last point. A man has received an invitation to a party and he is pondering what should be worn. He doesn't know if he should wear a costume, tie and coat, or casual sport clothes. What he

³⁶Festinger, op. cit., p. 267.

³⁷Ibid., p. 15.

knows about the moon's effects on the tides of the world will not help him in his decision of what to wear to the party. For him, the latter knowledge is at present irrelevant. The second does not follow from . . . and vice versa.

Knowledges, defined by Festinger, are elements in that they refer to " . . . what has been called cognition, that is, the things a person knows about his behavior, and about his surroundings."³⁸ Cognition is defined as " . . . any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior."³⁹ Elements are the " . . . things a person knows about his behavior and about his surroundings."⁴⁰ Combining these two concepts, elements of cognition or cognitive elements are knowledges (beliefs, values, or attitudes) an individual has about his behavior and about his surroundings. For purposes of this study, cognitive dissonance will be present if an individual has two opposing knowledges.

If the elements of cognition are relevant, i.e., " . . . follow from each other," then a state of consonance will exist. If dissonance does exist, its presence gives rise to " . . . pressures to reduce the dissonance and to avoid increases in dissonance."⁴¹ Thus, knowledge of this (cognitive dissonance) is " . . . an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction."⁴²

³⁸Ibid., p. 9. ³⁹Ibid., p. 3. ⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid. ⁴²Ibid., p. 31.

Festinger has thus declared that relationships between relevant cognitive elements are either dissonant or consonant. He also states that the intensity of dissonance felt by the individual is a function of its magnitude. If the value of the elements is great, the magnitudes of existing dissonance will also be great.

It is not my purpose to measure the magnitude of psychological discomfort. The questions asked were constructed to elicit responses which showed only the presence of dissonance, not magnitude. Several responses did imply dissonance. Some interviewees voluntarily gave their ideas as to the intensity and meaning it had for them.

Dissonance stimulating situations during the overseas sojourn and subsequent return home were investigated. What were the means by which these volunteers reduced or avoided dissonance, with the end state being consonance?

Festinger says that in reference to dissonance reduction, "manifestations of the operation of these pressures include behavior change, change of cognition, and circumspect exposure to new information and new opinions."⁴³

Many of the statements used are referring to dissonance situations described in General Perceptions and Dissonance

⁴³Ibid., p. 188.

Stimuli. The elements in conflict (opposing knowledges) have been isolated there. It will suffice for the investigator to give only a brief resume of these elements. Other quotations have been used which do not imply dissonance reduction. These have been included for illustrative purposes only, and to show volunteers' reactions to different situations.

Overseas

Change in Cognitive Elements

Dissonance reduction can be attained through a change in values, beliefs, or attitudes. Categorization in determining what should be placed where at times seemed like trying to answer the question of which came first, the chicken or the egg? The means of reduction were classified according to how the volunteers perceived the reduction. Responses indicating changes in attitudes and beliefs were the most common.

Change in Belief.--Reality forced the volunteers to change in order to "adjust" and this meant the reduction of dissonance. After various lengths of time overseas frustration became commonplace. Learning was the most often mentioned type of activity in the process. Through this beliefs

were changed, or added, and consonance was achieved. The volunteers learned why the government functioned the way it did and why the people behaved the way they did. They learned the reason why and developed a high level of understanding. With the knowledge of "why?", a more sympathetic viewpoint was held. In the area of friendship and social obligations the following was said:

I was upset at first. How could they make so many demands upon me? I wondered what would prevent the entire school from coming down if I granted one student something After I realized the _____ position in that I had, so to speak, accepted responsibility for these students by my first offer to them and that I simply had to be more careful and guarded in what I could give later on.

And another mentioned:

As far as the guests staying as long as they pleased, we found this pretty amusing . . . we had dropped several hints for him to leave but he just went on reading. This occurred during the first week. We joked about this. Later on we adopted this way of visiting also.

The first quotation, "How could they make so many demands upon me?", implies indignation and dismay. The volunteer was using friendship behavior expectations of one reference group (the U.S.A.) in viewing and judging the behavior of people from another society. In this case the other society functioned as a second reference group. Dissonance was reduced when he became aware of the incompatibility of judging one group's behavior by the standards of another. This realization changed his belief from "They are taking advantage of me," to "They are not taking advantage of me

because my actions to them signified something different." Concomitant with this realization a change in behavior was invoked so as to prevent further misunderstandings.

The second illustration is similar to the first. Guests at first were thought to be rude because they "over-stayed." It was amusing to the volunteers but somewhat disconcerting. The volunteer used socially approved means of indicating the end of a visit. These were valid only for his primary reference group which in this case was American society. These were to no avail. Along with the joking done about this inconsistency between knowledges, i.e., "They don't behave like polite people in our society. Americans wouldn't dare to act like that!" came the realization that, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." He changed his belief when his reference group for judging behavior changed.

And pertaining to the performance of a job,

I realized after we got into it (teaching night school classes), the reason why the teachers didn't make a sustained effort . . . they had to teach after teaching all day and there was no extra pay.

The reason for the students dropping out was that the course work was too difficult. We then tried to improve our program and keep people interested. The classes were too big, too long and too hard at first.

I just recognized the fact that this had been the traditional way of doing things and setting up a western, bureaucratic system on top of a traditional system would not necessarily change the behavior patterns for quite a while.

These both pertain to the disillusionment felt by the

volunteer when enthusiasm for his programs waned. Because of their behavior, the volunteer condemned the host country nationals with whom he was associated as being hypocritical, i.e., "All talk and no real honest effort." The belief was changed when he found out why things were not going as was hoped. These people were then not thought of as being hypocritical but were reacting as any person would under similar circumstances. The last sentence(s) of each quotation imply the nature of the means of dissonance reduction.

Change in Attitude.--

1) The intellectual acceptance of . . . without condoning it as being correct, valid or justifiable was referred to at some time by many of the interviewees. The means of reduction here was not so much a process of knowing the "why?" of its existence but rather a reluctant acceptance of the individual's inability to change aspects of reality. A "you can't fight the system" and "it's bigger than us" attitude was implied. Witness:

I had to accept the situation rather than fight it. Until then I didn't know what I was trying to fight or what was bothering me.

This particular statement pertained to the discrepancy between the volunteer's conception on how government officials and institutions should function and how they actually did function. This is discussed under the heading, Political Realities of Life. When the volunteer accepted the situation

i.e., altered his belief that the situation can and should be changed by individuals such as himself in less than two years to one realizing that change could not be brought about by himself, he was then able to analyze why he was troubled. His performance was not measuring up to his expectations. What he thought should be accomplished by a volunteer was too great.

Sometimes this attitude invoked a change in behavior. The subsequent behavior was a means of dissonance reduction by avoidance of the dissonance provoking stimulus.

I guess I just kind of accepted it as one of the occupational hazards. In teaching I concentrated a little bit more on the factual information and less on the thinking about . . . I just kind of accepted it.

Again there is a reluctant acceptance which provided partial dissonance reduction. What the volunteers accept as an occupational hazard has been referred to previously. It was their students' unpreparedness to respond to teaching geared to the thinking process. This volunteer's students had learned differently and thinking things through was not central in their particular learning process. The volunteer's belief in the thinking process being central and most important in learning was challenged by the students' behavior. Thus, to avoid further dissonance on their part and also for the students, a change in behavior was necessary.

This change in behavior was preceeded by a change in belief concerning his role as a teacher. Initially, a teacher

is supposed to be a catalyst. He is supposed to make others think creatively. Through his and the student's efforts, the student will develop the mental tools that are indicative of an educated man. These are primary steps toward the development and perfectibility of man. It is a cultural pattern of American society--education is a key to progress; progress is equated with advancement; advancement is equated with going forward--and what American doesn't like to think of himself as going forward, mentally, physically or spiritually?

The volunteers' beliefs about a teacher's role of catalyst and primary agent of change was reinforced when they were sent to an underdeveloped country. With them they brought the belief that their host country needed education as they perceived it. The first thing in development was mental awakening and this the volunteers tried to do.

The volunteers' self-images as people who would stand in front of a class, give knowledge and would have students reacting in a manner showing the development of creative thinking were shattered. These young Americans had to alter their beliefs. They could not be agents of change as they had perceived themselves. They had to adjust to reality and become mainly distributors of facts. The belief that an educated populace helped develop their own society and that creative thinking was necessary for the development of their host society was strong. This knowledge was opposed by the

attitude displayed by host nationals. They didn't want or were oblivious to the necessity of the kind of education western society fostered. It was difficult to accept but the volunteers learned to live with it. A change in belief and behavior were necessary in order to reduce dissonance and avoid further dissonance stimulation.

Sometimes the change in attitude did not alter overt behavior.

I kept on doing the same thing even though I knew I was batting my head against the wall. A big brick wall. I accepted their viewpoint reluctantly but damned if I would change mine. Nuts!! I took the kid to a hospital like I knew I should!!

It has been mentioned before that we think sickness bad. A person who induces evil or who does nothing to alleviate it when he can is either wicked, immoral or crazy. We desire action! We believe that sickness is usually wrought by men's activity (or inactivity) and that which is wrought by men can also be "unwrought" by men.

Not all people in the world believe in things such as this. Sometimes sickness is thought to be God's way; to alter it is to tamper with God's will. Sometimes human life is not valued as highly as it is in our society. Dissonance was involved here because of the host society's emphasis upon the social functions of an individual. The incident to which the illustration pertains is one in which a child was dying. The volunteer knew that immediate medical care was

needed. He believed it his duty, not merely as a volunteer trying to show people what should be done, but as a human being, and insisted upon the child being taken to a hospital. The head of the family said "no" because there was an important family function in process. It required all members of the family being present over a period of time. This seeming negligence for human life--a child in their own family--fostered intense dissonance for the volunteer. He was in a dilemma: First, not to do anything for the child and watch death approach was totally alien to the standards of his native reference group (American society). If he did nothing, it would be as though he was aiding in a murder. Secondly, to do something would bring about hard feelings, possibly ostracism, by the people of the family and possibly by the entire village. It would have jeopardized the volunteer's work of the past and in the future. The volunteer reduced dissonance by doing what he thought he should do in terms of his primary reference group. For him, it was the lesser of two evils. Hark back to Robin Williams' statement, "And it could be argued with some force that to resign from one's culture is, in many circumstances, as difficult as to resign from one's racial category."⁴⁴ For this volunteer, it was not a question of racial category, but of conflicting

⁴⁴Robin M. Williams, op. cit.

moral values. He did not resign from his own culture.

2) Development of patience. Whether or not this involves adding or changing new cognitive elements was not determined. The development of patience is an attitude in response to reality which affected the volunteer's overt behavior. The development of this attitude enabled the several individuals to reduce dissonance. Let us look at several of their statements:

It is extremely frustrating but after awhile you learn to live with it . . . have patience, patience and more patience.

I felt a bit frustrated about these things . . . just so much different than what I had known. The frustrations grew smaller with the increase in my patience. But the knowledge that these problems existed never left me . . . I tried to overcome these problems as diplomatically as I could.

After about four months I experienced some problems. These were operational in nature. I kind of expected it. I developed a lot of patience. There was just not much friendship among the people of the village themselves. This was characteristic of many villages.

The elements to which these statements referred were varied. The inclusion of these the writer thought necessary because patience was mentioned in many different situations.

3) Redefinition of the self. All the volunteers reported that some kind of change had been wrought, by their experience. Many became aware of the change upon return to the U.S.A. The following is what happened to one volunteer. The change was engendered by a desire to do a job and the finding of an individual who represented a means to this end.

The description of himself is very similar to the composite picture that was given. This was a means of dissonance avoidance rather than dissonance reduction for the volunteer.

I met this man from the United Nations. He had as much influence as anybody else I knew. He was extremely diplomatic. Little by little I began to pattern myself after him. It began to work. At first it was a game because it wasn't myself. I unconsciously adopted this. I had actually begun to change psychologically and my personality . . . was different. People remarked on this. It was deep within myself. It was more than a role. This was of tremendous importance . . . it had carried over greatly into me. I have absorbed this. I have changed almost basically.

Social Support

Festinger says that regardless of how dissonance has arisen, a social group is a potential means of reduction. And " . . . by obtaining social support for some opinion the person thus adds cognitive elements which are consonant with that opinion and thus reduces the total magnitude of dissonance."⁴⁵

The individual will seek other persons in order to reduce his dissonance. He will be selective and will do so " . . . by finding others who already agree, or by influencing others to agree."⁴⁶

For the volunteers it was not necessary to influence

⁴⁵Festinger, op. cit., p. 188.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 189.

others to agree. They usually had the same opinion(s).

Festinger has referred to this as

the most obvious circumstance in which persons will receive social support for some opinion they wish to maintain is, of course, if those ~~they~~ talk to already happen to have that same opinion.⁴⁷

Festinger also says,

On the other hand, one of the effective ways of eliminating dissonance is to discard one set of cognitions in favor of another, something which sometimes can be accomplished if one can find others who agree with the cognitions one wishes to maintain.⁴⁸

Whether or not the individuals studied obtained social support through the addition of cognitive elements or through their discarding, I do not know. I think it is irrelevant. My purpose is to determine if dissonance was reduced through this means and who or what were the objects used in such a process. As might be expected, the most frequently mentioned means of reduction fell within the limits of social support. The mode was that of talking and the direction was mainly toward others that were in the same position, i.e., being overseas in an alien culture.

Group Living.--Those individuals that mentioned group living as being a source of dissonance still found individuals within the group who provided means of dissonance reduction. This function of group living far outweighed the dissonance stimulating effect. Let us look at some of the many responses.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 190.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 177.

Individually or socially, . . . we griped a lot about the situation. This is one advantage in living with volunteers . . . in that we could gripe freely. If we had to live with host country nationals we would not have been able to be so free in our criticisms of the system. This way we could blow our stacks anytime we wanted to. I think this was good because it helped to relieve a lot of your frustrations.

Everybody participated in griping at one time or another . . . some merely griped and others lost their tempers and had terrible scenes.

We usually talked about our jobs and the problems we had. I'd say that griping went on every day but I wouldn't say it was a major source of conversation. When we became resigned to the situation we griped less. But then we became more cynical. At first we had a lot of bad scenes . . . fights among the group which I'm sure was caused by frustrations on the job. After the first six months these gradually died out . . . everybody made some adjustment and learned to live with it. Then gripes became more specific about the thing that made you mad and there wasn't this casual griping about the system.

And another,

Of the volunteers all being stationed in one location . . . during lunch hour you could get all your problems off your chest. After lunch hour within the four walls of the house you could say most anything. And then you left it and it was through and over and you were ready to start back again, without any kind of anger. It was very marvelous. This happened almost every day.

And the volunteer continued:

We saw everyone at lunch usually. We talked about politics, philosophy and news in general. We talked about our problems on the job and made an effort to keep other volunteers abreast of what we were doing. This was one of the major ways of letting off steam, I think . . . and it was a good way.

These illustrations indicate the type of response to dissonance stimuli presented in the first part of this chapter. They refer not to one or a few particular elements or knowledges in conflict but a multitude. They probably also

referred to those not voiced during the interview. Talking to others of like kind, i.e., fellow American volunteers, afforded them a chance to get away temporarily from their host environment. Social support functioned as a respite and was also a major means of dissonance reduction. Here the volunteer did not have to change cognitions. If he so desired, the already held beliefs and attitudes could find reinforcement.

One volunteer recognized the reinforcement process due to an attitude on the part of a superior. Note his reaction to this in the last sentence.

I decided that complaining was an American trait. At the location they had the best jobs. One thing, they were reinforced by the director of the institution who was a national. He wasn't the socializing kind. He wanted to give the Americans a good place to live, a good place to eat and when they were finished with their work to be able to go home and relax. He said, "I don't go out and socialize, so why should they?" "They are here to do a job, not to make people like them." At the end of the day he would go into contemplation or something and the volunteers would go in and bitch about other nationals. There were Americans who agreed with me and we would sit around and bitch about the other Americans.

Non-Americans on the job provided a means of social support for only one volunteer. These were the British. For two others this potential source of social support was nonexistent and the volunteers had to find other means.

The British were here for the money and they constantly kicked the _____ mental ability. They felt that the Peace Corps was taking jobs away from them and they were hostile. Their hostility created loneliness. I got rid of the feeling by writing letters home and periodic Peace Corps volunteer visits. They stopped in one or three times a month.

Activities such as reading, writing letters home and seeing any available western movies were mentioned as means by which individuals were able to "let off steam."

Group Conferences.--Only two volunteers mentioned group get-togethers as a means of "letting off steam." One described the occasion and it reinforced group feelings. These were negative:

After five or six months we got together for a Peace Corps conference and we all recognized, the whole group, that we hated these people, and we called them . . . and every dirty word you can imagine. We all agreed at the conference that they were liars and cheaters

Other Americans.--These were cited as being means of reduction as well as dissonance stimuli. The individual who had difficulty with his team leader sought out persons whom Festinger refers to, "but it may be true that a large proportion of the persons a given individual knows may have the same cognitive dissonance which he himself possesses."⁴⁹

The volunteer said:

In the end, when I was successful in establishing my contacts with A.I.D. personnel and when people learned of the problems which they themselves had with this team leader, it became quite evident to all those concerned that the team leader had his own personal problems which was causing him to act as he did.

The A.I.D. people mentioned below were in the same situation as the volunteer in that they had similar dissonance

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 195.

between cognitions. The volunteer found social support for his opinion of the team leader among these people. He thus added cognitive elements which were consonant with his opinion and reduced the total magnitude of dissonance.

Missionaries.--Two volunteers mentioned missionaries as contacts with other Americans and said they were very effective in giving them a sense of "being home." For one, the missionaries were first skeptical but later became the chief source of social support for the volunteer and his partner.

Missionaries we knew, one family, felt sorry for us. They had us down for supper, sometimes every other day. They were the greatest American friends we had overseas. If we were ever depressed, we would go and see them.

Again there was a multitude of possible elements involved which might have provoked dissonance and which the volunteers might have wanted to communicate. The volunteer's preconceived notions of missionaries being sympathetic to human needs, especially those of a fellow countryman, was not shattered. These missionaries did provide a means of social support. For the volunteer expressed to them their general reactions to the host country, positive or negative.

Living in Pairs.--The volunteers living in pairs followed two tendencies: first, they were either not initially compatible with their isolation and frustration further alienating them; or else they found each other very

compatible. The first has already been discussed as a dissonance stimulus. Let us now consider the second. As with missionaries, they would discuss their general reactions to the environment with each other and this was usually about their job and related problems.

. . . this was a very strange example. I can't think of any other situation where you have two fellows just by chance put into a strange environment together and living as well as we did. We spent two years together with hardly any quarrel. We had nothing in common. I guess that is why we got along so well. We were almost like brothers to each other. We talked over our problems. Sometimes we would try to get away from each other because when you eat three meals a day with a guy for two years, he can get to look pretty ugly after awhile.

Host Nationals.---The friendship with host nationals mentioned were close and a source of social support. The nationals with whom the volunteers interacted were perceived as westernized or potentially western in their thinking. Through the friendships some volunteers were able to attain a higher level of understanding of the society in which they were living. Here are three different statements.

I think one thing that helped me when I was living alone . . . was one interpreter I got close to. In many respects I thought he was very westernized and we chummed around together. He and I were real good buddies.

My co-worker and I worked out problems together. We were completely compatible.

We had one close _____ friend. Actually he wasn't _____ because we Americanized him so. We talked over things with him because he understood the _____ way of life. He never wanted anything from us.

Joking.---Talking had been the major mode of dissonance

reduction with the recipients varying, i.e., other volunteers, missionaries, and so on. I would like to mention a particular type of talking, if it can be called that. It is joking. Humor has many functions, such as indirectly attacking the supreme, the high and mighty and the unapproachable. Humor in the form of joking was also an effective means of dissonance reduction. Consider these two statements:

We could talk about it and joke about it and then it wasn't so bad.

When the two new volunteers arrived we communicated our feelings with each other The great thing about it was that there was a humorist among us. He caught on to the idiosyncracies of the _____ immediately. When we would start to gripe he would say things like an _____ and this usually started us laughing. And then things wouldn't seem so bad.

So sessions which in the capitol city would normally be bitch sessions with everyone getting more and more angry at the situation and feeding on it, not helping each other, was the opposite to ours. Up there for some reason it worked the other way. We should be relaxed after we got done and felt better about it. Down in the capitol city you would get relief, but it would be negative. Our sessions weren't so much gripe sessions. We would get together and laugh about funny things kids did which were frustrating in the classroom.

Avoidance

Festinger has said, "When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which will or would likely increase the dissonance."⁵⁰

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 3.

The incompatible knowledges involved here have been cited previously. For the reader's convenience, the discussions can be found under the following headings: Govern-
ment Operations, Smells, Other Americans in the Country,
Cultural Differences in Concept of Time, and Group Living.
Let us look at these statements.

The Peace Corps administration was irrational many times . . . we just ignored them.

I did not want to associate much with the American community. I did not get this feeling of not wanting to associate with Americans until I felt some kind of security with the host country nationals. You don't reject something until you have something else. You can say to yourself, "Well, I have my own friends."

After people wouldn't show up a few times we just wouldn't invite them anymore. Like faculty members . . . everyone was just a little late In the U.S.A. I would have taken this as a personal affront. I didn't there because I said, "Well, they have to do this." This realization grew on me.

When the other two volunteers came there wasn't any trouble. It was just a personality conflict. Only if a third person were present could my partner and I talk This was the amazing thing. We both had different reactions to the same things but very similar interests. The other volunteers noticed this and mentioned it. We talked about it. One of them said, "Don't worry about it, it is just a personality conflict."

After we had the showdown, I said I'd try to do my best to help him by avoiding him as much as possible. Funny thing is the last six months were the best I had there because he and I knew what was bothering us. The amazing thing is I still respect him and inquire about him. It was just that when we were together, it was depressing.

The volunteer who had considerable trouble with his team leader found a source of reduction. Whether he knew it or not at the time it was precisely this means of reduction which provoked further antagonism:

I tried to find an outlet. This was a very strong fascination among the tribal people I lived with. I learned their dialect, became part of them as much as I could . . . this was the thing that caused more friction between the team leader and myself. I felt these people had something to learn from and therefore I felt there could be a reciprocal type of relationship. I expressed my problems to people in A.I.D. and there were others who felt the same way I did.

Thus,

By finding an outlet I didn't let it bother me. I ignored it as much as I could.

One volunteer was living in a society where, as he said, displays of anger are not condoned. It was interesting to note how he reacted to this. Witness the following:

This is the big problem . . . there are very few outlets and aggressive behavior is frowned upon, . . . overt manifestations of hostility are just frowned upon terribly. They learn to live with this.

Occasionally they break out in big violence and there are murders. But there is no normal outlet for frustration and hostility and this retention is learned by the children at a very early age, . . . this accumulation becomes directed upon themselves and is taken out quite frequently on animals. You'll see them beat animals unmercifully . . . and this is exactly what I did!

I had no normal outlets, . . . and I am a very aggressive guy. When I became frustrated, I wouldn't display it to anyone. I use to beat my horse . . . I hated my horse! I couldn't get mad at anybody. Even when I was living with another volunteer I could take this frustration out on him but that was even hard.

Definite or Creative Job while Overseas

The Gullahorns have stated: "Those who were able to become involved in creative work immediately upon return reported less feelings of isolation and alienation."⁵¹ This

⁵¹Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, op. cit., p. 40.

pertains to individuals returning home after an overseas sojourn. It was equally true of the volunteers commenting on their overseas tour of duty while there. It is suspected that being involved in creative work immediately upon arrival or shortly thereafter was not so much a factor in dissonance reduction as it was in dissonance prevention. Being engaged in something enabled the volunteers to perceive themselves as fulfilling some of their own expectations (here functioning as knowledges). These expectations were primarily concerned with accomplishing something. Here are a few examples:

A month after arrival we were still in training. I experienced a sense of frustration. I wanted to go to work, no matter what it was. When we finally did, at least it was something that had meaning. I think it came from the fact that we were there to do something.

I was deeply involved in the teaching experience. This to me was the thing that made the whole time worthwhile. I got very involved. I felt as though I was doing something very creative. I'd be preparing lessons and would get carried away with a new idea.

There were times when you could easily wonder what you were doing over there. I had a job to do and kept busy at it so this thing never really bothered me. The only time it did was during the first six months. I was doing something I didn't like and really wasn't supposed to be doing.

I never really asked myself the question, "What am I doing here?" I guess it was because I was pretty much satisfied with what I was doing. I had a very heavy teaching load and I enjoyed it very much. I was completely wrapped up in my work.

Reinforcement of Reason for Being There

A rationalization process was involved in what could

be called a legitimization of the self. Only a few volunteers made explicit reference to it. It is thought, however, that all those interviewed practiced it at some time during the two years overseas.

It could be interpreted as dissonance reduction because the volunteers added cognitive elements that were compatible to those already held. They had conceptions or beliefs as to what a volunteer should do. Reality, in many cases, forced volunteers to change or alter their beliefs and attitudes. Sometimes not only what they were doing came under question but also the basic reason(s) for their being there in the first place. The volunteers usually just gritted their teeth and said, "I'm here for such and such a purpose. I will try my darnedest to do this or something. Regardless, I do have a purpose!!"

I was there and I just assumed it was right and the thing to do. I had a chance to leave the village but I chose to stick it out. It was because there were communities like this and our job was to bring them together. Also, I don't like to leave anything if there is potential in it.

I came to the conclusion that one of my reasons for being there was in demonstrating that women could come out of the wing of their father, brother or husband; could do a responsible job and act in a responsible manner. I felt I was accomplishing something then.

Concerning feelings of depression, . . . not really We were there because we volunteered. Even though some said, "Give me a ticket and I'll go," I don't think they would have.

Motivation and Selective Perception

The volunteers who said the following were individuals whose experiences were very rewarding. They had, in a sense, constructive interaction and

. . . the constructive interaction leads the hosts and the sojourner to perceive each other as being similar in important areas and thus increases their tolerance and acceptance of differences in other areas.⁵²

The two volunteers expressing themselves below said, in the words of one, "that the cultures are extremely different but the similarities are in the people." Similar sentiments were expressed by the other volunteer:

I never tried to compare things with the States. I just kind of blocked the States completely out of my mind. In terms of really trying to do something that would count . . . the best way to do it would be through an understanding of the _____. Anything that would stand in the way of this I would try to avoid and the worse thing I could do would be continually hark back to the way things were in the States. I don't think I did this at all. I mean, I was never aware of, "Gee, we have this at home and not here."

And,

I had been motivated not to go out there and see the bad. But it wasn't until I really got to know the people and liking them did I get this tremendously positive feeling about the country.

An example of selective perception was given by another volunteer. It is one of overlooking or accepting the potentially negative and seeing the positive. It stemmed from

⁵²Ibid., p. 43.

proper training, and indicates something of the quality of the person that should be sent overseas, be it with the Peace Corps, International Voluntary Service or other organizations that work in a cross-cultural environment. The statement was the following:

The dirt is there if you see it. I mean, if you go around looking at the dirt, it is dirty. But also, is one of the greenest places you have ever seen in your life.

Return to the United States

Time alone has been the biggest factor in dissonance reduction since coming back to the U.S.A. The intensity for most has lessened and for others it has increased. The latter stems from doubt that what they are presently doing is the way to reach their goals. This has taken the form of impatience. Their goals are functioning as knowledges and they are in conflict with indications from the external environment, i.e., slowness of gaining necessary academic "tools" and doubt that these are even necessary or desirable in some cases. These examples serve as the opposing knowledges.

Most of the volunteers feel at home but with qualifications. Restlessness still characterizes many. The overseas experience has passed but it has left its mark--perhaps an indelible mark. Let us now examine some of the perceived means of dissonance reduction and general perceptions.

Social Support

The majority of responses again fell within this category. The mode was talking and those to whom the volunteers talked were three in type: non-volunteers with similar cross-cultural interests (plus several with similar academic interests), other volunteers, and host country nationals on campus.

Non-volunteers with Similar Cross-Cultural Interests (and Academic Interests).--Most volunteers felt strongly that Americans in general are not interested in what they did or learned overseas. Thus, many of the friendships that do not fall under the three mentioned in the above paragraph were a result of living conditions such as living in the same housing unit. Others were a result of being in the same department of the University. If academic interests were similar and the other individual expressed an interest in what the volunteer did overseas, the ensuing friendship was mentioned specifically.

When the latter occurred the volunteer was able to talk about something that was vital to him. He found someone who was really interested in what the volunteer had to say. Their being in the same department and coupled with the above, often meant they had similar career aspirations, i.e., work of a cross-cultural nature. The volunteers did not give any particular instances of explicit dissonance reduction accomplished by their interaction. Their reactions to this were usually

vague, such as, "It was good speaking to someone of like mind." It can be interpreted to mean that the volunteers were experiencing dissonance. Their overseas experience had tremendous meaning for them. They thought that Americans should be interested in what they had to say even though approximately one-half knew that they would be met with indifference. They were not upset because Americans would not listen to them in particular but rather because Americans displayed an overall attitude of ignorance to what the volunteers realized were very important world problems. They believed Americans, for their own good, should react differently but the actual behavior was far below expectations. The volunteers also felt that it was part of their duty to inform the American public but this was like banging their heads against a brick wall! "This shouldn't be so but I'm afraid it is!"

Thus, through talking to "different" Americans, the volunteers were able to find social support in a person who partially reinforced his beliefs in what should be the reaction on the part of an American citizen.

The same syndrome was applicable to those individuals who were non-volunteers but who had similar cross-cultural interests but not in the field of academic endeavor. The knowledges in conflict and means of reduction were identical to those mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Other Volunteers.--There were three major reference groups implied throughout the study. These may or may not encompass other reference groups but for purposes of clarity the investigator has subsumed them under the classifications of: host society, American society, and other volunteers. The last category is specific in content and it was this group in which many volunteers found social support.

I voiced my feelings of disgust to other volunteers, but not to my family or friends. These volunteers felt the same way. We would talk about what was wrong with the U.S.A. Also, what had happened in _____ and news about the other volunteers.

I felt good talking to the volunteers, especially the one girl. She was my best friend when I came back. She was a life saver.

This volunteer's statement illustrates a typical pattern. She found an individual who "spoke the same language." Or, "A person who is in some pertinent respect of the same status or in the same social category."⁵³

The volunteer and the girl mentioned were both in the same group and had similar reactions abroad as well as when they returned to the U.S.A. Again the major elements involved in dissonance for this volunteer centered around the apparent ignorance, ethnocentrism and so on by the Americans she met. Her primary reference groups overseas had been

⁵³Patricia L. Kendall and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "Problems of Survey Analysis," Continuities in Social Research, ed. Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), p. 147.

other volunteers and there she found willing listeners to what she had to say. They all had similar things to talk about by virtue of their being in that country and under the same conditions. This important source of social support was removed upon discharge. Although being away from the environment which prompted finding social support in the first place, its effect was still present. This was true of all the volunteers and was indicated by their need to talk about their experiences. Thus, finding a fellow volunteer, especially from the same country, was indeed a "life saver."

" . . . but not to my family or friends." The volunteers varied as to how much talking was done to family and friends. It is suspected that the reason why this volunteer did not was due to her finding other volunteers. For most of the others, it was difficult to verbalize the multitude of experiences they had overseas. There was no dissonance involved when family and friends could listen only up to a certain point. It was a statement of fact and all could not expect full appreciation or understanding of what was being said by the volunteer. As one mentioned:

My family and friends would listen to me. But after a certain point we both realized it was a situation of "we would have to have been there to really understand" sort of thing.

The following are some of the responses indicating the finding of social support in other volunteers:

There are several Peace Corps volunteers on campus and I talked to them quite a bit about my dissatisfaction.

I am closely associated with other volunteers. It seems like we all are having the same feelings.

It's fun to get together and discuss our experiences. Winter quarter we got together about three or four times a week and talked about small things such as trips, vacations, about what other volunteers are doing, and so on.

And another with a slight variation:

Occasionally I get a hankering to go and speak with other volunteers. When something is given on campus or a speech is given I go to other volunteers because you feel they are going to have the same or almost the same viewpoint as you would. At times, the viewpoint will be a cynical one in that the N.Y. Times will write about something pertaining to _____ and we will either laugh at the Times or question what the revolution is all about Other times it is outright concern and we voice and discuss it.

Host Country Nationals on Campus.---One interviewee

said:

. . . there are about thirty _____ on campus. I got together with them in September. All the time I had been away from _____ I felt extremely frustrated in some respect. I couldn't understand why. All of a sudden I was with _____ again and I was reacting the way they reacted.

The volunteer felt at home once he had located host country nationals. This could be interpreted to be a means of escaping from elements in his own society as being unpleasant. By interacting with host country nationals the person is able to sublimate these troublesome cognitions. It might also be a refusal on his part to give up an identity that was "found" overseas and a nostalgic attempt to relive old times. Perhaps it is indicative of a process of perpetuation, i.e., a means by which the individual can keep alive

the past.

Whatever it might be, the individual feels better when he is behaving in terms of the host country (a reference group). Doing this the missing "something" was found.

Activity was thought necessary when the volunteers returned to the U.S.A. If they could relate their experiences to someone, providing the person was really interested, it was a catharsis.

When the past academic school year began (1963-64), the volunteers reported a change or the beginnings of a change in their feelings. They were overcoming the initial period of restlessness and were in the process of reacculturation.

The Role of Creative Work

Whether attending school is creative work is left up to an individual's own definition of creative work. Many students will disagree. For the volunteers, attending classes was considered creative if it enhanced the realization of the long-range goals, i.e., if they thought it to be one means to the desired end of a cross-cultural type of work. It brought about a change in some volunteers. They were mentally coming back to the U.S.A.

When I came back to school I finally came out of my shell. Even people started noticing it. I finally started associating with people.

For one volunteer, activity of this kind was, in his own words, a "life saver." It is believed that the individual avoided considerable dissonance because of his work immediately upon return. Witness:

Coming back to the U.S. I was able to talk about my experiences. I taught in a Peace Corps training program. I felt very good about being able to talk about what I did in _____.

I didn't want to talk to anyone else about my experiences because there wasn't much to say.

This training program helped me very much in what could be called the "reacculturation" process. The program lasted ten weeks.

Here the volunteer had people that not only wanted to listen to him but had to even if they didn't desire to do so. In a sense, the volunteer had a captive audience. He was thus not exposed to as great a degree to the knowledge which fostered cognitive dissonance for most of the other volunteers. Ignorance, apathy, indifference and perhaps ethnocentrism on the part of Americans were not displayed by many in his "audience." The volunteer teacher's belief that Americans should be interested for their own good was compatible with what he experienced for at least ten weeks.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

For purposes of a summary I would like to sketch a "typical" volunteer whose responses were drawn from the thirteen interviews. The reliability of this composite picture is open to question because of the small sample. It is presented only as an aid in giving the reader a general idea of the interviewees.

"My name is Joe Volunteer. I am 22½ years old and am a graduate of _____ University. I majored in the liberal arts. I come from a family that is neither rich nor poor. You might call my background middle class. I travelled in the U.S.A. and a little in Canada. I had plans to go overseas but they didn't materialize. I had always wanted to do so and if I hadn't gone into the Peace Corps, I think I still would have gone overseas eventually.

I lived in a neighborhood that was all Caucasian--white people. In high school I had only a little contact with people you would call from minority groups. This contact increased considerably when I entered college. I don't think I had any different feelings toward minority groups than I had toward anyone else.

You ask me why I joined? Well, that is hard to answer.

Frankly, I was very tired of school and the job I had at that time was very boring. I planned to go back to graduate school but not just then. It might surprise you but I always wanted to work overseas even though I had not done much travelling before. This cross-cultural type of work-- it seems interesting to me. You combine travelling with adventure and you learn--really learn! I always wanted to do this but I wasn't sure of how to go about it. I had been considering the Foreign Service and things like this. But even though it is a field of growing importance due to what we call the "shrinking world," I feel the opportunities are pretty limited. Thus, when the Peace Corps came into being, I thought this would be a great opportunity to see if I liked overseas work and in a way, to get my bearings on life. I really wanted to contribute something to the country in which I would be placed and I think I contributed something, although not one heck of a lot.

The two years were truly an educational experience. I learned--learned and learned! I learned about myself, about another culture and I looked at the U.S.A. from a different perspective. About myself, I found this kind of work a challenge and rewarding in non-material things, such as a feeling that you have accomplished something that might help others in some small way. About the host society I learned why things are the way they are--at least to some

extent. This was probably the biggest or most important thing I learned. We can't condemn others because if you understand the reasons why such and such are so, you become more sympathetic and if you do criticize, the criticisms are better founded. I think I have a much better insight as far as how important culture is to shaping an individual's personality. Finally, about American society, I am just more critical--of almost everything. I sometimes find myself saying, "Americans do such and such . . .," instead of "We do such and such" I think I've experienced something that few Americans have or would want to experience. I don't feel better than other Americans but I do feel different. It isn't that I feel like a man without a culture, but almost like a man with two cultures. I don't know, perhaps I should go and see a psychologist?

Other American volunteers provided most of my social life. The people I lived with were the ones with whom I had much in common. After all, we were all volunteers, getting the same pay and there for the same purpose. We were all in the same boat. I did have contacts with host country nationals. Some could speak English and were westernized. If I could have spoken the language more fluently I would have gotten to know more of the people. Other nationals with whom I had friendships were a direct result of my job. I worked with them or else we were in similar fields and through the latter

we became acquainted.

Did I ever feel at home in _____? I sure did! It took a little while, between six and nine months but after that I had no trouble concerning not feeling at home. The only thing I missed from the U.S.A. was some food. Like hamburgers, cokes, and things like this. Other amenities I missed at times but nothing seriously.

Although the two years were thought to be then, and are still thought of now, as having been very rewarding, I was glad to leave. It wasn't that I was dissatisfied but that two years is long enough for anyone at one stretch. I just needed a break. I just needed to get away. I felt very reluctant at first because I realized I might never see these people again. It made me very sad. Once I accepted the fact that I had to leave, I got itchy feet and was anxious to do so. I just wanted to leave and go anywhere. I wasn't so anxious to come back to the U.S.A. as I was just anxious to travel. I can't say I was that elated about coming back to the States. I had a sense of freedom and responsibility over there. I was accomplishing something and I felt needed. Here in the States I just don't feel this way.

I wish Americans would have a little more relaxed attitude toward life. I wish they wouldn't take things too seriously. I mean it is good we are serious; look what we have accomplished. But I think that we take it to extremes. Rush, rush, rush!! Hurry up and make money, money and more

money. We should be more flexible. We can learn a lot from _____ society. One thing I dislike very much is the hypocrisy, shallow-mindedness and falseness of many Americans. They put on this big front. I always felt some of this before I left but I feel it much more strongly now. As you can see I am more critical of American society since coming back from _____. I'd also like to see closer family ties in the U.S.A. I saw this in _____ and realized what an important thing it is to society.

What would I like to see adopted by _____ from the U.S.A? I think just some western institutions and attitudes which I think would help rid the country of what I consider areas of injustice. There is nepotism, corruption and things like that. The poor man suffers. There isn't too much else I would like to see adopted. I think the country by and large should be left alone. If they want westernization--fine, help them to get it. We should not force our ideas and beliefs on these people. We aren't perfect, you know. We are far from it!

I am more directed now. The two years overseas crystallized my long-range desires. I definitely want to go into work of a cross-cultural nature. The reason I came back to school is that I thought it would better prepare me for overseas work. Sometimes, just sometimes mind you, I wonder about this.

I characterize myself as being restless. I want to go back soon. If not, I just want to leave and go anywhere. It isn't that I dislike the U.S. but just that I learned so much being overseas. It was dynamic and challenging and this is a good way to learn. I miss the feeling of accomplishment I had there, their easier, healthier attitude toward life, and the quietness. In a sense I feel at home and then again I don't. The experience is still fairly vivid in my mind although the time spent thinking about it has decreased as the months go by. This is only natural. I communicate with a few of the volunteers in my group. We hash over old times and what other volunteers are doing. Our overseas sojourn is finished and this was the big unifying factor. It is past and thus you can't expect us to be close.

As far as repeating the two years is concerned, I think I'd say "yes." What I would prefer is something else in a similar vein. As long as it gave me the chance to go overseas and the same widening experience I had in _____. I think I'd like to be a little more independent this time and be able to make a little more money.

I guess I didn't see anything at first that I thought would bother me in _____. It wasn't so much physical objects that I found disconcerting but the unseen. By this I mean attitudes, beliefs and practices engendered by the society itself. You become really aware of the discrepancy

between transplanted western institutions and ideas and how they function in _____. It produced some curious results in _____, and the West has not really changed this country. Everything has a thin veneer of westernization but scratch the surface and you will find the traditional ways.

It made me mad to see how the American government, Peace Corps administration and the host country government functioned. I can see the "why" as far as the host country is concerned but not ours! There was so much waste and inefficiency in ours. My tax money being wasted! If only the American public knew!

It took me some time to get used to their different concept of time. As I said before, they have a much more relaxed and easy-going attitude toward life. I learned this very quickly when they wouldn't show up on time for an appointment or not show up at all. It didn't mean too much for them but it got me very irritated at times. As time went on I realized I was being ethnocentric in using my native standards in judging their behavior. You learned not to do this--this is part of what is called adjustment, I guess.

Like most volunteers, my job existed mostly on paper but it was a different story when I go there. There wasn't much of anything in actuality and this was an obstacle most

of us had to overcome. Gradually I did but it took some time and effort.

The group I was living with was indeed a source of what you call "social support." I let off steam with them many times. I needed this bit of America at times. You had to get away once in awhile. Sometimes, however, there would be personality conflicts between them and this would be bad for morale.

The hardest thing about being away for two years was coming back. It was a shock to see everything moving at such a fast pace. Everything looked so efficient and mechanized!! Everybody busy. I really felt "out-of-it," especially when I wasn't busy doing anything. You should try to do something, anything, to keep the restlessness controlled. I didn't talk too much to many people about the two years. I don't care what you say, people are just not really interested. They go through the motions and ask you questions you knew they would ask. It is a big farce sometimes and it makes me sick! Outside of my family I felt pretty much alone.

One thing that shocked me. This is the lack of concern of Americans for things not within the geographical confines of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They are so provincial--so ethnocentric. It makes me mad and I feel like leaving when I run into it.

In order to live in _____ for two years you had to change. I had to learn to live with what I saw. You might say, just grit your teeth and bear it. Don't judge them by American standards for they have different ways. One thing is for sure--I developed one hell of a lot of patience!! I would have gone nuts if that hadn't occurred.

When living together and letting off steam, I found I felt better if we could laugh about the things that were bothering us. It had a much better effect than just bitching and bitching. As far as the Peace Corps administration is concerned, if they irritated us too much, we just ignored them.

Generally, we felt all right as long as we thought we were doing something. It wasn't the heat, disease, sickness or lack of western conveniences that would depress you. The biggest enemy was inactivity. This is the morale killing thing. With little effort and if you are inactive due to something beyond your control, you can begin to doubt your own worth. When you do that you are in bad shape.

Many times when the going got rough you just said to yourself, "I'm here for a purpose and I won't quit." You might call it maturity but I call it stubbornness. You are also helped because you know that you are only there for two years.

When I returned to the U.S.A. I felt better when I

could talk to other volunteers. We all had more or less the same reactions. I was glad to start school--it kept me busy and I think it will help me in my career goals. I also came into contact with other people on campus who had the same ideas as far as career aspirations are concerned. It has been good to talk to host country nationals. All in all, it hasn't been too bad coming back. I'm biding my time until I can go again. I think I can contribute something to the world in which I live. I hope I will be given the chance to fulfill my aspirations."

Conclusions

Theoretical Considerations

According to Richard Brymer, alienation is perceived as how individuals

. . . see themselves in the system, their evaluations of their lives in the society, and their relationship to the society. The idea exists that an individual in the modern society may be "overwhelmed" by the society; that he can no longer see the "meaning" to it all; understand its workings or feel that he can exert any degree of control over his place and fortunes within the society.⁵⁴

Brymer uses Seeman's five meanings of alienation: (1) powerlessness--

. . . the expectancy or probability held by the

⁵⁴Richard Brymer, Stratification and Alienation, A Dissertation Proposal, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1964, p. 3.

individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements he seeks,

(2) meaninglessness--

. . . characterized by a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behavior can be made [or] when the individual is unclear as to what he ought to believe [or] when the individual's minimal standards for clarity in decision making are not met,

(3) normlessness--

. . . the anomic situation, from the individual point of view, may be defined as one in which there is a high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals,

(4) isolation--

. . . the alienated in the isolation sense are those who, like the intellectual, assign low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society,

and (5) self-estrangement--

one way to state such a meaning is to see alienation as the degree of dependence of the given behavior upon anticipated future rewards, that is, upon rewards that lie outside the activity itself.⁵⁵

Meaning number (4) is most applicable to the volunteers interviewed. Alienation in this sense was felt upon return to the U.S.A. The questioning of the place of material objects in American society is indicative of a reinforcement of low reward value given to usually highly valued or desired American goals. It is thought that these individuals gave relatively low value to material acquisition before going

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 4-5.

overseas and as a consequence of their experience, it is now still lower.

The volunteers believe that the "American way" is not the only way nor is it necessarily the best way. With this belief they reacted strongly toward anything that hinted at provincial thinking or narrow-mindedness. To think that the American way is inherently the best way, whether stated explicitly or merely thought, is something not atypical of many members of our society. It is a widely held belief. In this sense the volunteers were also alienated upon return to the U.S.A.

As a result of this study the investigator believes that the "third culture" is a state of mind. Its definition is more psychological rather than geographical. One does not have to be in a foreign environment to be of the third culture. Rather, he has to be in the "right frame of mind." He must be willing to try to attain a high level of understanding of the host society; to learn the "why" behind the behavior, beliefs, and attitudes held by those with whom he comes into contact.

There is some evidence indicating that the third culture has persisted for almost one year after the host society. The changes the volunteers mentioned are persistent and long enduring. These individuals have been motivated by their experiences to seek careers which will give them the same

feelings of adventure, challenge and accomplishment.

"Reference groups are those whose standards are used as backgrounds against which to test the appropriateness of one's own (or other's) values, attitudes, aspirations, and behavior."⁵⁶ The reduction of dissonance is perhaps better understood when viewed in these terms.

Cognitive dissonance was mentioned involving hygienic standards. The excretion of bodily wastes in public was disturbing to several volunteers. Their judgments of the acts seen were based upon one frame of reference (the U.S.A.) and dissonance was reduced with the changing of the reference group. They tended to compare the act in terms of what it meant in the host society.

Displays of friendship between members of the same sex, i.e., holding hands, was also mentioned as stimulating dissonance. Dissonance in most cases was again reduced via a change in reference groups. Initially these acts were viewed as abnormal. This kind of behavior was indicative of homosexuality. When the individual judged this behavior not from his native reference group(s) but from the point of view held by the host society, his attitude usually changed. He understood what it meant and it did not bother him as

⁵⁶Jeanne E. and John T. Gullahorn, American Students in France (The University of Kansas: January, 1956), p. 232.

much as it did previously. He experienced a shift in reference groups. Living in a foreign society for two years was a challenge for all those interviewed. To adapt meant not to judge other's behavior in terms of your own standards but in terms of the other society and also to judge it as a volunteer should judge. To be a volunteer meant the enlarging of one's reference groups--being a citizen of the world, being open-minded, and being a member of the third culture.

Hypotheses and Future Research

Some support was found for the hypotheses. The individuals studied described themselves and these descriptions were indicative of persons who had not yet "found" themselves in their own society. This does not mean they had no direction in life; rather, it meant they were in the process of considering which direction to take. Idealism played only a part in their motivations for joining. The experience functioned as a "break" for some and a test for others. Both overseas and since returning to the U.S.A. the volunteers encountered situations which fostered cognitive dissonance. Steps were taken to reduce this state of inconsistency.

This was actually a study of American cultural patterns in a non-American environment. The findings can be put to a practical use in future training of Peace Corps and International Voluntary Service volunteers as well as other types of cross-

cultural sojourners. The initial and protracted perceptions of the interviewees overseas, including the things which did and did not stimulate dissonance, give us a clue as to what obstacles will be met by an American going overseas to do a job. He first must understand his own society to some extent before he can understand another society. The interviewees in this study were either aware of this before departure or through their experiences overseas became aware of the differences in cultural patterns.

Volunteers should be made aware of the value their society places upon such things as efficiency, sanitation, honesty, and other areas referred to by volunteers in the preceeding pages. If they are aware of these things being different, it would aid them in working within the cultural framework of the host society. If a person is aware of something that will cause trouble he will take steps to avoid that trouble before it happens. Awareness before departure would not only alleviate some psychological discomfort felt by the volunteer but would also enable him to perform a job more effectively. He would have some knowledge of the channels through which a task might be performed.

A classroom situation in which volunteers discussed their perceptions of American cultural patterns and the emphasis the society places upon them could be held in a training program. The instructor could gradually introduce

examples of behavior representative of the host country and which would indicate a different cultural pattern. The volunteers could discuss how they would react toward such behavior. How would they feel when they realized that this would be what was encountered? They would have to cope with these things day after day and work with all the difficulties created. The investigator believes that this type of instruction, concomitant with language study, should constitute the major part of any effective overseas training program. Perhaps less emphasis should be placed upon learning what is the American Constitution, American foreign policy and more emphasis upon what makes Americans different as a society in their way of life. The former can be learned by outside reading in one's spare time. The latter usually lies outside an individual's conscious awareness, especially if the person has never had a cross-cultural experience. It must be brought into the realm of cognizance by instruction.

It has been mentioned that there is an addition of or a change of reference groups involved in the adjustment of an individual to a new cultural environment. A question for further research concerning reference group theory would be a determination of what reference groups are utilized when observing a different society. Under what situations will one reference group be predominant over another? Understanding of the actual process of adjustment to the host society and reacculturation in terms of reference group theory would be valuable.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Briefly describe yourself as a person before you left.
2. Why did you join? What were your expectations?
3. What did you first perceive upon arrival in _____?
How did you feel about this?
4. Was there anything during the entire two years that you considered different, troublesome, or areas of conflict?
What were they?
How did you feel about them?
What did you do about them?
5. What do you think you learned?
6. Considering your entire overseas period, with whom did you interact the most?
Why did you interact with this person(s)?
What did you have in common?
How often did you interact with this person(s)?
How involved do you think you became with your work?
7. Did you ever feel at home in _____?
8. What did you miss the most from the U.S.A.?
9. How did you feel about leaving _____?
10. How did you feel about returning to the U.S.A.?
11. What would you like to see adopted by the U.S.A. that you experienced in _____?

12. What would you like to see adopted by _____ from the U.S.A.?
13. Has this experience changed you or your career plans in any way? How has it changed you?
14. What did you first perceive upon arrival in the U.S.A.? How did you feel when you perceived this?
15. What did you do when you came back to the U.S.A.?
 - a. People talked to--who, how often and about what?
 - b. Activities engaged in--which, why and what done?
16. Have you noticed anything different or feel different about or toward the U.S.A. since you returned from overseas? If so, what?
How do you feel about it?
What have you done about it?
17. With whom do you now interact?
Why do you interact with the person(s)?
What do you have in common?
What do you talk about?
How often do you see this person(s)?
18. How do you feel about being back in the U.S.A.?
19. Do you feel at home now?
20. What do you miss the most from _____?
21. Do you think about your overseas experience now?
Is it still of significance to you? In what way?
22. Would you like to have a reunion with your fellow volunteers?
23. Would you repeat your overseas experience?

APPENDIX II

THE INTERVIEW

RULES OF ORIENTATION

- RULE I The interviewer should treat what is said in an interview as an item in a context.
- a. The interviewer should not pay exclusive attention to the manifest content of the intercourse.
 - b. The interviewer should not treat everything that is said as either fact or error.
 - c. The interviewer should not treat everything that is said as being on the same psychological level.
- RULE II The interviewer should listen not only to what a person wants to say but also to what he does not want to say or cannot say without help.
- RULE III The interviewer should treat the mental contexts described in the preceding rules as indices and seek through them the personal reference that is being revealed.
- RULE IV The interviewer should keep the personal reference in its social context.
- a. The interviewer should remember that the interview is itself a social situation and that therefore the social relation existing between the interviewer and the interviewee is in part determining what is said.
 - b. The interviewer should see to it that the speaker's sentiments do not act on his own. Don't let the interview become a battle of opposing sentiments.
- RULE V The interviewer should talk or ask questions only under certain conditions.
- a. To help the person talk--the main objective of the interview is to get the speaker to talk freely and frankly about himself and his environment, and there are a number of stock phrases that can be used for this purpose, such as, "isn't that curious?", "For example?", "Why?", and "Tell me more about it."

- b. To relieve any fears or anxieties on the part of the speaker which may be affecting his relation to the interviewer.
- c. To praise the interviewee for the reporting of his thought and feelings accurately.
- d. To veer the discussion to some topic which has been omitted or neglected.
- e. To discuss implicit assumptions, if that is advisable. During an interview the interviewer frequently has occasion to note an assumption which underlies the conversation but which itself is not expressed.

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