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thesis entitled

WORKING WITHIN THE CONTRADICTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

MASTER OF SCIENCE	degree in	AGRICULTURE AND EXTENSION EDUCATION

Major Professor's Signature

MAY 7, 2003

Date

WORKING WITH THE CONTRADICTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: IMPROVISTATIONAL STRATEGIES OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Education and Communication Systems

2003

ABSTRACT

WORKING WITHIN THE CONTRADICTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

By

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The purpose of this research was to explore and describe how improvisation is used by Peace Corps Volunteers as a strategy for negotiating and renegotiating international development. Arce and Long's perspectives on modernity were used to situate how and why various local actors renegotiate development. Long's perspective on the social interfaces of development was used to conceptualize the complexities and place in which development is renegotiated and Stake's perspective on formative evaluation provided a visualization for how improvisation could occur by the simultaneous evaluation, planning and facilitation of emancipatory social change. This research was conducted using qualitative exploratory and rapid appraisal methodologies. Themes of context and improvisation emerged from the research and indicated that program implementers are able to renegotiate the contradictions inherent in development by using improvisation and that the use of improvisation was dependent upon the empowerment of the Peace Corps Volunteer.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Joe Levine, for his guidance, encouragement, help and support throughout the various stages of my research.

I would also like to sincerely thank Dr. Bill Derman for his ideas, encouragement and invaluable teachings and Dr. Murari Suvedi, my academic advisor, for his guidance and assistance in planning my degree.

My deepest gratitude and thanks also extends to those Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who gave me their time and thoughts. I would also like to thank the people from the Michigan State University Peace Corps Office for their guidance and suggestions for the direction of my research.

Lastly I would like to thank my mother and father, Linda and Robert Bartholomew, and my sister, Audry Bartholomew, for their love, constructive suggestions, persistence and presence in my life. A special thanks is also extended to my friends and coworkers, especially Ernesto Restaino and Michael Woods, for their constant support and encouragement.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

> "In the village where I was, they had been there for hundreds and hundreds of years, but there was a German beef producer who was in cahoots with the president of the country who had been given much land up near our village to graze cattle. And he wanted more land and the president told him, "go ahead." So he just started taking all of the land that was in my village. And then he had the support of army troops to come in and displace people and put up barricades and they couldn't get to their fields anymore. So I don't even know if my village is there anymore. That's the really sad thing. They think that the Africans were animals, that was their mentality... And to the part where I got involved, and then I had troops harassing me to stop interfering, it was just a whole big giant fiasco."
>
> "So how did you handle it?"
>
> "I first went to my PC director and told him what was happening and he told me outright he could not get involved in any of this, this was political... and that he could not have anything to do with this. So he discreetly handed me the name of this human rights firm whom I contacted and he couldn't do very much, it's a small country..."
>
> ~Colleen[1], Returned Peace Corps Volunteer

International development is purported to be a medium through which emancipatory social change can occur. The reality of development is, however, that social change is often not emancipatory; it often reinforces inequalities that exist via imperialism and neocolonialism. The narrative of the Peace Corps Volunteer begins to illuminate the complexity that is inherent in planning for any type of emancipatory social change though an international community development effort. The realities of development, including historical intersections of colonization, racism and violence, become most apparent during the implementation phases of development programs. This is where the program implementer, the Peace Corps Volunteer, is confronted with the multitude of different ideologies and meanings of development.

[1] All names in this research are pseudonyms. Corresponding descriptions can be found in Chapter 4.

Modernization ideologies underlying the discourse of hegemonic international developmental agencies are also found in international extension services, the United Nations (Escobar, 1995) and the Peace Corps (Latham, 2000). These ideologies have historically shaped development so that the realities of the intended beneficiaries are seen from a patriarchal and pedagogical lens, holding that modernization is/should be the "ideal toward which development is directed (Axinn and Axinn, 1997, p. 50-51)." And indeed these ideologies are currently projected as people, the intended beneficiaries of development, are labeled as "traditional" and their knowledges described as "backward". Rist (1997, p. 23) poses the question of why ideologies of modernization persist when international development efforts have failed:

> "It may well appear surprising that, fifty years after the international community officially set its sights on extending 'development' to the South, this has still not come to pass. If a politician makes too many demagogic promises, he ends up a failure in the eyes of his electorate. And if a researcher persists too long with experiments that show no result, he is eventually dismissed by his employer. But nothing of the kind happens in the field of 'development': promises are tirelessly repeated and experiments constantly reproduced. So why is it that each failure leads to another reprieve?"

Axinn and Axinn (1997, p. 81) also offer insight to the failures of development, noting that, "Legal systems, bureaucratic constraints, social norms and maldistribution of assets" are serious detriments to people obtaining political and economic power so that the roots for sustainable and emancipatory development to occur are often cut off by those who wield power over them. For example, such development processes that are aimed to foster economic growth often exploit the intended beneficiaries of development. This is specifically true for women, whose work is often unpaid, uncounted and/or undervalued (Sen and Grown 1987, Waring 1997, Wichterich 2000).

Sen and Grown (1987, p.3) offer us further insight into how to look at this question. In their discussion on women in development and economic processes they note specific hegemonies that exist. They assert that,

> "[f]undamental conflicts have arisen between women's economic well-being and wider development plans and processes. Such conflicts occur both because gender relations oppress women and because many long-term economic processes have been harmful – or a best indifferent – to the interests and needs of poor people in general."

Despite these criticisms and the incorporation of more "participatory" development in response to these criticisms, the same ideologies persist in development initiatives and processes, so that even participatory approaches to development have perpetuated hegemonies and ideologies of modernization (Cook and Kothari, 2001). With such considerations, Rist's question of why inappropriate models of development are perpetuated resurfaces and another question evolves: How do local actors challenge and reshape exploitative and oppressive development initiatives and processes to demand emancipatory social change?

Implications and Need for Research

Many different local actors situate and transform the development process so that development cannot be situated within overly simplistic ideologies of modernization and economic growth. It is in part due to processes of exploitation and neocolonialism stemming from development initiatives, as well as hegemonies that exist within nation-states and communities, that the Peace Corps Volunteer may choose to renegotiate her or his role in development and consequently, the terms of development. The act of strategically renegotiating development by program implementers in the social interfaces of development is an act of improvisation. Various anthropologists and sociologists have

addressed the strategic negotiation and re-negotiation of international development due to the inherent contradictions between its theory and practice. Long (1989) explores conceptualizations of social interface discussing the encounters, meanings and negotiations of various social actors in development. De Haan and Long (1997) present issues of contested realities and rural images in international development. Abrams and Waldren (1998) have discussed the encounters between local development and conflicts of interest between local social groups and developers. Arce and Long (1999) have redefined modernity in relation to how it is actively shaped and experienced by local actors in development. Such research has purposively digressed from dichotomies of the "developed" vs. the "developing", in academic discourse, focusing on the positionality[2] of local actors and their reactions to development.

Despite the recognition of how development is renegotiated in the above mentioned academic discourse, policy development and evaluation of international community development may not, and often do not, take into consideration what actually happens *between* policies and outcomes, specifically in reference to program implementation (Long, 1989). In response to this Long (1989, p. 3) argues that

> "[w]e need to develop a more adequate analytical approach to understanding the relationships between policy, implementation and outcomes... Clearly, as recent research and practice demonstrates, this separation of 'policy', 'implementation', and 'outcomes' is a gross simplification of a much more complicated set of processes which involves the continuous reinterpretation or transformation of policy, both at the point of manufacture and at the 'frontline' by those responsible for its implementation..."

[2] Positionality is referred to as the relative place of the individual in relation to her or his identity (including gender, socio-economic and religious background, ethnicity, and/or other attributes) that affects how an individual and those who perceive the individual act and react to each other. Positionality of the intended beneficiaries as well as program implementer can be exceedingly relevant to how international development can occur (Cornwall, 1998).

With this assumption in mind, it is logical to refocus part of the current research on the renegotiation of development toward the experiences of program implementers in development. Program implementers are directly positioned in the social interfaces of development where they witness the renegotiations of development by the intended beneficiaries.

It is due to their positioning within the social interfaces of development that the program implementers are, in part, also able to renegotiate the terms and the outcomes of development programs themselves. By researching the experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers in program implementation and improvisation, we can begin to understand the program implementer's role as one of the local actors in development, specifically the potential for this role to be transformed.

Purpose and Research Questions

This research is intended to refocus part of the current research on program implementation toward the experiences of the program implementers in renegotiating development. More specifically the purpose of this research is to explore and describe how Peace Corps Volunteers may renegotiate the terms of development by using improvisation.

The following research questions were developed to explore and describe the processes of improvisation:

1. What are some of the improvisational strategies used by Peace Corps Volunteers?

2. On what basis are imrovisational descisions made? Why is improvisation needed? What kinds of strategies are associated with which contexts? Where are the improvisations located?

3. How are different strategies of improvisation used by Peace Corps Volunteers?

Rationale and Educational Importance

Interviewing Peace Corps Volunteers as the subjects for this research is appropriate due to their temporal and physical proximities to the social interfaces of development: Peace Corps Volunteers live in their communities for two years or more. Peace Corps Volunteers are involved in a range of development efforts including extension efforts in agricultural modernization, cooperative development to HIV education and prevention. They are linked to various funding agencies such as USAID, the World Bank and the United Nations and have worked in 135 countries worldwide (Peace Corps Organization, 2002).

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers residing in Mid-Michigan were interviewed due to their connection to Michigan State University and ease of contact. Michigan State University is one of the leading recruiters of Peace Corps Volunteers, having recruited approximately 1,876 Peace Corps Volunteers who have served in 134 of the 135 different countries in which the Peace Corps has worked (Peace Corps Organization, 2002).

This research adds to the existing literature on program renegotiation by concentrating on the experiences of the program implementers in development. It specifically addresses improvisation as a phenomenon of development in relation to social interface and modernity. The recognition of the phenomenon of improvisation and the understanding of its processes in international development may lead to the development of more appropriate and more emancipatory and democratic development programs. Lastly, this research has provided the participants of this research, the returned

Peace Corps Volunteers, an opportunity to reflect upon and share their experiences and can provide new volunteers with strategies for renegotiating development.

Definition of Terms

Antecedents - The contexts and environment of the intended beneficiaries, including their socio-cultural beliefs, positionality in economic, political and hierarchal systems, and the physical condition and accessibility of the environment and its resources around them. According to Stake (1972) any condition existing prior to teaching and learning, which may relate to outcomes.

Counterpart - A local co-worker and assistant to the Peace Corps Volunteer who helps in the development and maintenance of development programs.

Hegemonies – Systems of dominance that are rooted in specific histories that include processes of violence, colonization, oppression and control. Hegemonies can exist between nations (i.e. through processes of neocolonialism and globalization), between nations and communities, between communities or within communities (i.e. through intra-community hierarchies).

Improvisation - A creative and renegotiative strategy developed by the program implementer, where she or he chooses to re-negotiate at least a part of a development program or context to better accommodate the needs of the intended beneficiaries and the contradictions inherent in development.

Intended beneficiaries - As defined by Axinn and Axinn (1997) those people of "the third world", the "South", etc...who are in the process of developing. Also those people who are considered to be in need of "development" or who have determined such a need for themselves.

International community development - According to Rist (1997, p.24), "a belief and a series of practices which form a single whole in spite of contradictions between them." More specifically: the contradictory process by which groups of people either democratically decide for themselves their own future/development or have the decisions made for them, whether they be within and/or outside of the community.

Modernities – According to Arce and Long (2000, p. 1), "how ideas and practices of modernity are appropriated and re-embedded in locally-situated practices." Specific to this research the notion of modernities is used to underline and stress how local actors, including Peace Corps Volunteers, renegotiate the terms of development. This negotiation leads to the contestation of development via manipulation of systems, counter-tendencies, and hybridity.

Peace Corps Volunteers – Individuals who have volunteered their services with the Peace Corps organization who live with and work for two years for the specific communities in which they are placed. For the purposes of this research, Peace Corps Volunteers are considered "local actors" in development due to their proximity to the intended beneficiaries of development as well as the amount of time spent with their intended beneficiaries.

Pedagogy – The art and science of teaching children. Specific to this research, when the intended beneficiaries of development are viewed and treated as incapable and child-like and are consequently refused the right to define their own development processes and/or plans.

Program Implementation – The implementation of programs designed by a development organization for the intended beneficiaries of development through an intermediate party. Specific to this research: This notion may be and is often transcended by Peace Corps Volunteers as they not only act as program implementers but also as program planners and program evaluators to renegotiate the terms of development.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers – Individuals who have previously volunteered their services through the Peace Corps organization residing within the United States (Ali, 1998).

Social interface -According to Norman Long (1989, p. 3), "the critical points at which not only is policy applied but at which it is 'transformed' through acquiring social meanings that were not set out in the original policy statements."

Transactions - Actions of and between the intended beneficiaries and the program implementer(s) that occur during program implementation. The transactions are where the social interfaces of development are made apparent and where improvisation takes place.

Chapter 2. Conceptual Framework

The Researcher's Conceptualization for the Research

Prior to the initial stages of the development of this research I had taken various courses in theories of socio-cultural change, andragogical perspectives of adult learning and international development and sustainability. I had also had the opportunity to live in Nepal for five months, studying and conducting the beginning stages of previous research. With my classes and my experience in Nepal I became very interested in learning about what people can do to change what I view as the imperialistic and neocolonialist processes of international development, specifically how it has been historically practiced and how it is still largely perpetuated. Initially I believed that most Peace Corps Volunteers acted as mediums of cultural imperialism and modernization, going into countries with notions of changing the world through extending American knowledge to the "poor," the "ignorant" and the "developing." I was initially reluctant to interview them due to this. In retrospect, and in part apology, my perspective of Peace Corps Volunteers that I interviewed proved to be incredibly shortsighted. During the course of this research I found that many of them actively opposed ideologies of modernization and pedagogy, and often chose to completely disregard specific demands or expectations from their organizations or others that were not in line with what their communities wanted.

From the beginning of the research when I consulted various Returned Peace Corps Volunteers I found that they had to be separated a bit from the Peace Corps

Organization itself, as each volunteer had her or his own agency[3] in the development process. This leads to one basic assumption of this research: that Peace Corps Volunteers have their own agency and like local actors of development, have locally-situated discourses and counter-tendencies. They are able to change international development to better suit the intended beneficiaries. What I also found during this research was an incredible amount of complexity behind the contexts and acts of improvisation that I did not and could not anticipate to its full extent.

To implicate a theoretical "model" as such behind the act of improvisation is quite a paradox. Improvisation is a creative and dynamic act that is dependent upon different contexts as well as each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. Improvisation is an action that is reactive and therefore cannot necessarily be anticipated. With this consideration, it can be seen as antithetical to place such an act as improvisation into a set of rules or a model to describe the processes behind it. For the purposes of this research, the "theory" behind this research should be viewed as anti-theory, or better, as perspectives that have shaped this research. Though useful to begin a discussion or to provide a basis in which to conceptualize a phenomenon, theory is very much limited in that it can only represent a small part of human experiences, specifically when dealing with human behaviors and reactions to development. And all theories are situated according to the context of the creator or author of the theory, this research not being excluded. According to Peet (1999, p. 2), "[t]heories of development reach deep into culture and metaphilosophy for explanatory and persuasive power, while the end products of such deep thinking,... are political tools with mass appeal." To try to confine human behavior into a solid theory is

[3] Agency in this sense is used to indicate the Peace Corps Volunteers, unlike the Peace Corps as an organization, have individualistic thoughts and decisions.

and has been used as a political tool in modernization and development. This research attempts not to perpetuate simplistic notions of development and the results and analysis that are presented should be viewed within each narrative and according to complexities that are inherent in development and social change.

With this disclaimer in mind, the purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with the context of this research and researcher's frame of mind. Improvisation has not been directly addressed as a phenomenon used by program implementers in international community development. Perspectives on modernities, social interface and formative evaluation support and lead to such discussion. These perspectives also offer a supportive framework on which to build further perspectives of the position of program implementers in facilitating emancipatory social change.

A Critical Examination of the Peace Corps

Latham (2000, p. 112) discusses the modernization ideology underlying the mission of the Peace Corps. In his discussion he asserts that,

> "The Peace Corps defined the United States as an exceptional nation, a country ready to help the "emerging" world overcome challenges that Americans had long faced before. The Peace Corps characterized the volunteers as embodiments of a national capacity to catalyze "development" efforts, and it encouraged Americans to imagine themselves as apart of a uniquely empathetic, superior national community."

The Peace Corps mission (Peace Corps Organization, 2002) is to "promote world peace and friendship" and it attempts to realize its mission through:

- helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women;
- promoting understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served; and by

- promoting American understanding of other peoples.

A critical examination of the Peace Corps Mission reveals the modernization ideologies and imperialism embedded within these objectives and within the Peace Corps itself. For instance, the objective of "helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women" implies not only that "developing" countries do not have adequately trained men and women, but that "developing" countries also have an inherent need for outside intervention. According to Escobar (1995, p. 41), "[d]evelopment proceeded by creating "abnormalities" (such as the 'illiterate,' the 'underdeveloped,' the 'malnourished,' 'small farmers,' or 'landless peasants'), which it would later treat and reform.[4]" And indeed the Peace Corps is guilty of this. Latham (2000, p. 116) notes that the Peace Corps Volunteer was conceptualized to bring technical knowledge and problem solving experience that developing nations simply did not have- that the Peace Corps Volunteers should come from "modern" societies because they possessed insight and relevant experience that those from "traditional" societies did not.

By "promoting understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served," the Peace Corps can be used as a medium through which cultural imperialism is projected. Latham (2000, p. 126) notes that Peace Corps was to prepare developing nations for modernization by penetrating individual and community psyches-that Peace Corps Volunteers were, "[m]odels for emulation," representing, "a society that was

[4] Although this research has been situated according to Escobar's critique of the discourse of development and its international influence toward modernization, it is important to note that this research is not situated according to Escobar's dualistic representations of the active "oppressors" (developed nations) vs. the victimized "oppressed" (developing nations).

radically different from the one that they assisted," carrying "a culture that would 'demonstrate' the power of purposeful, planned action."

Lastly by, "promoting American understanding of other peoples" the Peace Corps projected the image of the "others," the intended beneficiaries, as traditional, passive and malleable peasants (Latham, 2000). The positioning of the intended beneficiaries of development as the "other" also serves to reiterate notions of racism that have been inherent in development, such as those that separate the "developed" and the "first world" from the "developing" and the "third world" despite the existence of third worlds in first worlds and vice-versa.

And this modernization ideology continues within the Peace Corps. Though the Peace Corps Organization emphasizes that they place volunteers with nations that request them, Waldorf (2001) has noted that nations are often not given a "choice" as Peace Corps Volunteers are often required under conditions imposed by the specific aid agencies or to gain the consideration of an existing funding proposal. This was also indicated during one of the pilot interviews. The imperialism behind the Peace Corps is apparent in this system, as nations may be coerced into accepting volunteers as part of their aid packages.

Waldorf (2001) also criticizes the Peace Corps for the cultural inappropriateness of some of its programs with her observation that programs the Peace Corps Volunteers are sent to implement or choose to implement may not be congruent with the needs and/or contexts of the intended beneficiaries, specifically noting instances where AIDS education programs enabled by Peace Corps volunteers in Malawi were simply not effective as they failed to realize the cultural and social implications of being tested for

HIV. With this, Waldorf argues that due to the shame felt by those who were seen at HIV clinics (as the people visiting them were assumed to have been there due to an HIV positive status) such efforts frequently solicited volunteers, but very few locals.

Searles (1997, p. 206) notes that fundamental questions regarding the Peace Corps experience and effectiveness remain unanswered partially due to the tendencies to analyze experiences so that earlier "wisdom" of bureaucratic decisions is confirmed:

> "Too few of the many lessons that can be learned from the Peace Corps experience have in fact been learned. There has been only a modest effort to examine the total history and draw from it new insights into, for example, what motivates people to do good, how development occurs in the Third World, and what lasting impact the organization has had on its members and their country"

Modernization ideologies of the Peace Corps serve not only to reconfirm bureaucratic "wisdom" but they may also serve to perpetuate notions of the intended beneficiaries as incapable of deciding the course for their own development, which in turn leads directly to the development of inappropriate programs.

Peace Corps Volunteers, Agency and Improvisation in Development

It is important to note the dissimilarities that may exist between the Peace Corps Organization and the Peace Corps Volunteers: as previously noted, Peace Corps Volunteers have the agency to renegotiate inappropriate program plans for development despite the requirements and association with their funding agencies. Latham (2000, p. 132) notes that by, "realizing that complex local cultures were neither easily understood nor readily malleable, many volunteers ultimately discarded grand social engineering in favor of specific work using whatever concrete, practical skills they could acquire..." and

that, "many volunteers eventually discovered that they could be effective only by rejecting the community development approach altogether."

This purposeful rejection of the community development approach and modernization varies according to context. Tidwell (1990), for example, discusses his experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer working in Kalambayi, Zaire under the post-independent colonial system of forced cotton cultivation imposed by Belgium's cotton industry. Several key contexts are described in Tidwell's experience including:

- His identification with his community;
- The Peace Corps apolitical stance on development; and
- Colonialist pressures and national hegemonies that hindered the ability of his community to define the course of their own development.

Due to the contexts in which he had to work, Tidwell chose to act as an individual agent by becoming a political advocate and activist. He improvised by disseminating strategies discovered by other villagers and in doing so he helped them to subvert the colonialist system and renegotiate the terms of development. By disseminating strategies discovered by other villagers, he was able to remain "apolitical" as required by the Peace Corps but was also able to become a medium and agent through which emancipatory social change could occur.

Locating the Effects of Modernity on Improvisation

Hegemonic notions of modernization indicate that there is a divide between the tradition and the modern, and that progress is achieved through the modern via economic growth, globalization, industrialization, etc. Along with this conceptualization of what is "modern" come conceptualizations of what is "tradition." The intended beneficiaries of

development, rooted in "tradition," are assumed to be "undereducated," "backward" and "poor" in development discourse (Escobar, 1995). They are often viewed and treated as incapable children with incomplete knowledge about what is good for them, thus rationalizing the 'salvation' of the Third World by the First World (Borlaug and Shiva, 1997). Fairhead (2000, p. 101) has noted that that "in 'development,' bureaucratic stewardship, which claims objective 'rationality' in resource management, gains rights to usurp personal control, and to suspend it until people in social action themselves become 'rational'-in other words, indefinitely," realizing the pedagogical and imperialistic nature of conceptualizing development in modernization. These conceptualizations of the modern are not applicable to the realities of development as they are mere images, or representations based upon imperialism through modernization (Haan and Long 1997).

Arce and Long (2000, p. 2) note the difference between the modernization, which is inclusive of policies implemented by national and international "cosmopolitan administrative and technological elites" in development, and modernity. According to Arce and Long (2000, p. 1), the concept of modernities revolves around an assemblage of complex social and discursive practices in which the modern is constantly re-embedded in the tradition. The implications from their work include the following:

- **The modern is itself rooted in tradition and cannot be meaningfully taken out of its "traditional" context.** For example, the "modern" production of coca in the El Chapare region of Bolivia is situated not only in the consumption patterns in the United States, England and elsewhere but also in the Bolivian socio-cultural construction of coca and economic opportunity. Western development agencies and law failed to view coca production according to its traditional and modern contexts. This lead to the criminalization of coca and the consequent displacement of Bolivian farmers, which in turn lead to the contestation and manipulation of development programs by the farmers. (Arce and Long, 2000, p.161)

- **The intended beneficiaries of development are hardly passive recipients of development. The intended beneficiaries of development actively shape development agendas to suit their lives.** Cleaver (2001, pp. 51-52) has noted how women irrigators in Nepal chose not to participate in an irrigational development project because they would be bound to rules of culture that did not favor them. Likewise Cleaver (2001, p. 50) discusses some manipulations of development projects by women who were securing their needs, each of these manipulations determined by resources available to the women, their respective social and hierarchal positions and amount of labor that each woman had to complete to secure the necessary resources for her family.

- **The reshaping of modernity is takes place via multiple and constantly proliferating modernities, such as counter-tendencies, violence, hybridity and locally situated discourses.** Jeganathan (2000, p. 112-126) describes the manipulation of ethnicity in the anticipation of violence by the nation-state of Sri Lanka. In this he found that, "'Tamilness' is produced in the shadow of violence," noting that individuals might choose to use and manipulate their ethnicity to avoid violence. Jeganathan also notes an instance where violence was anticipated, even desired by a local youth, so that he might be able to gain refugee status in the West. Fisher and Arce (2000, p. 94-95) discuss the conflicts between local and development discourses about sleeping sickness in Tanganyika. In this, they discuss how development agencies used the role of the microscope to legitimize policy implementation and to resettle local populations. They also describe resulting local contestation to this medicalized form of colonialism.

- **These multiple modernities explain the 'distorted' or 'divergent' patterns observed in development that are often referred to as failures (Arce and Long 2000).** Fairhead and Leach (1996) have researched anthropomorphic effects on land in Kissidougou. Their results indicated that the "deforestation" that was occurring was not deforestation, but rather a justification by the state to take resource control away from local inhabitants. Talle discusses issues of development and modernity with her research on female bar workers in Tanzania. Talle (1998, p. 52) discusses public associations of prostitution and female bar workers noting that, "in colonial, as well as present-day Africa, women themselves have initiated their detachment from collective entities and in the process they have carved out alternative self-images and identities articulating with specific and localized modernities that have secured their economic independence." This situation of economic independence is a modernity in which the women were able to empower themselves through the use of their bodies and identities.

Arce and Long's perspectives of modernity and development are important in how to situate the process of program implementation as they, "re-introduce the heterogeneity of belief and opinion within negotiations and struggles over development, and bring us to a new analytical strength (Abram 1998, p.14)." Such perspective draws us away from the notion that development programs are merely implemented, but rather that development programs are contested, redefined, reworked and reinterpreted by the various local actors involved through modernity. There are specifically two implications from this discussion of modernity that form a base for this research: These perspectives on modernity indicate that program implementers must respond to various modernities that cannot necessarily be planned for, implicating the need for and use of improvisation at the interfaces of development; and that program implementers may form their own modernities, counter-tendencies and discourses in the process of responding to various modernities created by the intended beneficiaries

Using Social Interface to Conceptualize and Explore Processes of Improvisation

The modernities described above exist and are created in what Long has referred to as the social interfaces of development. Long (1989, p. 3) describes these social interfaces as: "the critical points at which not only is policy applied but at which it is 'transformed' through acquiring social meanings that were not set out in the original policy statements." This transformation of policy is relevant as it accounts for where local agency and practice in development is situated. Situating this research according to the social interfaces of development is also critical as it forces us to focus on the

phenomenon of improvisation according to the inherent complexity of contexts and renegotiations in international development. Long (1999, p. 1) asserts that,

> "[s]ocial interface situations are more complex and multiple in nature, containing within them many different interests, relationships and modes of rationality and power. While the analysis focuses on points of confrontation and social difference, it must situate these within broader institutional and knowledge/power domains."

Long (1999, p. 1) indicates that social interface analysis focuses on "the rules, sanctions, procedures and proven practices for handling conflictive interests and perceptions." Improvisation in international development is a means to develop procedures and practices for handling such conflictive interests and perceptions between and among the various actors in development. Improvisation is reflective of and dependent upon the political and socio-cultural rules and sanctions that the Peace Corps Volunteer has to work within.

In his discussion on the social interfaces of development, de Vries (1997, p. 94) discusses ideologies of intervention involved in program implementation, noting that program implementers, "shape, adapt and transform particular administrative models with a view to making them fit their own socio-institutional activities and commitments," and notes the exploitative nature of ideologies of intervention located in many administrative models of development (1997, p. 89). Ideologies of intervention can be found in program planning, implementation and evaluation, and serve to illustrate various obligations and personal ethics of program planners, implementers and evaluators. With this in mind, a Peace Corps Volunteer can be a medium through which the "need for intervention" via pedagogical and imperialistic notions of development is perpetuated.

However, part of reintroducing "the heterogeneity of belief and opinion with negotiations and struggles over development" previously discussed is not only to orient research efforts toward the local actors in development, but to also orient research efforts toward focusing on all of the local actors involved. Research[5] has concentrated upon how the intended beneficiaries have as local actors create, challenge, negotiate and renegotiate development however, this research has not fully considered the possibility of program implementers as local actors who also create, challenge, negotiate and renegotiate hegemonies that exist in development.

When looking at the obligations and personal ethics of the program implementer it is necessary to look at other forms of ideologies and other concepts of intervention. Brockett and Hiemstra (1998, p. 131) have indicated that, "program planning is the implementation of values. Basic decisions about who should be served by programs and the way in which clients are served reflect a set of philosophical assumptions." Brockett and Hiemstra also note that obligations of the program implementer may extend in many, and often dualistic directions as a result of conflicting obligations of the program implementer to her/his intended beneficiaries, the institution, the society, oneself and to the profession.

With Brockett and Hiemstra's discussion on philosophical values and conflicting obligations that exist during program implementation, we can reverse and use de Vrie's concept of ideologies of intervention to construct a different ideology regarding the Peace Corps Volunteer's potential role in international development: Peace Corps Volunteers may choose to intervene *against* the pedagogical and imperialistic tendencies of development. Viewed in this way, the Peace Corps Volunteer's program implementation

[5] See Introduction, p. 4.

can be a process of shaping, adapting and transforming pedagogical ideologies of intervention to ideologies of emancipation and empowerment.

The Transformation of Program Planning, Program Implementation and Formative Evaluation

Program planning, implementation and evaluation are also often viewed as separate processes in international community development, however this method of development is limited it is not able to accommodate the multiple modernities that exist in the social interfaces of development. Long (1989, p. 3) states that:

> "The tendency in much existing work is to conceptualize the relationship between policy objectives, the means of implementation and the outcomes as essentially linear in nature, implying a kind of step-by-step deterministic process whereby a policy is formulated, implemented and then certain results follow. Clearly, as recent research and practice demonstrates, this separation of 'policy', 'implementation' and 'outcomes' is a gross simplification of a much more complicated set of processes which involves the continuous reinterpretation or transformation of policy, both at the point of manufacture and at the 'frontline' by those responsible for its implementation. Furthermore, 'outcomes' often result from factors which cannot be directly linked to the development programme itself."

Pearce (1998, p. 266-267) has noted that most program planners find that conducting a needs assessment prior to program planning to be unnecessary. With such a perspective development initiatives are apt to perpetuate inappropriate development agendas as the actual needs of the intended beneficiaries are not taken into account-they are assumed. By beginning with inappropriate plans for development that are not reflective of the needs and/or wants from the intended beneficiaries, the program implementers have two different choices:

1. To continue to implement the program as it has been prescribed. Not only does this perpetuate various hegemonies and contradictions of development, but also this program is apt to not serve the intended beneficiaries, perhaps even causing them more harm.

2. To formatively evaluate the existing incongruencies and to improvise the program plans to better suit the needs of the intended beneficiaries. In this way, the role of the program implementer is transformed from implementation to simultaneous implementation, evaluation and planning.

Stake's (1972) perspective of program evaluation is appropriate and conducive to begin to visualize how improvisation may occur during program implementation in international community development according to the second choice presented above. In his discussion of formative evaluation, Stake sets up two columns of boxes (see figure 2.1), one column being the intended antecedents, transactions and outcomes of development programs. The intended antecedents include notions of the intended beneficiaries of development and their needs. The intended transactions include the predictions of how the program will be implemented. The intended outcomes occur in relation to the logical contingency from the intended antecedents and the intended transactions. However, situating development according to this type of linearity is extremely limited. Stake (1972, p. 95) asserts that very rarely are the intended antecedents, transactions and outcomes congruent with the observed.

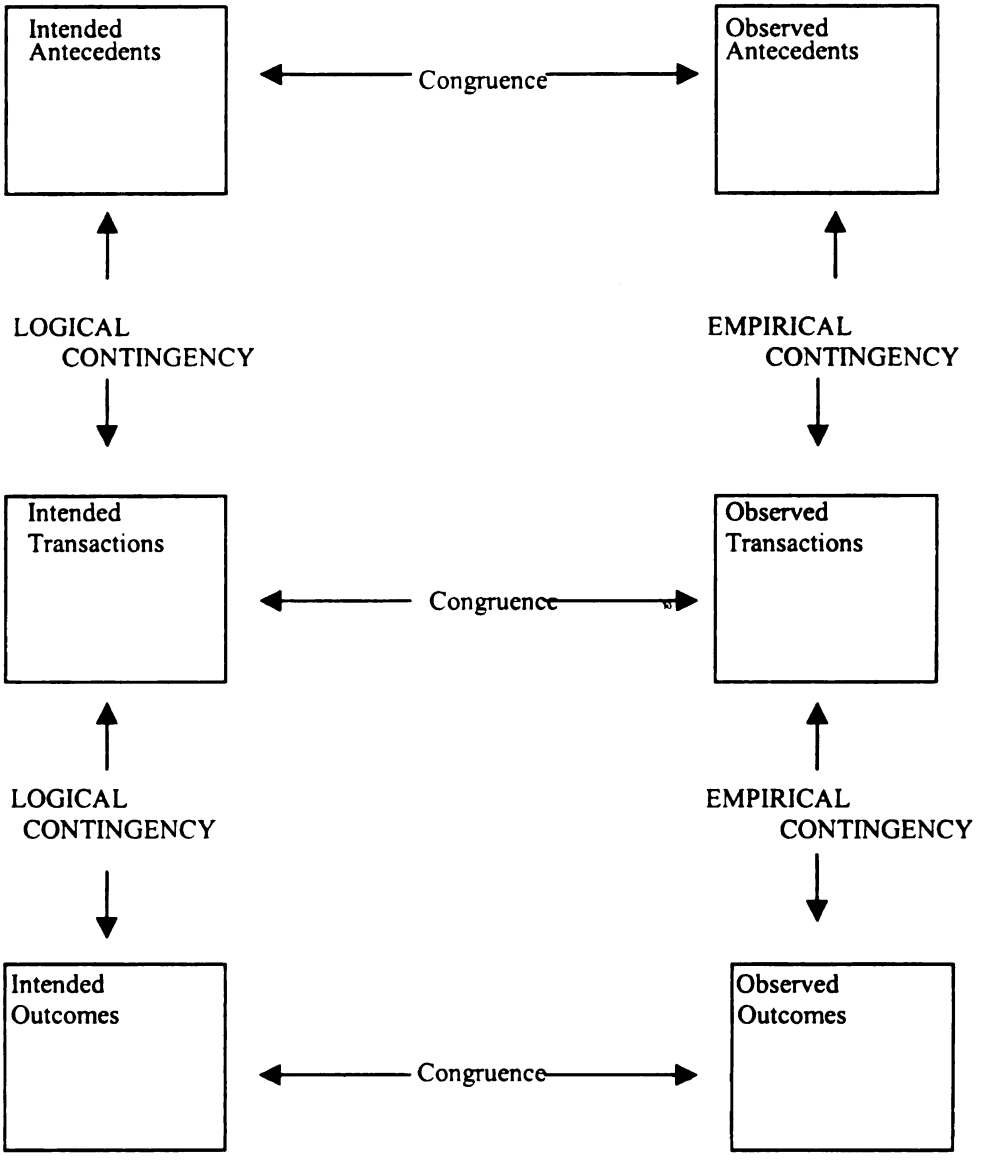
In response to this, Stake indicates that a second column is needed that includes the observed antecedents, the observed transactions and the observed outcomes. It is in this observed column that the realization that expectations are not synonymous with outcomes occurs and the potential for simultaneous program planning, implementation and evaluation resides: It is between the intended and observed antecedents, transactions and outcomes that program implementers may constantly re-evaluate and renegotiate the plans of the program to better suit the intended beneficiaries. For example, if a program implementer does not expect to be placed in an area of political intra-community conflict

according to the intended antecedents of development, she or he must evaluate the difference between the intended and observed antecedents. With this evaluation the program implementer is then able to redefine the program plans, adjusting them to the observed antecedents of her intended beneficiaries before she will be able to facilitate any type of beneficial outcomes for her or his community.

Stake's perspective on formative evaluation is a continuous process where evaluation, program planning, and program implementation constantly occur. The Peace Corps Volunteer may have to reconsider the program plans and antecedents and improvise many times in order to better suit the intended beneficiaries.

We can return to Tidwell's experience to further illustrate this concept. Tidwell evaluated his role as a Peace Corps Volunteer and as a member of the community in relation to the development that was occurring. Upon this evaluation he renegotiated his role to further accommodate the realities of the villagers, and had to re-plan the development program that he was sent to implement. With the renegotiation of his respective roles in development, Tidwell improvised in assisting his community while remaining "apolitical." Upon one of the villagers being discovered and arrested for stealing cottonseeds, Tidwell had to once again re-evaluate and renegotiate his role in development, as the potential for getting a large majority of the villagers fined and arrested for such subversive activities that he actively promoted and extended became a reality. With this he had to formulate another plan to accommodate the reality of the villagers whom he was working with as well as to protect himself. (Tidwell, 1990:181-196)

Figure 3.1. Stake's Model
for Program Evaluation



Stake (1972, p. 96) states that the intended and observed antecedents are relatively static and that the observed transactions are dynamic. However, Tidwell's experience in international development shows that the antecedents and outcomes of development can

be quite dynamic in nature. For example, the antecedents of development changed when one of the villagers was arrested, creating the need for Tidwell to radically renegotiate his already negotiated terms of development.

In summary, the Peace Corps and the Peace Corps Volunteers exist in different spaces in development, where the Peace Corps Volunteer has the agency and is in the position to help facilitate emancipatory social change. Looking at the processes and ideologies behind modernization and exploitation allows us to conceptualize how and why the intended beneficiaries of development and Peace Corps Volunteers may choose to renegotiate development. Situating this research according to the social interfaces of development brings out the complexity of the interactions between development agencies, program implementers and the intended beneficiaries of development. Lastly, Stake's perspective on formative evaluation helps us to begin to visualize how a program implementer is able to improvise by simultaneously evaluating, planning and facilitating emancipatory social change. All of these perspectives provide a framework that supports and gives context to the phenomenon of improvisation in international community development.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This study has been built around the following questions to analyze the role of improvisation in international development, the context in which such creative strategies are used and the process by which they occur:

1. What are some of the improvisational strategies used by Peace Corps Volunteers?

2. On what basis are improvisational descisions made? Why is improvisation needed? What kinds of strategeis are associated with which contexts? Where are the improivsations located?

3. How are different strategies of improvisation used by Peace Corps Volunteers?

Research Design

The methodologies of this research are based upon explorative qualitative inquiry to explore how Peace Corps Volunteers improvise in international development. Exploratory qualitative inquiry has provided this research with "an orientation or familiarization with the topic under study and [it] serves to enlighten the researcher about salient issues, helps [to] focus future research on important variables, and generates hypotheses to be tested (Henry, 1998:117)."

This research was developed using concepts of social interface (Long, 1999) to explore and describe processes of improvisation specifically, how improvisation is linked to different and often conflictive contexts of development. It is due to this complexity that improvisation is quite unpredictable, and consequently unamenable, at least in its beginning conceptualizations, to any type of quantitative research design.

According to Reinharz, (1992, p. 185) the emancipation of the participants of research from being treated as mere objects of study depends on using interviews in which researchers participate interactively, multiple interviews, group interviews, and the negotiation of the interpretations of the participants. This perspective has influenced the design of this research so that the researcher has been able to form working relationships with the participants of this research that have facilitated the reflection, sharing and questioning of the participant's experiences. The researcher has been able to explore the depth and processes involved in the strategic renegotiation of development according to Reinharz's perspective with a qualitative research design. The qualitative research design has allowed the participants of this research to have time to reflect on their own experiences as program implementers of international community development programs and to personally interact with the researcher. This interaction is viewed as necessary to forming a working relationship between the participant and the researcher and has allowed the researcher to clarify questions and responses as necessary. Not only does this contribute to the validity of this research; more importantly, it is a more ethical approach toward conceptualizing the dependent relationship of the researcher to her or his participants.

This research has combined both emic and etic perspectives on the realities that are represented. The deconstruction and reconstruction of narratives was primarily used to represent emic perspectives. According to Mattingly and Garro (2000, p. 1) the narrative "is a fundamental human way of giving meaning to experience. In both telling and interpreting experiences, narrative mediates between an inner world of thought-feeling and an outer world of observable actions and state of affairs" while Fetterman

(1997:476) notes that, "An emic perspective compels the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities." The conceptual framework and the researcher's own positionality have contributed contribute to forming a secondary, etic perspective.

This exploratory qualitative study used key informant interviews and a focus group according to basic tenets of rapid appraisal methodology that Kumar (1993) describes. Both pilot and research interviews were semi-structured and informal.

Instrument Development

The interview instrument consisted of a dilemma directed by a former Peace Corps volunteer and written by the researcher as well as a set of interview questions developed by the researcher and academic professionals. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers reviewed the dilemma and the interview questions during the pilot interviews. The dilemma was developed as a mnemonic device to induce the participants to reflect upon disconnections that the participants have experienced while implementing programs of international community development based upon their own position and the situation and context that they were placed in. The disconnection in the dilemma was represented by a situation where the implementation of a development project held specific contradictions between groups within a given community of intended beneficiaries, specifically regarding issues of gender and power, (see Appendix C. for dilemma).

Pilot Interviews

The pilot interviews were used to generate an understanding of how Peace Corps Volunteers conceptualize and interpret renegotiation, improvisation and innovation in

international development as well as to gauge what theories they may hold regarding such phenomena. Their responses served to form a collaborative and working definition of improvisation (Maxwell, 1998:79 and Chung, 2002) detailed in the conceptual framework. The pilot interviews were also used to test the final format of the interview instrument and to align the researchers own conceptualizations of improvisation with the participants. There were four participants in the pilot interviews, and they represented a purposeful critical sample as Henry describes (1998:105). Two were selected due to their association with the Peace Corps Office at Michigan State University and three were purposively selected due to their contact with various theories of development through a shared graduate-level course with the researcher.

The criteria for the pilot interviews were set to include former Peace Corps Volunteers residing within the mid-Michigan area who had completed their service with the Peace Corps within the last ten years. Before each interview began, the participants of the pilot test were informed that the researcher is specifically studying how international community development is renegotiated during the program implementation stages of development, (see Appendix A. for pilot test interview questions).

Population and Sample of Research Interviews

The participants of the research interviews consisted of a theory-based purposeful sample and a snowball sample of key informants who were contacted through correspondence with the Peace Corps office at Michigan State University and those who were interviewed for the pilot test. The criteria for the research was set to include former Peace Corps Volunteers currently residing within the mid-Michigan area who had

completed their service with the Peace Corps within the last twelve years. Twelve Returned Peace Corps Volunteers were interviewed for this research. Two of the twelve were dropped, as they did not fall within the selected criteria for time.

The sample was variable, in part, according to those who chose to contact the researcher to participate in this study. Women were represented more than men, with six women and four men being interviewed for this research. This is not surprising considering that women account for over fifty-five percent of the number of MSU-recruited Peace Corps Volunteers and trainees (Peace Corps Organization, 2002) currently serving and over sixty percent of the total number of Peace Corps Volunteers serving (Peace Corps Organization, 2002).

Participant Solicitation

Twenty letters were sent to various former Peace Corps Volunteers via Michigan State University's Peace Corps office. A mass e-mail with the letter attached was also sent through Michigan State University's Peace Corps office. The letter briefly described the research, the researcher and her background and invited former Peace Corps Volunteers to share their experiences in program implementation with the researcher. A low initial response rate was received (N=4) to the first solicitation. A second solicitation in the form of a personal e-mail was then sent out. Those who did not respond to the second solicitation were considered to have chosen not to participate and were left alone. There were not material or economic incentives used to solicit participants.

Data Collection

The dilemma was sent to the participant up to seven days before each interview. Participants were asked specific questions regarding the location, date and types of service with the Peace Corps before the discussion of the dilemma. During the discussion of the dilemma, each participant was asked to relate any experience that she or he may have had where she or he had to respond to a dilemma and how she or he resolved it. After the discussion of the dilemma, interview questions were asked regarding how the participants experienced the social interface of gender in relation to program implementation, (see Appendix A. for specific questions developed for the research interviews).

The final collection of the data for this research consisted of a focus group. One participant from the pilot interviews and two participants from the research interviews participated in the focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to invite participants to collectively discuss their own dilemmas and improvisations as well as to ask participants to assist in the interpretation and analysis of the data collected during the personal interviews. According to Montell (1999:44), "[g]roup interviews allow for a more egalitarian and less exploitative dynamic than other [interviewing] methods, and the interaction among participants produces a new and valuable kind of data." Morgan and Krueger (1993:16) also asserts that focus groups are appropriate for researching complex behavior and motivation, and that "[b]y comparing the different points of view that participants exchange during the interactions in focus groups, researchers can examine motivation with a degree of complexity that is typically not available with other methods." The data collected from the group interview have served to bring out the

nuances missed and unexplored during the personal interviews, (see Appendix B. for specific questions developed for the participants of the focus group).

Conditions of Data Collection

Participants had the option of participating with a telephone interview if a personal interview was not feasible. One participant chose a telephone interview. The focus group interview was held over dinner at the researcher's house. All research interviews and the focus group were recorded using an audio-recording device. Various conditions of data collection, including responses to and interactions with the researcher, were noted with each interview. The participants of the research and the pilot test were asked to choose a place to interview where they felt the most comfortable.

Data Analysis Theory

The data obtained were systematically analyzed using a modified grounded theory. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990:57) the purpose of grounded theory is to: "[p]rovide the grounding, build the density, and develop the sensitivity and integration needed to generate a rich, tightly woven, explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents."

Due to the complexity of improvisation that is caused by the relativity of experiences at the interfaces of international community development and positionality of the Peace Corps volunteer, one of two anticipated theories may have been generated from the initial analysis: that if the processes behind "how", "why" and "where" of improvisation contained basic similarities then improvisation would have been treated as

a definitive process through which the former Peace Corps Volunteers improvise with general and predictable strategies. It was found, however, that the processes behind the how, why and where of improvisation could not be coalesced into a basic theory of similarity at this stage of the research. It was also felt that the renegotiation and improvisation of international community development does not necessarily lend itself to theory. Due to this, improvisational strategy was explored and described according to various themes found in the research interviews. This is appropriate and can provide the grounding for additional research on improvisation in international development. This research builds "the density and develop the sensitivity and integration" to and of the phenomena of improvisation in international development.

Open and axial coding derived from grounded theory was used to begin the initial analysis of the experiences of former Peace Corps Volunteers in improvisation. This modified grounded theory was appropriate to explore current abstractions regarding the how, why and where of renegotiation and improvisation in international community development and to situate them in part of the reality in which they occur.

Data Analysis

The responses from the personal interviews were openly coded to systematically sort for commonalities and differences of the participant's responses, specifically in response to the Peace Corp's Volunteer's positionality and her or his allowance for deviation from the program plans. Open coding is the most appropriate for organizing the anticipated large amount of rich data by breaking it down into categories more amenable for examination, comparison, question, conceptualization and analysis. Each category

was labeled. Properties and dimensions as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990:69-72) were attributed to each category.

After data were initially categorized, the data were axially coded to examine potential connections between a category and the conditions that influenced it. Axial coding aids in contextualizing the data, which then aided in addressing the how and why of individual improvisational strategies used by the participants of this research. Open and axial coding was used to help sort the extremely rich data and to generate an initial data analysis that was then presented to the focus group.

Strauss and Corbin (1990:198-199) assert that memos and diagrams are necessary and assist one's movement "away from the data to abstract thinking, then in returning to the data to ground these abstractions in reality" while Maxwell (1998:90-91) suggests the use of memos to "stimulate and capture" one's ideas about her or his data. Memos were generated during the data collection and analysis to record and facilitate reflection of the researcher and the participants of the focus group's interview on the research process, methods and theory. Diagrams and analytic representations were developed to envision a simplified whole of the results and to organize the open and axial codes found from the research.

Reporting of Data

The data were initially reported to the participants of the research who chose to participate in the focus group. A final summary with all identifiable references removed was made available upon request to the participants of this research.

Limitations

Ethnic representation is a limitation as only Caucasian ethnicities are represented in the research. As elucidated in the interviews, the ethnicity of the program implementer is an exceedingly important context of program implementation in international development. See Chapter 4 for more discussion. There is also a limitation in the representation of different volunteers from different host countries. The host countries that are represented include Bolivia, Chad, Cameroon, Honduras, Lesotho, Mali, Paraguay, Poland and Togo.

Lastly there is a limitation on the focus group in that though all participants of the research and pilot interviews were invited to the focus group, only two of the research participants and one of the pilot participants participated.

Though this research is not generalizable beyond the participants and their experiences represented, it is transferable. The use of improvisation by program implementers within international community development programs can be researched using similar methodology.

Validity

Reactivity between the researcher and the participants was a potential limitation of this research. Researcher influence was been limited with the avoidance of leading prompts as well as by noting instances where the researcher or any of the participants believe or indicated that such influence may have inappropriately guided a response.

Reactivity between the dilemma and the participant of this research was a concern. To check for such reactivity, the degree of similarity of each response was compared to the dilemma. None of the dilemmas experienced by the participants were in direct alignment with the dilemma used and so reactivity between the dilemma and the participant was not found to be an issue.

The pilot interviews tested the final format for the interviews. The focus group was used to correct, collaboratively analyze and expand upon the data collected during the research interviews. The pilot test of the interview instrument and collaboration on the data analysis serve as member-checks in locating and analyzing discrepancies of the research that exist in the research instrument, the data collection and the initial and final data analyses.

Chapter 4. Results

Eleven Returned Peace Corps Volunteers were interviewed during the research and the focus group. Below is a brief profile of each volunteer including their approximate location of service and the projects with which they were involved during their service with the Peace Corps. Also included in each description is the volunteer's own conceptualization of improvisation in response to the question, "In the context of your experience in the Peace Corps, how do you define improvisation?" Exact locations and dates of service have been omitted and all names have been changed to help protect the confidentiality of each volunteer.

Amanda

Amanda served in Poland. She was sent to teach conversational English to students at a technical high school. She was also involved in teaching grammar, translating brochures to bring in foreign investment and overseeing U.N. model programs in high schools. Amanda asserted that improvisation isn't something for which one can necessarily prepare, that it is instinctual. With this, her conceptualization of improvisation was:

> "going with the flow... finding the best solution that everyone can live and work with."

Brie

Brie served in Lesotho, a country landlocked by South Africa. She was sent by the Peace Corps to serve as a primary resource teacher. Her job was to aid in improving the education system by training elementary teachers. Brie developed the following

secondary projects: HIV and AIDS education programs, an English club, establishing a library and beginning a MAPS project. Brie indicated that she had conceptualized improvisation in respect to the flexibility and that it entailed:

> "Having to clear your mind of expectations and to go with what you have available to you."

Colleen

Colleen served in Togo, West Africa. Colleen was sent to Togo to continue a program that a previous volunteer had worked on to help people build fishponds. Colleen described improvisation as:

> "Finding ways to make things work when the ways that you've been given are not working."

Daria

Daria served in Bolivia. Daria was sent to implement various technical assistance programs in forestry and soil conservation with one local organization. Daria also helped to implement various projects, involving housing improvement and water access with other local organizations and talked to six and seventh grade classrooms about environmental issues. Daria conceptualized improvisation as:

> "Coming up with activities to do when I don't have something else to do."

Evan

Evan served in Honduras in Central America. Evan's primary project was to help a state forestry school create an ecology curriculum. Evan conceptualized improvisation as:

> "Being sensitive to your environment and sensitive to the people and knowing when you have to change in order to address problems... I would consider improvisation as basically being sensitive to a situation, knowing when you need to change. If there is another way of doing it, being receptive to that."

Fiona

Fiona served in Lesotho. She was sent by the Peace Corps to work as a household food security advisor. Fiona also worked to secure water for her village, developed a girl's camp and developed various environmental and HIV education initiatives. Fiona described improvisation as:

> "taking what you have and trying to make something out of it, or you don't have to, it is really up to your own initiative."

Greg

Greg also served in Lesotho. Greg's primary project was in range management/rotational grazing. His secondary projects involved securing waterholes for one of his villages, co-creating a business market to help villagers sell their sheep, teaching English and planting trees. Greg described improvisation according to symbiotic functionalism:

> "Immersing yourself in the process of mutual adaptation. To wake up and the morning brings to you a whole set of things that you didn't expect and you adapt to. And so do the people around you, you're constantly kind of feeding off of the other person and adapting to that, and then they're adapting to you."

Hugh

Hugh served in Mali, West Africa. Hugh was sent to Mali to work in agriculture extension. His secondary project was in soil erosion control. Hugh indicated that he felt that improvisation meant to him:

"Making due with what you've got, as far as intelligence, as far as the opportunities given to you."

Ian

Ian worked in Paraguay, South America. Ian's primary project was to get cooperatives running as small businesses. Within this program he was involved accounting and administration education. Ian stressed that improvisation implied a necessity not to get caught in stagnation and that he thought of it as:

"A deviation from the original plans based on contextual reality."

Jael

Jael volunteered her time in Paraguay. Jael's primary project was to train elementary education teachers.

Kim

Kim began her service in Chad and was moved to the Cameroon when the Peace Corps relocated her due to political unrest in Chad. She developed her own primary projects while in Cameroon. She primarily worked on HIV education, but also worked teaching people about malaria and STDs. Kim conceptualized improvisation as:

"Making due with what you have, guessing as you go along. You can't read about all of the answers in the book, until you get into the situation and realize all of the underlying problems that are occurring..."

Themes of Context

It was found that improvisation was a reactive and/or subversive strategy that arises from specific and complex antecedents. It is due to the conceptualization of improvisation as a reactive process that the contextual realities behind improvisation must be addressed. The experiences of the Peace Corps Volunteers elaborate upon these contextual realities of development and serve to illustrate the context in which the Peace Corps Volunteer and/or any program implementer may face. These contexts indicated by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of this research include but are not limited to the following:

1. Bureaucratic Structures
2. Unrealistic or Inappropriate Expectations for Development
3. Community Hierarchy
4. Hegemonies and Histories of Colonization and Exploitation
5. Multiple Systems of Governance
6. Globalization
7. Gender
8. Ethnicity

Peace Corps Volunteers often have to improvise according to the demands of the Peace Corps as well as in response to the demands from the individual organization(s) that they may be sent to work with. What was found was that Returned Peace Corps Volunteers indicated they had to work within the bureaucracies of the Peace Corps and various funding organizations, inappropriate notions for development from the Peace Corps Organization and various funding organizations, and the insistence of political neutrality of the Peace Corps Organization.

Theme 1. Bureaucracy

Although bureaucracy was referenced when Returned Peace Corps Volunteers discussed the contexts in which they had to work, it was very specific and somewhat sporadic. Many Returned Peace Corps Volunteers instead indicated that they often had "complete flexibility" with the Peace Corps as an organization. Ian indicated that though he was surprised by the assignment of a specific project that he found the assignment to be more of a guideline:

> "It never even occurred to me that the Peace Corps would have 'this is what we're doing and you're assigned to this projects and this is what the project goals are.' But I think that quite honestly that the project goals are more of a guideline, and at least the way I felt, I felt that the Peace Corps always said, 'this is where we are right now, this is where we ultimately want to be in ten or fifteen years, we've developed these goals and these steps, get there'. As a guide, you figure out how to get there. If you don't want to use that guide, that's fine. You design what you want to do as long as you get to that point or as long as you keep us on that point so that the next volunteer after you can continue on, if it's a longer-term goal."

Other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers indicated that they did not have the same type of flexibility with which to work. The experiences of the Peace Corps volunteers who did experience frustrations with the Peace Corps as an Organization are worth discussion however, as they provide an essential context for how improvisation can occur.

Part of the bureaucracy of the Peace Corps that Returned Peace Corps Volunteers noted included having to quantify the projects that they worked on. Ian discussed how the quantification of projects could be misleading:

> "There is a tendency to say, 'well this volunteer is a great volunteer compared to this person'. But it is so different. The volunteer that finds five hundred thousand dollars for their site really isn't doing much, he or she was dropped into that situation, anyone could have done it. So the person who goes in and doesn't ever find a dime, and really doesn't have anything to quantify, but the people are there to meet in a group. He or she has done the same, at least in quality, perhaps more..."

Kim mentioned that she thought it was unreasonable to have to quantify social change with quarterly reports due to the time that it took to notice the effects of development and to build relationships necessary for development:

> "It is hard...development is slow. The volunteer gets there and in the first six months is really confused, 'what am I supposed to be doing,' 'what's going on,' 'how do I go about doing this,' 'who can I trust?' That was huge. It took me a long time to figure out whom I could trust and get to work with me, who was really interested..."

This expectation can lead to the development of projects that are intended to be counted as opposed to the development of projects intended to serve the communities. The Peace Corps Volunteer has to work with this system of quantification to serve the Peace Corps and/or her or his intended beneficiaries.

Brie indicated that she had a lot of frustrations with the Peace Corps as a government bureaucracy when trying to get some of her programs funded due to the rules and regulations that she had to follow:

> "It was really frustrating a lot of the time because we had these ridiculous rules and regulations and they have all sorts of stuff, its just a pain in the neck. A lot of the things that I would try to do would get kiboshed just because the Peace Corps was being a pain...You had all sorts of bureaucratic hoops to go through, both within the Peace Corps and within your country of service and I found that to be more of a problem than my community because my community was really excited about this one project that I wanted to do but the bureaucratic funding problem was what nixed it."

Some of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers also indicated that they experienced frustrations with the apolitical stance of the Peace Corps as an organization. A Peace Corps Volunteer, though a direct agent of social change, is not expected to become overtly political. Jael's experience in becoming politically involved in her community illustrates the possible repercussions that a Peace Corps Volunteer could face by becoming politically active:

> "At this point the director of my program and the volunteer coordinators were saying, 'you are in this way too deep politically, you are not supposed to cross the line and you're kind of tearing apart the community's trust with the principal... So I was in deep and I loved my community, but it would have been very awkward for the teachers to work with me, and to feel an alliance with me because if they had been on my side then they wouldn't be on hers and that, politically wasn't real wise.... My coordinator said, 'we need to move you to another village.' So that was about a year into my service, so then I went to another village."

Jael's experience provides essential context for the phenomenon of improvisation - there are rules in which the Peace Corps Volunteer is supposed to work, and that there are potential consequences for political action.

Colleen also discussed her experience with the Peace Corps as a "non-political" entity when she was witnessing the land being taken away from her intended beneficiaries:

> "I went to my Peace Corps director and told him what was happening and he told me outright he could not get involved in any of this, this was political...So he discretely handed me the name of this human rights fellow in the country..."

Colleen's experience was a bit different. Although Colleen was often "told" not to get politically involved was often "reprimanded" for doing so, she did not face the repercussions that Jael did. In her experience we see that her Peace Corps Director indirectly supported her political activism allowing her more flexibility to help her intended beneficiaries.

Theme 2. Unrealistic or Inappropriate Expectations for Development

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers indicated that the Peace Corps expectations for development are not necessarily congruent with the needs of the intended beneficiaries, however and as previously stated, it was found that Peace Corps Volunteers responses to inappropriate or "unrealistic" expectations of development varied in part according to the

flexibility of those to whom they had to report. Greg decided that working with a rotational grazing association was not appropriate given the lack of knowledge as to what exactly was causing soil erosion in his local community. Greg stressed that though he was sent to work with a specific organization on rotational grazing patterns, that he never really "felt the burden of having to work with the grazing association." He indicated that this was because the Peace Corps and the grazing organization were supportive of him working with his other projects as opposed to the one that he was assigned.

Hugh described issues that he felt were more urgent to deal with than the ones that he was assigned by the Peace Corps.

> "My job description was agricultural extension...They wanted me to improve the breeding stock [of chickens and rabbits]...They were all good interventions, but what was putting food on the table was the cereal crops. And most of the people's diets are cereals. And again, with the chickens, the children will be healthier once they get more meat and all of that, but if you don't have the cereals, first of all, you won't be able to feed the chickens. You won't have any money because you are spending it on grain. So I viewed my cereal crops as my primary mission. But I think that they expected me to improve the breeding stock and husbandry techniques and things like that."

Ian noticed that the demands of the organization that he was working with were unrealistic due to the organization's past relationship with its intended beneficiaries. The organization was trying to "wean" people from a giving based system that it had established. He noted that because the intended beneficiaries were backed against a wall, that they had learned to use this organization in this way.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers also voiced frustrations about working within generalized, or blueprint, approaches to development that were not suited toward the realities of the intended beneficiaries. Brie talked of her experience with how the Peace Corps wanted her to implement a pilot program for HIV education and how her community reacted to it:

> "They wanted parents, teachers and religious leaders to attend all of these workshops before they would go into the schools because it was really important to get the parents on board with these things...my community said, '[y]ou know there is no way that that is going to happen. We need to just have a parent's meeting at the school, tell them what we are going to do and do it.' Because the parents needed to do their own things, they wanted to have their input but did not want to attend the workshops first...it was just how my community was...and the funding organization is this bureaucracy up here, and they had no clue, they wanted to make sure that their money was being spent responsibly and that it had some effect, but they did not know what it was like being on the ground."

In these accounts we can find some of the frustrations inherent in working with the Peace Corps as a development organization including working within bureaucracy, inappropriate development plans, and stances of political "neutrality". However, it is important to reiterate that many of the Peace Corps Volunteers described their programs as being flexibility.

The Peace Corps Volunteer often has to work with various international, national and historical hegemony and hierarchal systems that carry histories of exploitation, colonization and violence as discussed in the conceptual framework. Directly implicated in these systems that have influenced development are discrepancies between those people who have access to resources and those who do not, as well as variations of resources that are available. Consequently, the needs of the intended beneficiaries may be differentially represented, underrepresented or not represent at all in international development.

Due to issues of access to resources, also implicated in hegemonic and hierarchal systems and their histories is how communities will react to development initiatives and entities, including the Peace Corps Volunteer. Ian for example, found that if he did something within his community that those in power did not like, it created and "us vs. them" mentality that could hinder his ability to help his intended beneficiaries. Fiona

found that intended beneficiaries notions of Americans and HIV defined how she could present her materials on HIV education.

Theme 3. Globalization

Colleen described how influences of globalization and international hegemony had the support from the nation-state to displace the community from their land:

> "In the village where I was there were, they had been there for hundreds and hundreds of years but there was a German beef producer who was in cahoots with the president of the country who had been given much land up near our village to graze cattle. And he wanted more land and the president told him, "Go ahead." So he just started taking all of the land that was in my village. And then he had the support of army troops to come in and displace people and put up barricades and they couldn't get to their fields anymore... I don't even know if my village is there anymore. That's the really sad thing. They think that the Africans were animals, that was their mentality..."

Processes of globalization influence and direct several facets of the intended beneficiaries' lives. In Colleen's account we see that her intended beneficiaries were pushed off of their lands due to processes of globalization and international hegemony, and that this racism and violence was directly support by their government. The realities of processes of globalization are often not accounted for in program plans. In this example, those who were pushed off of their lands do not have the opportunity to define and work for their own development, a difficult context in which the Peace Corps Volunteer may find her or himself having to work.

Theme 4. Hegemonies and Histories of Colonization and Exploitation

Kim's experience elaborates on some of the effects of hegemony that have historically contradicted and continue to hinder development initiatives aimed toward emancipation:

> "The rest of the country considered that area very ignorant, very poor. No one really wanted to go there. There were rumors that the government tried to keep it that way though. To keep the people in the fields, working... I think that the were very uneducated in my area compared to other areas and was pretty undeveloped... The factors that I saw, such as going from my area to the capital could take me up to three days because there were dirt roads that were in terrible shape. And the roads were supposed to be paved for the last twenty years, but they never were because people kept stealing the money. And it was all of these government people stealing the money... If they don't pave the roads, people are less likely to go in and out and are more isolated. So I think that there was some truth to that..."

With this account we can see that hegemonies that are found in processes of globalization also exist in the history of colonization. We can look at Ian and Evan's discussions of hegemony to expand upon how it affects the intended beneficiaries of development. Ian explained how history of violence could shape a community, specifically in reference to the reluctance of various communities to directly challenge authority:

> "Paraguay was under a very brutal dictatorship until 1989. So you've got even people as young as we are that were ten and eleven, even older than that, thirteen, fourteen and remember a time when you couldn't say anything against any authority figure, because that was in some way related to the dictator, the president. There were people in my community who told me stories of when they were fifteen, sixteen or seventeen who were actually brutally beaten because they were in a group greater than three after dark. I think that even to this day, and I don't know if it is changing because I don't know if the government has changed that much, but people are afraid of authority figures...Any professional will come in, and I saw it a lot, they come into the community and it's like 'your wife is making me lunch, I'm going to stay in your house for this, you're doing this for me...'"

Ian continued his discussion noting how this history affected how his community reacted to any perceived authority or professional:

> "it is almost like, "Yes, sir, that will be done for you.' When they go up to talk to someone like that, you can literally see a change in physical posture. The hat comes off, its almost like the head goes down a little bit..."

There may be distances between the Peace Corps Volunteer and the intended beneficiaries if the Peace Corps Volunteer is associated with authority. Ian indicated that his intended beneficiaries would hesitate to work with him due to how they had initially positioned him as part of the power structure that he described in the previous paragraph. Evan also noted the effects of his positioning according to notions of hierarchy and authority:

> "Titles in Honduras and other places in Latin America are more important than in the United States because they are as much a social distinction, on the level of an aristocratic title in some cases, as a professional one. It clearly separates one from the rest of a highly impoverished, monetarily and in terms of western style education, society... I tried to get them to call me by my first name but that was clearly not culturally acceptable. They eventually started to call me *ingenier*o and from that point on everyone addressed me as *ingeniero*. Did this distinguish me more - yes, unequivocally - however, it also created more social distance in some cases."

As Evan notes, these titles and the positioning of Peace Corps Volunteers can distance the Peace Corps Volunteer from her or his intended beneficiaries, creating an initial barrier to development and indicating the need for improvisation.

Brie noticed the racism that is often implicated in development, where hegemonic and colonialist notions of ethnicity have pervaded "developing" societies and/or groups so that the people of these societies and/or groups may see themselves as "traditional," "backward," or "incapable." In Brie's case her intended beneficiaries situated themselves and her according to colonialist notions of development:

"The girls in my AIDS club honestly believed that white people were smarter than black people. They were going to have a debate in school; they were always having debates in the class. Like one day the debate was that white people were smarter than black people. They didn't think that there was anything to debate. They just assumed that, there was this belief that just because I was a white American that I knew everything... I think that they sometimes had unrealistic expectations as to what I could do for them because I was a white American."

Theme 5. Hegemony and Hierarchy within Communities

Hegemony can also exist within communities so that classism, racism and sexism are not only perpetuated by "outside" development initiatives and people. Jael's experience elaborates upon the context of hegemonies within communities. In the process of organizing a commission to deal with money that was stolen from her community, Jael came to realize the position and reluctance of her community to get involved in demanding the accountability of the principle who had stolen the money:

"I don't have anything to lose. I don't have any children in the school that are going to be punished, tortured, ridiculed, treated poorly by teachers and principals. They were really afraid of that...[The principal's] connection with the supervisor of the state. There was no threat of losing that job because it was just that connection...even the next year she did not return as the principal and she was officially out of that position and she was promoted to the office of the supervisor."

Ian described his experience in working within hegemonies and hierarchies within his community:

"I felt like anything that I had to do that I had to be careful, that there were certain people in the community who were considered the leaders and no matter what I did, unless I got the approval from them, it wasn't going to happen. It wasn't necessarily the president of the cooperative where I was working it was just certain people, that for some reason or another, I can't tell you why, the community looked up to...when we would some things that those people didn't like, it would create a kind of 'us vs. them' mentality where I felt sure that they were trying to undermine everything that we were doing and I am sure that they felt that we were trying to undermine everything that they were doing."

Ian also emphasized that those who were able to command and control resources and influence the intended beneficiaries of the projects reinforced the existing hierarchies described above:

> "My understanding of the situation was that there were these community members, that the activities that they were engaged in always seemed to put more money into their pockets than it did anyone else's. And that's how they kept their hold on everybody... there was definitely a hierarchal system..."

Theme 6. Multiple Systems of Governance

Peace Corps Volunteers will find themselves working within many different and often conflicting hierarchies and hegemonies. For example, Fiona indicated that she often had to work within two different systems of hierarchy and government that could be in opposition and in direct contradiction to each other:

> "We have certain systems in the U.S. that are also in place in Africa, but I just know how to work within that system more readily than people who are use to a chiefdomship. It's like they have dual governments going on at once, the glossy government that everybody sees, just for the Peace Corps, and then the real village government. They didn't necessarily work together. Every village has a chief; the chief decides what goes on in that village. And it doesn't always connect up with the supposed democracy. And so laws, well it's like, 'here are our laws, and we're just going to post it for everybody, but in reality, I'm the chief and I decide what goes on in my village.'"

In Fiona's account we can see that there are very different and opposing hegemonies and hierarchies that a Peace Corps Volunteer may have to work within. Local customs and laws can be as influential in shaping development as national or international laws.

All of these aspects of power, hierarchy and hegemony vary extensively and can be barriers to emancipatory development. However, the Peace Corps Volunteer can reject and work around these barriers by via improvisation.

Access to the intended beneficiaries of development and to necessary resources defines a part of the context in which the Peace Corps Volunteer has to work. Access is often dependent upon how the Peace Corps Volunteer is situated by the intended beneficiaries of development. The situation of the Peace Corps Volunteer defines what resources and groups of people that the Peace Corps Volunteer will be able to work with. It also defines how the intended beneficiaries of development will react and work with the Peace Corps Volunteer. The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers interviewed indicated how access to resources and people underlined perceptions of gender and ethnicity. Peace Corps Volunteers experiences vary tremendously in relation to how her or his gender and/or ethnicity are perceived by the intended beneficiaries of the programs and this is not surprising given that issues of gender and ethnicity pervade every aspect of development, so that it is impossible to exclude either one as a contextual reality.

Theme 7. Gender

All of the Peace Corps Volunteers interviewed noted that female Peace Corps Volunteer have a more difficult time with serving in the Peace Corps, in general. Evan and Jael noted that being male allowed for a greater degree of mobility. Hugh noted that because he was concerned about gender relations in the community that he worked that it was difficult to involve women in his programs. Specific experiences according to gender and ethnicity vary. For example, Daria had a difficult time interacting with her organization because of how they treated her as a woman:

> "I had some frustration with my organization because they were very macho and as a woman they didn't much care to listen to what ideas I had. So I would present ideas every now and them, and when they kept getting brushed aside, that's when I stopped. I gave up trying to get them to do any of my ideas."

Kim discussed the correlation between gender, marital status and cultural validation that she observed during her service in the Peace Corps:

> "It was huge. The women in Africa are considered second class, at least where I was. Especially even though I was a little older and had a college degree, I wasn't married and I didn't have kids. That's what makes a respectable woman. I was not a respectable woman."

We can look at Amanda's experience in the Peace Corps to elaborate on Kim's point. In Amanda's experience we can see how she was viewed as a single woman by the other single women in her community, noting how her single status in combination with her status as an American woman created a barrier to bonding with her intended beneficiaries:

> "I was seen as a threat from the other women because twenty-seven is an old age for a single woman. They would say to me, why are you being so selfish that you are not married and don't have children. Because it was seen as being very selfish. It became a point of extreme contention amongst other females who were single. I just couldn't go out with them. The men would want to talk to me. So they need men, they need to get married and they need to have kids to be relevant in their society and to be seen as not girls anymore. And I didn't. I was a foreigner, with these ideas of wealth... I never had a problem with married women."

There is however, another side to the context of working within gendered identities, where gender cannot be viewed only in relation to how women are negatively received in the Peace Corps. For example, Evan stressed the ability of a Peace Corps Volunteer to use her or his gender to her or his advantage, noting that female Peace Corps Volunteers often have more access to women. Ian supported this view when he expressed his experiences with gender and development:

> "I think that as a male, it was easier for me to volunteer, quite honestly. But I don't think that men are as effective because they are only reaching fifty percent of the population. An American man is not going to have the opportunity to sit

down and get any meaningful work down with a group of women. Where I think that this is easier for a woman, as much as I think that in general it is harder for a woman to volunteer. A woman can be taken seriously by men and a woman can be taken seriously by and get access to women. I think as a man, I worked very effectively with the men in my site, as much as I tried to reach out to the women... My work was done with men, I didn't have access to the women... And I think that this gets further into development, beyond the Peace Corps in general, I've had the feeling that the majority of practitioners are men. Men only reach men... So I think as women you were taken seriously by the men, though it was hard to get that respect initially, but it's possible, and then its possible then to step into the other role..."

Theme 8. Ethnicity

Brie noticed that her ethnicity and American status were more influential than effects of gender in how the intended beneficiaries perceived her. With this she indicated that if she was situated as a white American she was seen as a "walking ATM" but that if she was seen as an Afrikaner she was disliked.

> "My skin color seemed to be a bigger factor [than gender], especially in Lesotho, because it is encased inside South Africa...They have this love-hate relationship with white people. They love Americans, they think that Americans are so great but then there is this whole Afrikaner thing. If you are mistaken for an Afrikaner, watch out... I think that sometimes they had unrealistic expectations as to what I could do for them because I was a white American. And they also often saw me as a walking ATM. They though that I had unlimited access to funding and that certainly wasn't the case."

The racism that can be inherent in development as described by Brie's experience in the previous theme[6] is also reflected upon Peace Corps Volunteers of non-Caucasian ethnicities. All of the Peace Corps Volunteers interviewed were of Caucasian ethnicity[7]. Many of them noted the difficulties associated with working as a non-

[6] Theme 4, See Kristen's discussion of how colonialist notions of ethnicity were carried perpetuated by her intended beneficiaries.

[7] This is a limitation of this research. Recommendations for addressing issues of ethnicity can be found in Chapter 5.

Caucasian Peace Corps Volunteer. Greg, for instance, noted that he had heard that black volunteers had more pressure on them. Evan indicated that the Hispanic and Mexican Peace Corps Volunteers that he had worked with had encountered a tremendous amount of racism from their families in Honduras and that their intended beneficiaries did not take them as seriously, often saying that they were not "American."

These contexts including existing hegemonies, bureaucracies and identity situation create a multi-faceted experience for a Peace Corps Volunteer to live and work in. Some of these contexts, such as being a woman in a community where women are discriminated against, can be viewed as obstacles. Improvisation however is and can be used to overcome, transcend or detour around such obstacles. Other contexts, such as Greg's relationship with the Peace Corps and his funding organization, can provide the Peace Corps Volunteer with a medium for improvisation to occur. The next section of this chapter presents specific improvisational strategies that are related to any one or more of the above contexts. Before moving on however, it is necessary to keep in mind that that these improvisations, like these contexts are intricately linked and constantly re-worked. See Chapter 5 for discussion on such linkages.

Themes of Improvisation

Improvisation is method of examining, negotiating and renegotiation different and often-conflicting contexts and reactions to development, such as those listed in the previous section and in the contextual framework. As stated in the methodology, the phenomenon of improvisation cannot be strictly placed within any type of theoretical model due in part to its unpredictability. To accommodate describing the phenomenon of improvisation in development I have listed improvisation themes found in this research instead of developing any type of theoretical model. These themes include the forms that improvisation may take including:

1. Secondary Projects
2. Modification of Projects
3. Relying on Local Resources and People
4. Strategies of Convenience
5. Strategies of Independence and Avoidance
6. Pleading Ignorance, Misinterpretation and Asking for Help
7. "Crossing Over", i.e. Identity Changing
8. Activities of Bonding
9. Advocacy and Political Activism
10. Using Power

Theme 1. Secondary Projects

Secondary projects are developed by the Peace Corps Volunteer in response to either what the intended beneficiaries of development request, or in response to what the Peace Corps volunteer feels that is needed and are often used to replace the primary projects. For example, Hugh indicated that his secondary project, soil erosion control, was what he primarily worked on during his three years in the Peace Corps:

> "My job description was agricultural extension...I would deal with a lot of small farmers with their chickens and rabbits and cereal production...but that was what I was supposed to do [laughs]. I'm sure everyone says that. I think that it is very common, unless they are associated with a specific project, to change what they are doing... My secondary project was actually all of the work that I did..."

Brie also stated that most Peace Corps Volunteers do not end up working on the projects that they were assigned by the Peace Corps:

> "I would say that ninety percent of the Peace Corps Volunteers end up not doing what their primary project asks them to do. I mean, they probably do it a little bit, but that is not the main focus of their work."

An interesting note to this improvisation is that many of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers were very enthusiastic when discussing their secondary projects, specifically in relation to their discussion of their primary projects. For example, Fiona indicated that the projects that she developed she felt really strongly about but the primary project that she was assigned was not realistic. Jael also emphasized that secondary projects were more relevant because they:

> "...came from a direct need from the community or even a request, like, 'can you do this?' or 'is this possible?'"

Fiona also indicated what she felt when she saw that her primary project was not in congruence with what her community wanted:

> "You learned when you got there and said, "oh, so I'm not going to do these things. Okay, so let me just figure out something else that I can do that is beneficial to the community."

This is where the significance of improvising via the use of secondary projects lies. Peace Corps Volunteers can and often use their secondary projects as a method of renegotiating the terms of development to better suite the needs of their intended beneficiaries. These secondary projects can replace or take precedence over the primary projects, as the secondary projects are the Peace Corps Volunteer's *response* to the intended beneficiaries of development.

Greg was able to improvise and use his secondary projects to replace his first by

voicing his opinion on the primary project that he was sent to work on.

> "The Peace Corps usually puts you in touch with some other groups that is working, in this case, it was a group who was trying to look at these rotational grazing issues. And then I said, 'well, I'm not sure of my role with this association, could I do this?' and they were quite supportive of that."

Greg went on to describe how he chose the secondary projects that he would work on instead of his primary project:

> "Well, when I first go there, I kind of observed for awhile and I realized that I wasn't sure of what I could do So I sent a letter out to all of the village chiefs saying, 'what would you have me do in your village, I'll be here for two years.' I go the reply back and only three chiefs called me, and so those were the three villages that I ended up working with for the next two years. And the local businessman and I made contact going through the grazing association."

Ian cautioned that secondary projects that are in response to the needs of the intended beneficiaries take time to develop and work:

> "I think that there's a tendency for Peace Corps Volunteers to go into where they're living and say, 'okay, I know the situation, I've been in training for awhile, I know what's going on' and get into the site and immediately make snap judgments without thinking, 'I'm an outsider coming in.' It's more like, 'I've been in training three months, I've been in training every day and this is what they've told me and this is how it has to be.' By making those quick judgments like that, volunteers had a hard time getting secondary projects going... So for example, I was working in a cooperative, the plan was made with the National Ministry of Cooperatives, whereas the secondary project came from being there for awhile and somebody approaching you and saying, 'Why don't we do this?' or a volunteer saying, 'There's room for this.' But only after awhile could a volunteer say that. I would say that volunteers who develop their secondary projects early on, fail."

A Peace Corps Volunteer's use of a secondary project as an improvisation is interesting as it is a "legal" way of improvising. It is expected that Peace Corps Volunteers develop and implement secondary projects as they find necessary. In response to this, Peace Corps Volunteers can and often do renegotiate their program plans by developing their secondary projects according to how their communities define their own

need. The place where needs are defined and addressed by communities carries the potential to transform the development process into one of empowerment. Peace Corps Volunteers can situate themselves so that they become agents or mediums for empowerment through their secondary projects.

Theme 2. Modification of Projects

If a Peace Corps Volunteer does choose to work primarily on their primary projects, they may choose to modify the methodologies behind the primary projects. Ian modified his program to meet the needs of his intended beneficiaries by helping them to learn the basics of accounting, business, management and administration upon seeing that the cooperative that he was sent to develop into a small business was not even working. Ian managed the coop until the people learned about accounting, business, management and administration and then acted as a trouble-shooter and guide.

In response to dealing with the bureaucracy of the Peace Corps, Brie was able to modify her programs by relying on her relationship to and knowledge of her intended beneficiaries:

> "If I wanted the money to implement my programs then I had to do it their [the Peace Corp's] way. But I also feel like that by that point I had enough real-life experience in the community that I could figure out ways to get around it and modify it to my own community's needs."

Peace Corps Volunteers may also have to modify their secondary projects to better suit their intended beneficiaries. For example, Fiona had to make concessions on the AIDS education program that she developed:

> "[The people] were willing to try pretty much anything. [But] as far as HIV and AIDS they weren't so receptive because they had some preconceived notions of HIV and American and condoms and that kind of thing. But eventually, it turned itself around when I made some concessions to the material I would present and

> then they were like, 'Okay, you can present it'... I couldn't talk about condoms at least to the kids in school. But I'd also do little programs in different villages with grown-ups and I would bring in condoms because they just didn't have them there..."

By modifying their projects Peace Corps Volunteers can work within their primary projects while redirecting them to better suit the intended beneficiaries of development. The modification of projects also helps the Peace Corps Volunteer to make their secondary projects more culturally appropriate and acceptable.

Theme 3. Relying on Local Resources and People

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers indicated that they often had to rely upon local resources and people. Hugh stated that improvisation meant "making due with what you've got, as far as intelligence and as far as the opportunities given to you." Implicated in this statement is having the ability to recognize and work with local people and resources. Hugh described his experience by indicating that he chose to use local knowledges and local resources to follow the principals behind the construction of a dam and in doing so, made the project more appropriate to the realities of his intended beneficiaries.

> "I was, and still am, a big believer in using local technology to solve these issues because people are familiar with it and they know how to fix it. They have all of the tools, the hoe, the hammer. And if you make a fancy concrete dam and it breaks, then first of all the engineering needed is beyond [what we had access to], but if you get it wrong with rocks, you just get more rocks. It's pretty easy. With a concrete dam it takes an incredible amount of capital, solid engineering skills and if the people don't like it you've got a heck of a job to get it apart."

Kim responded to the lack of resources and the language barrier between she and her intended beneficiaries by using local translators and available visual aids to help implement health education projects:

> "I lived in a very rural area, the nearest telephone was a couple of hours away, the nearest anything was a couple hours away. We had one big market day a week and we had some government officials, but it wasn't lie there were a lot of stores with everything. So often I might not be going to a bigger town for two months or something, so I had to make due with what I had. When I was teaching about something. I had to think of different ways that I could make it so that people could understand what I was teaching about... I knew that my French wasn't the greatest and I know that I had to rely a lot on visual, aids or have someone there, helping me translate. Especially since none of them spoke French. So I had to make a lot of drawings, think of games and ways people could understand just because I didn't have all of these resources always available."

Peace Corps often rely upon their communities for support. Colleen relied upon her intended beneficiaries for the safety that they had provided to her[8]. Daria spent time with her intended beneficiaries to improve her Spanish. Brie relied upon her counterpart as a cultural liaison and translator of local feelings and needs:

> "I relied very heavily on my counterpart. She and I had a lot of mutual respect for each other... So I used her very much as a cultural liaison and because she was kind of the unofficial chief of the village and so she had a lot of respect from the community and she would tell me, she would be very straight forward with me, she would say, 'That's not going to work'. So that was really helpful. A lot of people don't have that. So that was my main strategy, relying on her to help me."

Peace Corps Volunteers also rely upon other Peace Corps Volunteers. Hugh often sought help from an older volunteer in his village for help with language. Fiona indicated that she relied heavily on other Peace Corps Volunteers because they provided essential support networks. She stated that she would meet with other Peace Corps Volunteers to communicate problems and potential solutions or strategies, specifically during times when she felt powerless.

[8] Colleen indicated that a man tried to rape her during her service in the Peace Corps, but her community was able to prevent it. She indicated that she had never felt safer than in that community.

Theme 4. Strategies of Convenience

The Peace Corps Volunteer often discovers this form of improvisation accidentally. It is then learned and modified as needed. For example, Daria discovered that her host family liked her because she was humble. With her discovery she decided that that was a convenient strategy to use when getting to know her community:

> "I was told by the people that they really liked having me there because, well I don't know how to explain it-one of the things that the people said about me was that I was humble, which means that I'm personable. I'm able to work with these people. Sure I have all of this college education but I don't seem high and mighty. I am easy to talk to and listen to them and try to do things with them... I learned a little of it while I was in training. That's one of the things that my host family said about me. They really like the way that I played with the kids and even though I could not understand half of what they said I still participated in a few of the family activities and they liked that. So our placement person would talk to the families every couple of weeks... and that's what they told her. So I was like, 'well, since it is quite effective I'll keep doing it.'"

It is important to note her that even though Daria was able to use her humility to bond with her intended beneficiaries, that it was as Daria described, natural. Evan and Jael also indicated that they had used humility to gain access to and establish rapport with their communities.

Fiona discovered two different strategies of convenience during her time in the Peace Corps:

> "I had to learn certain cultural ways of doing things, because the American, the pushy American way, will not get you anywhere... I mean, I hate to admit it, but if it was going to get my village water, then I could flirt with a guy and be like, 'oh you're so smart' and manipulate the situation to be what it needed to be for my village... women in their culture did not cry. So if you cried you would get what you wanted just to stop you from crying. And I wasn't the only volunteer to find that out... I didn't use them too much, just when I had to. And the tears were out of frustration, that's how I discovered it"

By recognizing and using or contradicting perceived gender roles, Fiona was able

to manipulate culturally-based and gender-based systems to gain access to people and resources that she was not able to otherwise.

Theme 5. Strategies of Independence and Avoidance

Peace Corps Volunteers can choose to work independently or to avoid those who might hinder program renegotiation, such as their assigned organizations and the Peace Corps. Colleen indicated that she:

> "... felt like I played the game of avoiding the people who I worked with so that I could get my work done. People in the government, people who I was supposed to be checking in with regularly. It was better just to, and I learned this from the person ahead of me, just to ignore them basically and go about my work. Which I did... It is all a game."

Colleen was also able to extend her strategy to her community to help them avoid the functionaries whom they did not want to work with by helping her intended beneficiaries to work cooperatively:

> "I ended up forming a union of all the fish growers in the area, with the expectation that after the person who followed me left, there would be no more volunteers. So I started taking it upon myself to get these guys working independently, on their own, helping each other. So we set up this union so that every three months or so they would walk all to one village overnight and have meetings and tell each other what they were doing, exchange information and help each other out... They were very proud, there were thirty or forty men and they were very proud of this [union] that they were all part of."

Ian was able to modify his programs by avoiding his organization when possible and misinterpreting his duties[9] . Ian indicated that he was able to avoid his organization due to the physical distance between his community and his organization and that he adjusted accordingly:

[9] See following theme.

> "What I did when they weren't there was very different from what I did when they were there. The community knew it and they appreciated it. When I would go to the capital they'd be talking about, again we'd be with the head of the agency, talking about how things should be and I would keep my mouth shut and say, 'okay, we'll do that and we'll do that' and 'you want it to be done this way and this way,' and I would get back to the community and they had a basic goal, something that they were looking at. We did it whatever way we could..."

Theme 6. Pleading Ignorance, Misinterpretation and Asking for Help

Amanda, Ian and Jael indicated that they would plead ignorance or non-expertise either when they were confronted by dealing with someone or something that they found counter-productive.

Ian indicated that one strategy that he used when confronted by demands that he did not want to meet from his organization was to say that the specific task was not within his realm of expertise.

Ian was able to modify his programs by purposively misinterpreting what was expected of him. During the focus group he indicated that:

> "We were working towards getting an oil factory up and running. So they [the organization] wanted me to be in the office doing a lot of the paperwork that needed to be done because they didn't want to do it where what needed to be done was to organize the farmers... The people from the organization were like, 'no, no, no, we need this done, we need the paperwork done. Your job is to do accounting, you're job is to do this.' And then I would say, 'oh, okay' and then tell them, 'oh I didn't understand what you were talking about' and spend my time out working with the people, making sure that they understood what was going on."

Ian, Amanda and Jael indicated during the focus group that asking for help was a method of improvisation. They stated that when they asked their communities for help, it was not necessarily to get specific answers to problems. They noted that asking for help from their intended beneficiaries allowed them to do the following:

> 1. Delineate any existing power differentials such as those that exist between "the expert" and "the learner"

2. Open up dialogue between Peace Corp Volunteer and their community

3. Encourage participation in programs

Jael indicated that she would specifically use language as a method of asking for help, asking for help in translating her materials, "It was a way of getting to someone and using language as an excuse."

Theme 7. "Crossing Over"

As previously discussed, Peace Corps Volunteers are often associated with specific titles and identities within their communities based upon social and cultural hierarchies that exist within a community. These titles and identities are also associated with education and economic levels, power and authority. These titles and identities determine what access a Peace Corps Volunteer has to their community. For example, Colleen did not initially have access to her male intended beneficiaries. Ian and Hugh indicated that they did not have much access to their female intended beneficiaries. However, Returned Peace Corp Volunteers indicated that they were able to "crossover" or change their identities. Ian indicated that he manipulated his own title to reject power hierarchies that existed between the "educated" and the "uneducated":

> "Having a bachelor's I had more education than ninety-nine percent of the people there. But yet, three months in I was no longer titled. Before they knew me, they called me "*licenciado*", which means licensed, because I had a bachelor's. For the first three months they would refer to me as *licenciado*, and I'd be like, 'I don't know who you are talking to.' One of the best things that I heard from a volunteer was that if you address these people in the formal, it makes a world of difference. And so when I would address them in the formal and talk to them, and this happened on numerous occasions, they would ask, 'Who are you talking to?'"

By rejecting these titles Ian was better able to access his intended beneficiaries.

Jael also indicated that one of the ways in which she was able to form relationships with her intended beneficiaries was to reject the division that existed between being a teacher and being a parent:

> "I feel that the hierarchy for me was clearly between the school employees and the other people... So I felt that division. It was hard. I made a conscious effort to cross, to take off my teacher's hat and go sit by the fire... to show that you can wear both hats."

Amanda indicated that she was also able to crossover gender boundaries and barriers. Her ability to crossover however, was dependent upon her status as a foreigner as well as what she was trying to do:

> "I think for a woman as a foreigner in some instances, because I know of instances where I could not have done this, in some instances I think that I could [cross over]. And I think that my foreign status and what I was talking about would give me credibility. And it was very specific... There was always a tension to work with men in the school system and with other things that I did. As a foreigner you carried it differently. I always felt that tension, that I was a woman and there was a place for me, but as a foreigner I always stood with a foot in that place and my other foot in a place that wasn't defined, but not really in the men's world. I might be able to get close, but there were places that I really couldn't get into. There were moments I could gain respect, so at some moments I was at a level with a woman of equal social standing, but I was a host country national. So I stood on a different area... The way that I was used to acting was so foreign to them. Being an aggressive female, which I could use at times, as a weapon, worked... But I had to recognize how people reacted to it. I didn't have any idea that, 'well I'm going to go act like a polish female because I need to get this done,' it was like you have to know which situation you are going into and whether you can fit in or whether you can be different."

Amanda went on to describe that her ability to crossover into the "men's world" was very dynamic. She stressed that only in some instances she had the ability to crossover:

> "There was access but it wasn't there all of the time... And I put the words into it, but you knew it when you were in it. You knew that in the moment, okay, you have access or okay, I don't have access... I knew when they called me girl, that I didn't have access. And that was one. And I could maybe have access for a while,

and they would call me a girl, and I did not have access. And then you might get it back and then you might be pushed out of it again."

Theme 8. Activities of Bonding

The trust and respect from the intended beneficiaries can aide Peace Corps Volunteers in renegotiating their programs. Many of the returned Peace Corps Volunteers often indicated that bonding with their intended beneficiaries served not only to secure their trust and develop a rapport with the intended beneficiaries, but also served to gain respect and validation.

Fiona indicated that developing this trust was crucial in being able to begin her work:

> "For the first six to nine months you just hang out and they get used to you and they see how you are and you develop a level of trust just by *being there*... A lot of Peace Corps Volunteers find themselves trying to be out of their villages as much as possible, so I would just be there trying to learn the language, and going to my schools every week, where I would do social events. Which was a big deal. And after I would do that then I could start to do my actual work. Because I had developed my level of trust, though they still thought that I was completely strange, but maybe, just maybe, I could help them with some things."

Greg's experience in the Peace Corps indicates that the ability to bond to the intended beneficiaries could depend upon the situation of the Peace Corps Volunteer's identity. For example he indicated he was able to bond with his male intended beneficiaries over beer, whereas female Peace Corps Volunteers might not be able to do that without being really criticized.

It is possible however, for the Peace Corps Volunteer to transcend such barriers to access via bonding. It is important to note that bonding can also lead to the ability of the

Peace Corps Volunteer to "cross-over" to and from different identity roles. Colleen's experience in bonding illustrates this point.

> "Part of developing that rapport was every morning you'd be out at the fish ponds at six o'clock before the men would go to their fields and work, you would sit and drink palm wine. And it was funny but by drinking alcohol with these men early in the morning, that somehow gave them the confidence in me-that I knew what I was doing. It was very very strange. And I learned the hard way that I could not do more than two visits in the morning. [Laughs]. So would do two visits in the morning, then I would do two or three in the afternoon. The expectations were more than that, but it was just impossible. So it took about six months of doing that to build up the rapport... And then word of mouth traveled quickly and we could push things forward. People would hear me in the distance because there was no traffic up there and they would just come running from their villages, tucked far away, and they would wave me down saying, 'we want to do ponds now too'..."

Theme 9. Advocacy and Political Activism

Peace Corps Volunteers may choose to act as advocates for their intended beneficiaries. This form of improvisation often crosses political boundaries between the intended beneficiaries of development, their governments, and the Peace Corps itself. Advocacy can take the form of knowing how to actively manipulate a system to gain access to resources. Fiona for instance, was able to be an advocate for her community because she understood how to manipulate Western-based systems and had the necessary resources to get water to her village:

> "It was just advocacy and knowing how to manipulate the system. And having the opportunity. Most people couldn't afford a bus ride down from my village to the capital city to go talk to the people who were putting water into the villages. So I would just go and pressure them to get somebody up there to put in a pump and I would say, 'You know they really need their water to be in the village...'"

Advocacy also includes the use of direct action to renegotiated the terms of development. When a human rights group could not do much to intervene with the

occupation of her community's land, Colleen chose to act as an organizer and advocate for her community:

> "I first went to my PC director and told him what was happening and he told me outright he could not get involved in any of this, this was political... and that he could not have anything to do with this. So he discreetly handed me the name of this human rights fellow in the country whom I contacted and he couldn't do very much, it's a small country. Word did get very high up in the government that I was involved in encouraging the people to protest. I came home one day from my work and the village was on the war path, total war paint, dressed in red, playing the tom toms, total warpath mode. And the German was there, they were trying to chase him away. He basically came up to me and said, "Can you believe that they area acting like this?" And couldn't believe that I would side with them and have anything to do with that. And immediately starting after that, I would come home from work and I would find boot marks around my yard and around my house where soldiers had been trying to look in and find things. They were just trying to get me to go home. Then they would start putting up barricades around the village to keep people out from their fields.
>
> One day two nice little boys were so mad that they knocked over one of these posts and I looked out of my window one morning, while I was drinking my tea, and there were the military dragging these two little boys away to put them in jail. And again, I was not to get involved, I was under specific orders. Ten days later the boys still weren't home. So I drove my motorcycle down to where they were being held and they saw me. They saw me. They could hear my motorcycle coming and they jumped up in this little jail cell, yelling at me, to me. So I stopped and there was this guard outside. I had just lost it. And asked him, "how can you be doing this to these two little boys?" and it turned out that he was not just a guard, he was the full head of the military for that section. I didn't know that and I was reprimanded again by various people. You just get into all of these situations that you don't envision and are certainly not part of the project you were assigned to. The boys were released the next morning only because I showed up."

Jael also chose to act on behalf of her intended beneficiaries when the money that they had donated to build classrooms and to buy supplies was stolen by the principal of that school. Jael organized a meeting in an attempt to hold the principal accountable:

> "We were asking, 'Okay, where is the money, what are we going to do?' And nothing happened. School started in February... April 23rd I called a meeting... The teachers were supportive but knew that I didn't have the support of the principals and they had to be careful about being supportive in front of her. Anyway, over two hundred people showed up to the point where we couldn't even have it in a classroom. So we moved it out into the lawn and I just explained in

> my broken Spanish that we had a space problem and that, 'I understand that a lot of you are from communities that have great schools and we really need your input and we need to do some fundraising and we need some classrooms built and we need to just get this together.' From that twenty people came forward and we started a commission and probably fifteen of us worked really closely and we started to get the classrooms built anyway, at this point the director of my program and the volunteer coordinators were saying, 'You are in way too deep politically, you are not supposed to cross the line and you're kind of tearing apart the trust in the community with the principal.' which it wasn't even there and she didn't even come to that meeting because she knew that the people were going to say, 'Where is all of that money that we had paid to sign our children up for school.'"

In Colleen's account we see that she made several conscious decisions to encourage her community to protest, speak in favor of her intended beneficiaries and to act to demand social change. Her actions occurred with the awareness of the potential repercussions that she faced, including the potential for violent confrontation with those who supported the beef producer. In Jael's account we see how she chose to act as an advocate by using her position as a Peace Corps Volunteer working within the school to organize a commission that was able to build the classrooms that her community needed. Jael also chose to do this in spite of the Peace Corps stance of political neutrality and being relocated into a different community.

Theme 10. Using Power

Just as Peace Corps Volunteers can manipulate and use titles to access power, they can also use people with power as an improvisation. The intended beneficiaries of development carry power according to their socio-economic levels or class, their gender and ethnicity as well as through their personal contacts. Fiona had to ask her male friends to help her get trees and chickens for her various projects. She indicated that she did not

have any problems getting access to necessary resources once she had learned to use men to get them. Hugh described why he chose to implement parts of his project politically:

> "I tried to design projects that were obvious. They weren't always the best thing to do, but you did it for political reasons. Like when you build these soil erosion barriers you build it in the chief's field first. Once he accepts it, and it's not just because he wants to benefit, its because if he buys the project, then he's sold it to everyone else... Or if you build them in people's fields who have some status in the village... Every village is different, but generally it would be in the field of somebody with status or if a big gully was approaching the fields."

Greg also indicated by his discussion that part of this strategy involves the recognition of those in power and how this power can be used. Greg notes the different types of actors who do have power, as well as the power of knowing these people:

> "What you realize is, to get things done you have to be in touch with two aspects of the community. One is that you have to be in touch with what people feel and think. Because that always gets expressed and that will always make your stay there more comfortable and more effective. And the other is that other are people that kind of understand how things get done in a community, they are like spark plugs if you will. So there are the chiefs, there is the merchant class, other are the government workers coming in and out of the area. Those people are important... if not only for the transportation capacity that they would provide. For example, government vehicles were sometimes the only trucks that would come through this area in a month, because there was really no possible road unless you have a four-wheel drive. So going to the grazing association enabled me to meet some of those people and I think that the sheep marketing things certainly would have never happened, which ended up being the best thing for the populace because they were able to, instead of worrying about who was going to buy their sheep, they created this market"

Greg further described how he used this strategy as a method of serving his intended beneficiaries:

> "...we have this water tank, and it essentially has a little pipe from it that leads to a bigger water holding tank and the question was where to locate that. Do you locate it near the chief's house, do you locate it near the local business owner who has a small store? In general those things weren't that difficult. You generally went with whoever was the most powerful... Because if you are going to try to build a water system but you are going to thwart the chief in the village that you are gong to build the water system, you are in fact, not going to end up building the water system. Whereas if you choose the local businessman, his ability to

constrain the project from even happening is not as great. And since I thought that the project had merit in and of itself, and the villagers really wanted it, that acquiescing to the village chief was more practical and perhaps even more reasonable."

Amanda's experience indicates how power can be negotiated. Amanda reflected upon her access to and her realization of her own power as a Peace Corps Volunteer, noting that although she did not use people with power to get things done, she would ignore people in power to get things done:

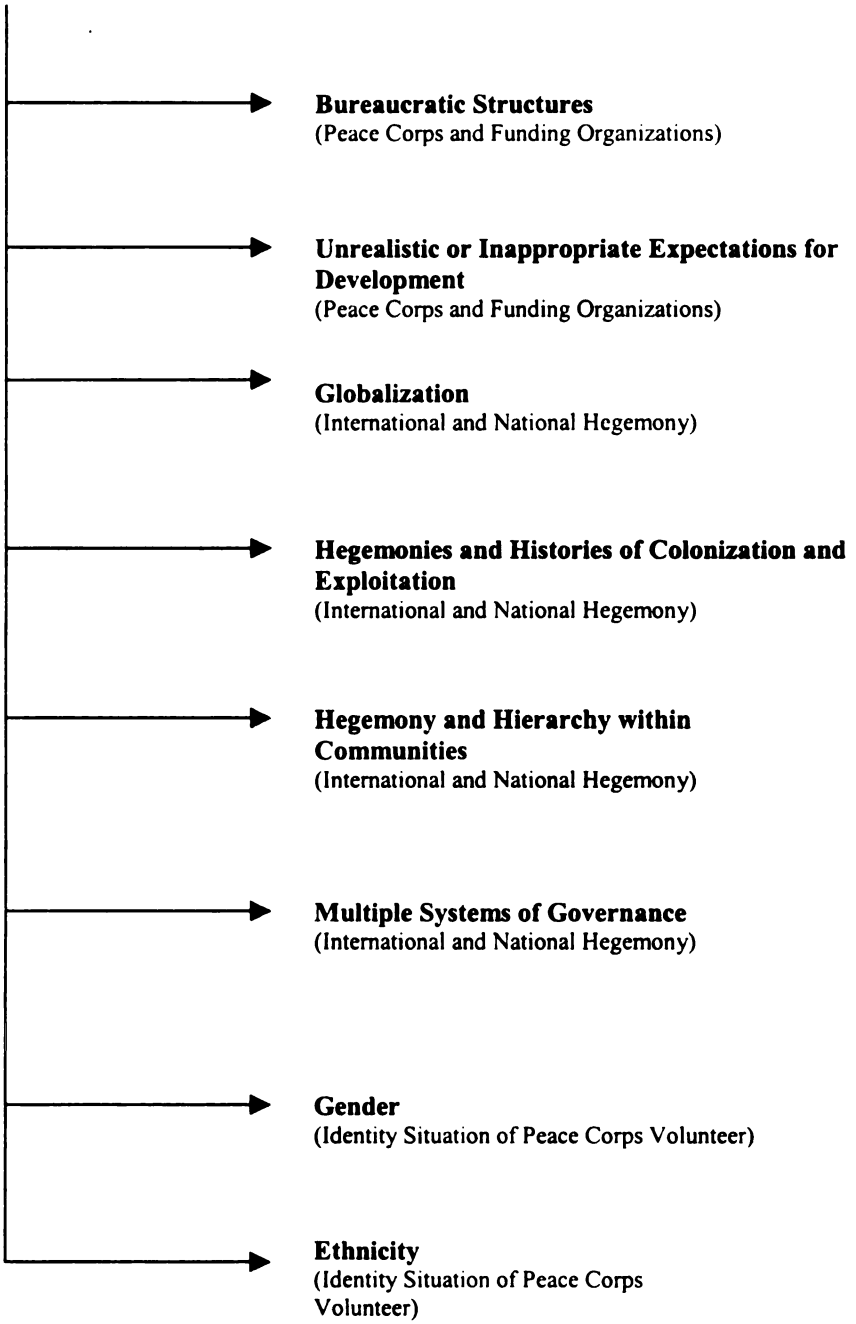
> "You don't have anything to lose, they need you... they're not in charge of the money. But you do not realize that when you are a Peace Corps Volunteer. It took me six months to realize that I had the power. Those first six moths were hell."
>
> "So did you have that power those first six months, or did it take six months to develop that power?"
>
> "No, I think that I had the power from day one and I just didn't realize it... Basically what my director did to me was tell me that I was to teach classes for thirty-six hours a week. You can't actually teach classes thirty-six hours a week and be sane. But I didn't realize that I could say no. I knew that I could say no, but I was afraid... And I would think, I don't want to alienate these people, I'm going to work with them, I'm going to be part of their community. But I realized that over time they were getting the best of me. That they were going to try to exploit me, that they didn't have my best interest in mind. And I think that I had that power from day one, that they had put that out there for me to see how I would react to it. They were going to push my buttons as far as they could go. And one day I just realized, I just got pissed enough... And I was afraid walking into that office the very first time when I knew I was going to tell him. Because I didn't know what his reaction was going to be. I think that all along I had the power, I just didn't have it in me to use it... His first reaction was, 'you have to teach these classes.' I said, 'Assign them to me, I won't be there.' Then there was nothing that he could do. And I realized somewhere in that conversation that there was nothing that he could do to me. And I think that he must have realized that it wasn't going to happen anymore. But that didn't stop him from trying to get that power back... It was a constant struggle."

Chapter 5. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to explore how program implementers can renegotiate the unfavorable terms of development by using improvisation. By examining the contexts of development in which Peace Corps Volunteers live and work, it is possible to illustrate why improvisation is needed in program implementation as well as the basis on which some improvisational decisions are made. The various contexts of development indicated by the Peace Corps Volunteers of this research include working within bureaucratic structures, inappropriate or unrealistic expectations for development, various international, national and intra-community hegemonies and hierarchies, and how the Peace Corps Volunteer's identity is situated according to gender and ethnicity within the communities that they live and work (see Figure 5.1. for a diagrammatic summary of the contexts found).

When I constructed a diagram of how the contexts found in this research were related to the improvisations I found that the connecting lines between contexts and improvisations were quite numerous and so complexly interrelated that it was impossible to create an accurate representation of improvisation with a pen and piece of paper (let alone a representation of improvisation in a word document). Perhaps this metaphorically serves to underscore the complexity of the phenomenon in international development and its relationship to modernity, its placement in the social interfaces and its process of formative evaluation. The complexity of development that is illustrated in each narrative of context supports Rist's (1997) assertion that development is a contradictory process. For example, Peace Corps Volunteers are sent with the expectation that they will implement programs and facilitate development, however as Daria noted, the situation of

Figure 5.1. Themes of Context



her identity by her funding organization as a female often prevented her from creating new programs and projects for her community.

The multiplicity of contexts and their resulting improvisations found in each narrative also supports Long's (1989) assertion that research should focus on the inherent complexities in development that lend to its renegotiation. Improvisational strategies such as using secondary projects, modifying projects, using local resources, employing strategies of convenience and avoidance, pleading ignorance, crossing over, bonding, using power and advocacy are creative responses and reactions to dealing with the different contexts of development (see Figure 5.2 for diagram). All of these strategies are also rooted in different types of power which exists in communities between the intended beneficiaries; between communities and the nation-state; between the Peace Corps Volunteer and the nation-state; and between the Peace Corps Volunteer and her or his funding organizations.

National hierarchy and hegemony often occurs concurrently with processes of globalization as Colleen has noted with her discussion on how the nation-state of Togo encouraged global forces to displace local people. Consequently, Colleen had to work within both contexts of "globalization and hegemonies" and "histories of colonization and exploitation" and improvised by using strategies of "advocacy and political activism" and "using power." A single context can demand several improvisations from the program implementer, such as gendered lack of access (i.e. Amanda and Colleen's experiences with not having access to various people and resources due to their gender) requiring improvisational strategies of crossing-over, bonding, strategies of convenience, using power, etc... Likewise, many contexts may be dealt with by a single improvisation: Brie's development of secondary programs to deal with unrealistic or inappropriate expectations for development and bureaucracy.

As illustrated by the conceptual framework and many of the narratives of this research, the actors in development (local, national and international) are rooted in processes and histories of colonization, oppression, globalization and modernity. With this, it must be stressed that improvisation does not occur without context and history, and is therefore a reactive strategy. Fiona chose to secure water for her village by manipulating her power according to the politics of gender that existed in her community (a strategy of convenience discussed in Chapter 4). Hugh chose to use local knowledge and resources to help his intended beneficiaries build a dam and he was consequently able to help his community rely upon their own knowledges and systems, an extremely political improvisation as it promotes independence of the intended beneficiaries from "outside" systems of development (a reaction to not having resources from the outside to build a dam). However, there are two main distinctions of improvisation as a reactive strategy that can be drawn from the research. The motives that underscored improvisation suggest that improvisation can also be viewed as a subversive reactive strategy or a positional reactive strategy.

Peace Corps Volunteers can also use improvisation to position themselves as necessary or to use their positions to gain access to resources. Positional strategies may include knowing advocacy strategies or strategies of convenience that Fiona described or being able to recognize and use local resources as Hugh described.

Peace Corps Volunteers can use improvisation to subvert hegemonic systems that might be impossible to challenge and renegotiate without improvisation. Jael's challenge of the school principal and Colleen's encouragement of community protests serve as examples of subversive strategy. Less overt subversive strategies may include pleading

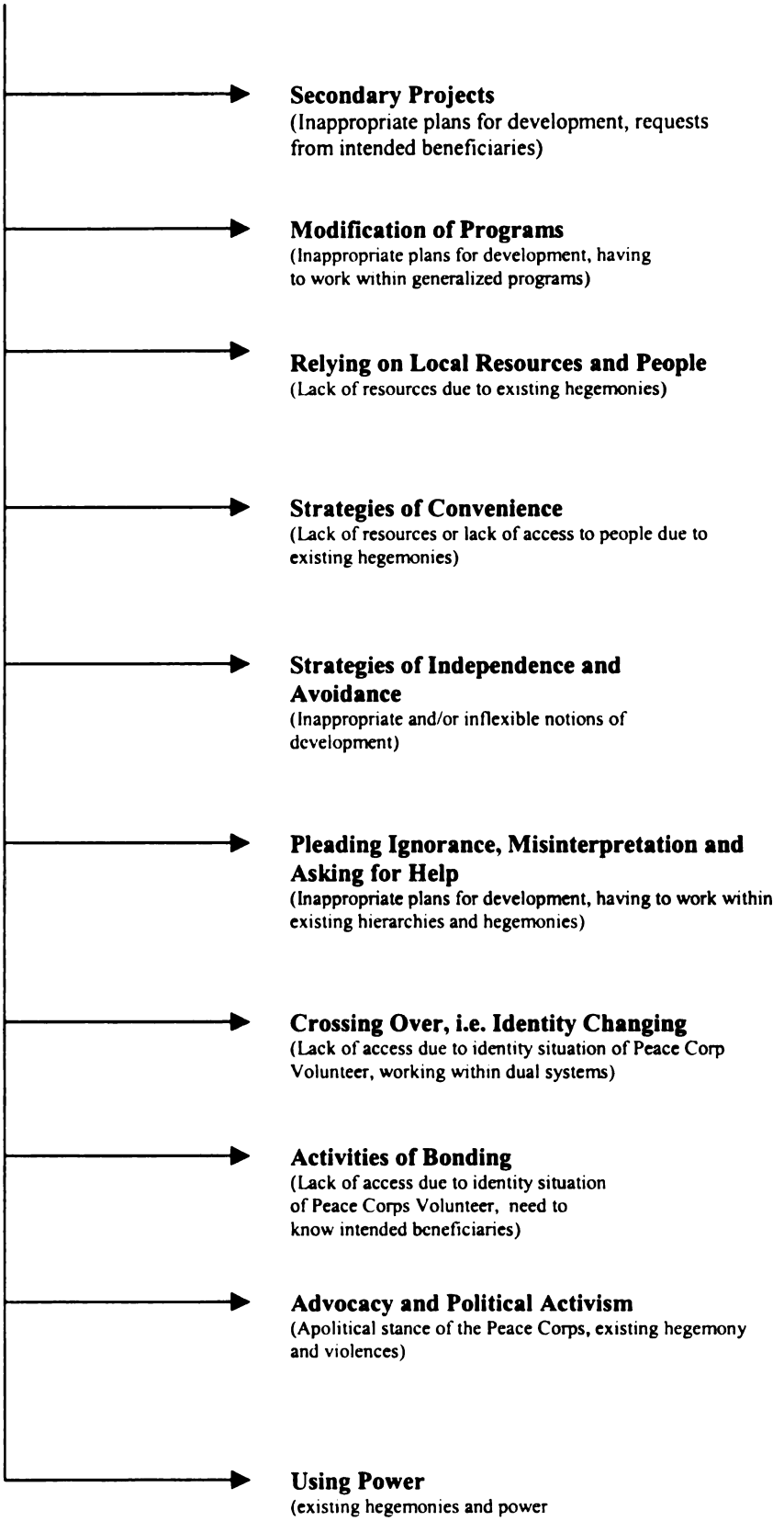
ignorance and misunderstanding directions, a strategy that Ian described. However the line between subversion and position may not be easy to draw: Amanda used her position as a foreigner to subvert hegemonic systems that favored male access to people and resources.

The example that Greg offered is especially useful in viewing development and improvisation as potentially contradictory process, and indicates another variable that underlies improvisational strategy: Power. Greg's discussion on using persons of power to illustrates such contradictions:

> "...we have this water tank, and it essentially has a little pipe from it that leads to a bigger water holding tank and the question was where to locate that. Do you locate it near the chief's house, do you locate it near the local business owner who has a small store? In general those things weren't that difficult. You generally went with whoever was the most powerful... Because if you are going to try to build a water system but you are going to thwart the chief in the village that you are gong to build the water system, you are in fact, not going to end up building the water system. Whereas if you choose the local businessman, his ability to constrain the project from even happening is not as great. And since I thought that the project had merit in and of itself, and the villagers really wanted it, that acquiescing to the village chief was more practical and perhaps even more reasonable."

As Greg points out, acquiescing to persons of power may be necessary to implement development projects that the intended beneficiaries want and/or need. The issue with this is that power hierarchies can be reinforced in this manner as opposed to being challenged and renegotiated. This example implicates that there are contradictions existing in using improvisation as a method of defining, negotiating and renegotiating development. By first placing wells in the chief's yard, Greg used a positional strategy,

Figure 5.2. Themes of Improvisation



however this strategy could serve to solidify existing community hierarchies. But many Peace Corps Volunteers indicated making such concessions, viewing them as a "reality of development." With this, improvisation must also be considered as a potentially contradictory process.

There are several implications for Peace Corps Volunteers and other program implementers of development. Peace Corps Volunteers in this research often described the advantage of flexibility, the ability to recognize resources and the ability to manipulate various systems in their discussions on improvisation. The use of improvisation also involves the recognition of dominant and subordinate power differentials. However, the use of power and the power to improvise seems to depend upon the Peace Corps Volunteer's own empowerment. Activities of bonding and crossing-over are also very intricately related and affect whether or not the Peace Corps Volunteer will be able to improvise and how. As Colleen and Jael acknowledged, bonding with their intended beneficiaries allowed them to crossover gender, ethnic and hierarchal boundaries so that they could better serve their communities. Amanda draws out this intricacy further in that she discussed how her ability to bond to her intended beneficiaries depended in part on her ability to crossover by using her ambiguity as a foreigner. All of these examples illustrate that improvisation is not a passive act, but one that is reflective of the following:

1. Peace Corps Volunteer's observations of existing incongruencies and contradictions in the social interfaces of development;

2. Her or his judgment of existing incongruencies and contradictions in development;

3. Her or his identification with her or his intended beneficiaries;

4. Her or his ability to manipulate, detour around and/or reject inappropriate or exploitative systems that she or he has to work within; and;

5. Her or his own empowerment.

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of this research have demonstrated that improvisation is a purposeful strategy and a "proven practice" to negotiate and renegotiate conflictive interests in development. Peace Corps Volunteers are able to demand and assert their own agency in development and in the process form their own discourses, ideologies of intervention, counter-tendencies and modernities. For instance, Ian's use of avoidance as an improvisational strategy in renegotiating development and Amanda's changing of identities parallels Cleaver's and Jeganathan's discussions on modernity as described in the conceptual framework of this research. Such improvisations help to explain the divergent patterns observed in development.

Improvisation can be a direct and indirect method to challenge power via "underground" strategies. In this way, improvisation can also be though of as a method of controlling and/or securing power by the Peace Corps Volunteer. It is also a formative process as indicated by the narratives of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of this research. Their experiences indicated the possibility of the program implementer to transcend her or his prescribed role in development so that she or he can become an agent for emancipatory social change.

Recommendations for Further Research

Issues of identity in international development are extremely important in understanding how it is enacted, appropriated, challenged and renegotiated. Though this research discusses identity situation of the Peace Corps Volunteer according to gender, more research on gender in development, specifically how it is experienced in the social interfaces by the program implementers is needed. This research suggests that identity situation according to the ethnicity of the program implementer is an important context of international community development. Specifically due to the heavy recruitment of minority volunteers by the Peace Corps, understandings of how non-Caucasian ethnicities experience facilitating international development while implementing programs are needed. Such information and research can provide Peace Corps Volunteers with improvisational strategies that have been developed by other Peace Corps Volunteers. Furthermore, research on identity situation according to the age of the Peace Corps Volunteer is also needed as age (the older the volunteer, the more she or he may be associated with having a spouse, children, etc...) may also influence improvisational strategy.

Recommendations for Methodology

Before the research interviews began I was directed by a Peace Corps Volunteer to inform other volunteers of the purpose of my research using the word, "improvisation." This worked out well, as it limited the scope of a very complex experience.

The dilemma was written with a view of the Peace Corps an inflexible development agency in mind. However, during the research interviews many Peace

Corps Volunteers indicated that the Peace Corps was not inflexible. This should be corrected for any future research.

Although this research has been situated according to the social interfaces of development, it is not a social interface analysis. The various actors of international community development include the program planners, administrative representatives from the Peace Corps Organization, representatives from the local funding organizations and especially the intended beneficiaries of development. Interviewing these various actors would provide this research with different views/ideologies of development that influence improvisation processes and would be appropriate for a long-term social interface analysis. Also interviewing the intended beneficiaries of development on processes of program implementation and improvisation according to aspects of modernity is essential, as it would provide a better explanation to the outcomes of international development.

Appendix A. Interview Questions for Pilot Test and Research Participants

1. Interview questions for both the pilot test and research participants before discussion of the dilemma:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your educational background in?
4. When did you volunteer for the Peace Corps?
5. Which country hosted you during your time in the Peace Corps?
6. Which languages did you study? Were you fluent before you arrived in the host country? Were you fluent by the time you left the host country? Where did you go for language training?
7. What was/were the program/programs that you were implementing?
8. How did you feel about these programs?
9. What was the primary source of funding for the programs you implemented?
10. How much room did you have (allowance) to deviate from the program plans?
11. Why did you decide to become a Peace Corps volunteer?
12. How do you feel about the time you spent in the Peace Corps?

2. Interview questions for both the pilot test and research participants during the discussion of the dilemma:

1. How did you feel about the dilemma?
2. Have you experienced anything similar to the dilemma that you were sent while volunteering in the Peace Corps? Please share your thoughts about it...
3. When did you experience this (was it early or late in your career as a Peace Corps volunteer)?
4. How did you resolve the dilemma that you described?
5. Did you look to others for help? Who (i.e. ex-patriot or local, woman or a man, youth or elder)?
6. What factors, influences, policies and/or people might have influenced your decision?
7. Was the resolution satisfying to the community that you were working with? If so, how can you tell?
8. Was this resolution satisfying to you and to the program/funding agencies? If so, how can you tell?
9. How might you have resolved your experience differently?

3. Interview questions for both the pilot test and research participants after the discussion of the dilemma:

1. What does improvisation mean to you?
2. How often did you have to improvise during your time in the Peace Corps (i.e. never, often, frequently, sometimes)?
3. On a scale of one to ten, one being that you have a very small tendency to improvise and a ten being that you frequently tended to improvise, what

would you rate your own tendency to improvise during your experience in the Peace Corps? Why?

4. How might your gender have influenced
   what program you were placed in?
   how the intended beneficiaries of the programs responded to you?
   what you were allowed to do?
   what resources your or your intended beneficiaries have access to?
   how much you had to renegotiate the program plans?
   how the intended beneficiaries responded to you?
   how you acted or behaved in specific instances?

4a. Interview questions for the participants of the pilot test after the interview:

1. How did you feel about this interview?
2. How was it unclear or confusing?
3. How could this interview be improved?
4. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group interview to help me analyze and discuss the data with other participants?

4b. Interview questions for the research participants of the final study after the interview:

1. How did you feel about this interview?
2. Do you have any questions for me?
3. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group interview to help me analyze and discuss the data with other participants?

Appendix B. Focus Group Questions

1. [after the relation of a pilot member's experience in improvisation to the group] What do you think of the experience that was just related to you?
2. Do you have any questions regarding this experience?
3. What strategies of improvisation did you notice?
4. Why and how were these strategies used?
5. Would anybody like to relate any of their own experiences in improvisation with the group?
6. Do you think that this person's gender was implicated in how she/he had to renegotiate program plans? What do you see in this person's story that may relate to their gender?
7. [after the presentation of the initial data analysis] What do you think of this analysis of your interviews?
8. Do you have any questions for me?
9. Do you see any key points that are missing from this initial analysis? Which ones?
10. Would you analyze any of these point differently? Why or Why not? If so, How?
11. How do you feel about this analysis? Are you comfortable with it?

Appendix C. Dilemma

Experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers in Program Implementation: the creative renegotiation of international community development.

Dear Peace Corps Volunteer,

Please read over this dilemma and reflect upon any of the dilemmas that you may have experienced implementing programs during your service with the Peace Corps. Please call me at (517) 337-0618 or e-mail me at barthol6@msu.edu to schedule a confidential personal or confidential telephone interview.

Thank you for your time,

Pamela Bartholomew

A Peace Corps volunteer was sent to implement a program funded by USAID in a remote village of Nepal. The purpose of this program was to implement a community forestry program that would teach local women about community forestry group policies, regulations and rights. This program was designed to help women empower themselves through economic independence.

The community forestry program that the Peace Corps Volunteer had to implement had the support from a few very vocal female activists of the local community. The remainder of the community, specifically the men, did not like the idea of women learning about and participating in community forestry. The men gave many reasons for this. The first reason was that women had no time to learn about community forestry-their jobs included running the household, performing agricultural labor and fetching water. According to most men in this village, women's roles as wives, mothers and daughters were believed to be more important to the functioning of society than their potential roles as community forestry managers, policy makers, workers and teachers.

Secondly, being involved in a community forestry program was indicative of privilege and status. There were some men in the community who were involved in a previous community forestry program in the same region, but this program did not succeed. Most of the men in the community believed that this new program would give women an unfair advantage over men and that this would lead to civil disorder. Also, some of the matriarchs of the community, respected for their age, their children and their grandchildren felt that the community forestry program that was designed for all women would undermine the authority and respect that they had earned.

Consequently, many husbands forbade their wives to participate in this program. These women did not want to shame their families by disobeying their husbands. Women's livelihoods were secured by their marriage status in this village. If a woman chose to participate in this program, she risked being divorced and losing all access to resources necessary to feed, shelter and take care of herself and her children.

Despite all of these contradictions with implementing the community forestry program, the Peace Corps Volunteer had to fully implement program within two years.

Appendix D. Invitation Letter

Dear Peace Corps Volunteer,

Hello. My name is Pamela Bartholomew and I am a Master's student in Agriculture and Extension Education at Michigan State University. I have recently finished my coursework for my degree and am in the process of beginning my thesis research. The purpose of this research is to explore and describe experiences of former Peace Corps volunteers in program implementation. Specifically, I will be exploring the creative processes behind program implementation and how and why Peace Corps volunteers may renegotiate their program plans to better suit the needs of the intended beneficiaries of their programs.

I am writing to invite you to share your experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer with me. If you are interested, you can choose to participate with a confidential personal interview or a confidential telephone interview. Upon receiving a signed consent form I will send you part of the interview instrument to reflect on for one week before the interview, which will be scheduled at your convenience. I wish to conduct one personal or telephone interview per participant and each interview will take approximately one hour of your time. After these interviews I will hold a focus group over lunch or dinner at my house in late July. For this focus group I will invite all of the participants of this research to help me analyze some of my findings from the personal interviews and to share their experiences in program implementation with the rest of the group.

If you have any questions, please contact me via e-mail: barthol6@msu.edu or telephone: (517) 337-0618. If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and send the attached consent form enclosed to Pamela Bartholomew, 406 Agriculture Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing MI, 48824. Your participation in this study is at all times completely voluntary.
I am very excited to work with and learn more about the Peace Corps community. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Pamela Bartholomew

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