DIVERSITY'S HIDDEN DIMENSION: GAYS AND LESBIANS IN THE PEACE CORPS

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THESIS ABSTRACT

DIVERSITY'S HIDDEN DIMENSION:

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Gays and lesbians have served as Volunteers in the Peace Corps since it began in 1961. Their continuous presence was rarely noticed during the Peace Corps' early years because most were invisible and silent. Since then, the convergence of several trends has encouraged gay people to acquire a voice and to establish a visible presence: the emergence of the gay liberation and gay rights movements, fundamental changes in the Peace Corps' training and selection practices, and the advent of "special needs" designations for Volunteers who potentially face exceptional challenges.

The purpose of this study was to determine if sufficient evidence exists to argue in favor of a "special needs" designation for gays and lesbians entering the Peace Corps, which now designates as "special needs" groups such populations as seniors, the physically challenged, married couples, and minorities.

The study posed three questions. First, does sexual orientation influence gay and lesbian Returned Peace Corps Volunteers' qualitative assessment of their Peace Corps experience? Second, do they believe that they have special or unique needs which they consider should be addressed? Third, how adequately were those needs addressed by the Peace Corps?

Two strategies were employed for conducting the research: a questionnaire was developed and distributed to lesbian and gay Returned Peace Corps Volunteers; oral interviews were conducted with current and former Peace Corps staff in order to confirm, amplify or challenge the information received from the questionnaire.

The majority of those surveyed believed that gayness was either value-neutral or a positive factor in work performance, in the quality of interpersonal relationships, and in the sense of personal satisfaction and fulfillment about Peace Corps service. The majority also concurred that lesbians and gays do have "special needs" regarding training and support which the Peace Corps has attended to inadequately.

To the gays and lesbians who have served

as Peace Corps Volunteers

1961 - 1991

We have a voice now

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My degree committee, Dr. Janis Droegkamp and Dr. Diane Ehrlich, deserve high praise for their support, encouragement and unwavering confidence in me. Their affirmative guidance reinforced my will to persevere. A special expression of gratitude is due to Dr. Droegkamp for her relentless, loving insistence that I could do this, and for her steadfast accompaniment through it all.

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To all those who participated in this research project, I extend, across the divide of anonymity, my heartfelt thanks. Their responsiveness, enthusiasm, and ringing endorsements of this project meant more than they can know.

Finally, I would like recognize the wisest and kindest man I know -- my life partner, Dr. Bruce M. Broerman. Without his unconditional love, loyalty and companionship, this project would have been the loneliest of quests.

JBK

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INTRODUCTION

When I applied to the Peace Corps, one of the forms I filled out contained this question: "Do you have homosexual tendencies?" While by then I knew that I was gay, I had not told anyone. Assuming that answering the question truthfully would disqualify me from the Peace Corps, and too afraid to ask for clarification, I checked "no." In 1969 I completed pre-service training and began Peace Corps service in a rural village in El Salvador. I still view my Peace Corps service as one of two transcendent experiences in my life; the other was "coming out" as an openly gay man.

Protecting the "deep secret" about my sexual orientation while I was in the Peace Corps caused me considerable psychological and emotional pain. During my training and Volunteer service I never experienced permission from trainers, other Volunteers or Peace Corps staff to be open about who I was. I believed the Peace Corps assumed all Volunteers were heterosexual. The cross cultural adaptation training we received about male and female roles and interpersonal relationships was directed at heterosexuals. The men and women had separate training sessions about sexual mores, do's and don'ts. I clearly remember a trainer reciting to the men names of brothels that were on an unofficial "hygienically approved" list.

In spite of the cost of my silence, I succeeded. No one ever knew about my profound sense of alienation induced by fear that my "secret" would become known. No one ever knew that eventually I did discover the El Salvadoran gay subculture. Although never regretting

being a Peace Corps Volunteer, I can still recall how I felt during training and Volunteer service about the omission of attention to some of my most fundamental gay-related needs and concerns.

For over a decade I have again been associated with the Peace Corps, first as a trainer in Chile and then as a training specialist with a company which, under contract to the Peace Corps, staffs and manages training centers in countries of destination. My work keeps me in constant contact with training centers, curriculum development projects, the evolution in the Peace Corps' training philosophy, Peace Corps staff, and with networks of serving and returned Peace Corps Volunteers. The anecdotal accounts of many gay and lesbian friends associated with the Peace Corps as staff or as returned Volunteers have made me wonder how much has really changed in the Peace Corps' understanding as an institution of the special challenges that Volunteer service presents to gay and lesbian Volunteers.

During my deliberations about what to choose as a MA thesis topic, I heard a radio interview with James G. Wolf, author of Gay Priests (1989). He conducted an anonymous survey among gay Roman Catholic priests in the U.S., asking them to reflect on the quality of their lives and the effectiveness of their service within the seemingly incompatible conditions of being gay and priests. During the interview, I found myself saying, "I could do that with gay and lesbian Returned Peace Corps Volunteers!" At that moment, this project was born.

CHAPTER I

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

In formulating my research questions, I was intent on avoiding the same pitfall Wolf (1989), a heterosexual, experienced while drafting his questionnaire for gay priests:

> As a gay friend of mine wisely pointed out to me, it [the questionnaire in draft version] would have provided a great deal of information about "who was doing what to whom and how often"....Simply put, my initial preoccupation was with trying to document sexuality as behavior (p. 4).

While heterosexuals rarely describe the characteristics and quality of their relationships with other people in terms limited to sexual behavior, homosexuality is frequently understood by heterosexuals as predominately a matter of sexual partners and activity.

My research interest, on the other hand, was in seeking initial information about the role a gay or lesbian sexual orientation plays in constraining or enhancing a cross-cultural interpersonal ability. Since the Peace Corps is philosophically a people-to-people organization, the success of a Peace Corps Volunteer rests largely on the ability to interact in another culture sensitively and genuinely with people who are predictably as filled with misconceptions about Americans as a Volunteer is initially about them. The focus of my research was therefore not on sexual behavior in a cross cultural setting, but rather, on

how people who defined themselves as <u>being</u> gay or lesbian viewed their experiences through a perspective of sexual orientation.

Like Wolf (1989), I believe that:

> ...our sexuality, the aspect of ourselves determined by gender, sexual attraction, and sexual activity, can play a powerful role in determining our routine interactions with others depending on the extent to which we emphasize its importance. I suspect that for most heterosexuals sexuality is usually an unconscious component of personality that only becomes significant during times of fantasy or intimacy with another person. Though this is no doubt true for some gay men and women, the issue of sexuality is most likely much more conscious in their lives. Because of homosexuality's ongoing prominence in the mind of a gay person, sexuality, and all issues related to it, provides a near constant source of social and psychological ambiguities that one must address....For this reason, I feel safe in concluding that the average homosexual man or woman is far more qualified than the average heterosexual to assess the extent to which sexuality influences our psychological, social and spiritual behavior (pp. 5-6).

First, I wanted to know how sexual orientation influenced gay and lesbian Returned Peace Corps Volunteers' (RPCVs) qualitative assessment of their Peace Corps experience. Second, I wanted to know if lesbian and gay RPCVs believe that they have special or unique needs which they consider should be addressed during various chronological stages of their involvement with the Peace Corps. Finally, I wanted to know the opinion of gay and lesbian RPCVs about how adequately those needs were addressed by the Peace Corps.

Methodology

Two strategies were employed for conducting the research: a questionnaire was developed and distributed to lesbian and gay RPCVs; oral interviews were conducted with current and former Peace Corps staff in order to confirm, amplify or challenge the information received from the questionnaire.

Questionnaire development. The questionnaire, which appears in full in Appendix A, contains sections organized in the same general phases as Volunteers experience their chronological association with the Peace Corps: application, staging (a type of pre-departure event), pre-service training, and Volunteer service. Each section contains questions unique to the activities undertaken during that particular phase. For example, in the application/recruitment section, respondents are asked to report on discussions they had with a Peace Corps recruiter about sexual orientation as a qualifier for Peace Corps service. Other questions are repeated in each section. For example, respondents are asked to indicate how open they were about being lesbian or gay during each of the phases. In all, the questionnaire contains 41 major entries, including baseline information items. At the end of the questionnaire, four optional narrative response questions invite respondents to provide additional comments about their experiences.

Two eligibility requirements were placed on potential respondents. First, respondents must have "come out"

(acknowledged being lesbian or gay), at least to themselves, by the end of their Peace Corps Service. Second, they could not have voluntarily terminated early their Volunteer service period of two years. By placing these requirements on respondents, the sampling would reflect a population of RPCVs who were cognizant of their sexual orientation, and therefore more likely to be able to evaluate its influence on their relationships with the people around them. Furthermore, the issues surrounding attrition rates would be avoided by limiting the survey to RPCVs who completed their service. This exclusion of early terminators would also increase the probability of receiving data from RPCVs who held fundamental, positive beliefs about the value of the Peace Corps as a concept and as a personal experience.

Finally, the issue of anonymity had to be addressed: rather than offer anonymity as an option, it was established as policy. There are many gradations to being "out" as a gay or lesbian person, and even the most openly gay people occasionally find themselves in situations where discretion is advisable. A published survey qualifies as one such situation.

Survey sampling technique. Snowball sampling was chosen as the method of data collection. Snowball sampling works as a chain letter, where the first persons contacted agree to contact others, and is "particularly useful in the study of deviant subcultures where respondents may not be visible, and routine

sampling procedure may be impractical" (Bailey, 1987, p. 95). Bailey's usage of "deviant" is taken in the nonpejorative sense.

While snowball sampling is usually neither random nor probabilistic, it was clearly the technique of choice for research which is more qualitative than quantitative in nature. Moreover, there was no known population to randomize, since the Peace Corps maintains no biographical records which identify RPCVs by sexual orientation. Finally, I was in a unique position to conduct this research. Singleton, B. C. Straights, M. M. Straits and McAllister (1988) point out that the snowball technique is "the basic approach to obtaining access to private settings. The key to its implementation is knowing where to start" (p. 310).

I had the access to the private setting, I already belonged to it, I knew where to start, and most importantly, I believed that I would be trusted by gay and lesbian RPCVs. For the past decade, both personally and professionally, I have been closely connected to the Peace Corps as an openly gay man. Among my friends and acquaintances are many lesbian and gay RPCVs and Peace Corps staff. Other friends and acquaintances to whom I had access are known in the gay subculture as "gay sensitive" people who themselves had access to other networks of gay and lesbian RPCVs and Peace Corps staff. I was confident that my first-tier, immediate access to the target population would be sufficient to get the snowball rolling down the hill.

Questionnaire distribution. Three methods were employed for distributing the questionnaire; making personal contacts, placing an announcement in the newsletter of the Chicago Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (CARPCV) organization, and placing an ad in the "Hotline," a twice-monthly publication of the Peace Corps containing employment and educational opportunities.

From the first fifteen personal contacts, ten people qualified and agreed to participate, and all of them offered referrals to others. These referrals were contacted by phone, in the belief that personalizing the request to participate in the survey would increase the rate of return. This branching path of contacts and referrals produced 32 of the 80 questionnaires in the survey. Another 35 questionnaires in the survey are from respondents who received them from those participants who agreed to distribute additional surveys.

The most novel of those distribution activities was suggested by a staff member in the Peace Corps Headquarters. Introducing himself as a gay man, he said that he had found in his office photocopier the cover page of the questionnaire and was wondering if he was still in time to participate. Besides providing the names of other potential respondents, he suggested putting a big sign and stack of questionnaires in the Returned Volunteer lounge in headquarters and offered to do it himself and to keep it supplied.

The first announcement was placed in the CARPVC monthly newsletter. Twelve RPCVs contacted me, and 11 questionnaires

were returned. This gratifying response was offset, however, by the experience of trying to get the announcement placed in the "Hotline," which is distributed to approximately 7,000 RPCVs and another 6,000 currently serving Volunteers.

An announcement of this sort in the "Hotline" was a double anomaly, for it was neither a job nor an educational opportunity. More unusual still was the gay-themed content of the announcement. The "Hotline" staff, while very supportive and committed to placing the announcement, felt the need to get approval. The approval request eventually traveled all the way to the desk of the Deputy Director of Peace Corps, who in turn sought the advice of the Office of the General Counsel of the Peace Corps.

The General Counsel's office expressed their concern that the motivation for conducting the survey could be construed as an advocacy effort promoting the inclusion of homosexuals in the "protected class" of minorities under Federal law. Although repeated reassurances did not convince them, they did consent to the publication of the announcement if allowed to make some "small editorial changes" to the submitted text.

Following are the two texts, first as submitted to the "Hotline", then as edited and published.

> GAY AND LESBIAN RPCVs NEEDED. I'm seeking assistance from RPCVs who: 1) were "out", at least to themselves, at some time during their PCV years, and 2) who did not early terminate of their own volition. I need you to fill out a questionnaire about the ways in which being gay or lesbian influenced the quality of your life as a Volunteer in relationship to your work, to Peace Corps staff, to other Volunteers and Host

> Country Nationals. I'm gathering this information for use in a Master's thesis about training and support issues for Gays and Lesbians as a unique population of Peace Corps Volunteers. Confidentiality is assured -- no names will be used in the thesis or shared with anyone else. I'm a gay RPCV (El Salvador, 1969 - 1972) and have been involved as a private contractor with Peace Corps training activities for many years. I need questionnaires returned to me by May 1, 1991 at the very latest, so please contact me without delay. To save time, I prefer that you call me, but contacting me by mail is acceptable. [Name, address and phone number follow].
>
> RPCV CONDUCTS RESEARCH. Jim Kelly, RPCV/El Salvador is conducting Master's thesis research on the experience of other RPCVs as it relates to their sexual preference. If you are interested in filling out a questionnaire, about which he assures confidentiality, you should contact [name, address and phone number follow] (Announcement, 1991, p. 4).

In submitting my request to the "Hotline" on February 10, 1991 for a February 15 publication, I was calculating three months for survey distribution and returns before my deadline. The announcement appeared on April 15, two months behind my schedule and only one month before the deadline for survey submission. The bureaucratic delay and the hopelessly diluted text rendered virtually useless this otherwise promising source of respondents. Six people contacted me, four of them heterosexuals. The two gay respondents did return questionnaires.

Future research on the experiences of lesbian and gay Peace Corps Volunteers will probably also depend on techniques similar to snowball sampling. The "Hotline," by virtue of its large and comprehensive distribution to current and former Peace Corps

Volunteers, is an ideal vehicle for gaining access to this otherwise invisible and undocumented population. However, it appears that effective use of the "Hotline" for such a purpose will depend on official sanctioning, longer lead times, and use of unambiguous terminology explicitly inviting gay and lesbian participation.

Interviews with Peace Corps staff. Former and current Peace Corps staff were interviewed in an attempt to corroborate the survey results, in particular those items which asked respondents to evaluate the quality of their relationships and interactions with people who represented the Peace Corps, such as recruiters, trainers, and staff members in the Peace Corps offices in their countries of service.

Whether employees or short-term consultants, staff perform dual roles. They facilitate, enhance and support the work of the Volunteers. They are also commissioned to protect the political and bureaucratic interests (among others) of the Peace Corps as a U.S. Government agency through adherence to established policies, practices and procedures. The second motivation for interviewing Staff members, therefore, was to determine what policies, practices and procedures related to lesbians and gays have existed over time within the Peace Corps. Thirty current and former staff, both heterosexual and gay or lesbian, consented to telephone interviews.

Survey Respondents' Baseline Data

Of the 80 qualifying questionnaires, 11 are from RPCVs who served in the 1960s, 21 are from RPCVs who served in the 1970s, and 48 are from RPCVs who served in the 1980s. In this last pool of 48 are 3 currently serving Volunteers. The average age of the respondents is 37, while the median age is 33. Nine respondents served for more than two years in the same country, and 3 respondents served two-year terms in two different countries. Thirty-two respondents lived in villages, 31 in rural towns and 16 lived in regional or capital cities (79 respondents answered this question). Of the 77 respondents who identified their job as a Volunteer, 33 worked in the Education sector, 18 in Agriculture, 17 in Community Development, and 9 in Health.

The following tables provide information about countries and decades of service and the distribution of participants by gender:

Table 1: Survey Respondents By Gender and Decade of Service.

DECADE of SERVICE	MALE	FEMALE
1960s	11	0
1970s	20	1
1980s	34	14
TOTAL	65	15

Only 19% of the survey respondents are women. This underrepresentation is probably explained by the consequences of

the research being conducted by a male who had initial access to primarily gay male RPCV networks, and the subsequent gender imbalance in the questionnaire referral and distribution system. There is no reason to believe that there are fewer lesbians than gays in the Volunteer ranks. No studies indicate that there is a lower incidence of predominate or exclusive homosexuality among women than among men. Moreover, according to the House of Representatives (1990) report, women comprise 52% of the Volunteer population (p. 5).

Table 2: Survey Respondents by Country and Decade of Service

COUNTRY	1960s	1970s	1980s	TOTAL
BRAZIL		1		1
CAMEROON			1	1
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC			1	1
CHILE		1	1	2
COTE D'IVOIRE			1	1
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC			1	1
ECUADOR		1		1
GHANA		1	2	3
HONDURAS			6	6
INDIA	1			1
IRAN	1			1
JAMAICA			1	1
KENYA		1	3	4
KOREA		3		3
LESOTHO		1		1
LIBERIA		3	3	6
MALAYSIA	1			1
MAURITANIA			2	2
MICRONESIA			1	1
MOROCCO			4	4
NEPAL	3	2	1	6
NIGER		1	1	2
PARAGUAY		1	6	7
PERU	2			2
PHILIPPINES	2		2	4
SENEGAL		1	1	2
SIERRA LEONE			4	4
ST. VINCENT		1	1	2
SWAZILAND			2	2
THAILAND		3		3
TURKEY	1			1
ZAIRE			2	2
UNKNOWN			1	1
TOTALS	11	21	48	80

Interviewed Staff's Baseline Data

Nine women and 21 men were interviewed. Appendix B lists the interviewees by first-name pseudonym and describes the positions they have held within the Peace Corps. Many have experiences which span over two decades. Because of this overlap and the longevity of many staff, the number of perspectives for each of Peace Corps' three decades exceeds the number of staff interviewed. The following table illustrates the number of people, by decade, who have held various positions within the agency. The table does not differentiate between field and headquarters positions for those job categories which exist in each, but that information is explicit in Appendix B.

Table 3: Interviewed Staff by Jobs Held in the Peace Corps.

FUNCTION	1960s	1970s	1980s - Present
RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT		5	13
STAGING AND PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	14	7	8
COUNTRY DIRECTORS AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS	2	6	3
OPERATIONS: DIRECT VOLUNTEER SUPPORT	1	2	16
STAFF TRAINING		5	4
ADMINISTRATION	1	0	2
TOTALS	18	25	46

Topics Excluded From the Research

Over half of the survey respondents and of the staff interviewed raised issues which are beyond the limited scope of this research. Some of those issues are addressed in Chapter 6 as topics which merit future consideration. Others are simply beyond the scope of this project. Those issues are listed here and briefly discussed in Appendix C: AIDS, moral and religious positions on homosexuality, legal and legislative considerations, and bisexuality.

Conventions Used in This Thesis

Use of gay, lesbian and straight. Contemporary gay and lesbian anthropologists, historians, psychologists and sociologists have produced volumes of opinions about the most appropriate terms to use for describing ourselves. The term homosexual, first introduced in 1869, is itself a constructed word which did not become part of standard American English until the 1920s (Katz, 1983, p. 16) and has acquired exclusively clinical and negative behavioral meanings. Although predominate usage cannot be necessarily equated with consensus, within the U.S. homosexual subculture, the terms gay (for homosexual men) and lesbian (for homosexual women) are the most widely utilized and are employed in this thesis.

Lesbians and gays commonly refer to heterosexuals as straights. It is not a pejorative term, although its precise origin is unknown. Straight is not a name heterosexuals chose

for themselves; therefore it is used sparingly in this thesis as a communicative word among lesbians or gays. In all other contexts the term heterosexual is used.

Phases terminology. As described earlier, the questionnaire used in the survey was organized according to chronological passages or phases associated with being a Peace Corps Volunteer. Over the last thirty years, the nomenclature for these phases has experienced several changes. For the purposes of the research, the most generic and/or the most durable of those terms was selected to denote each phase. All persons interested in becoming Peace Corps Volunteers must first apply, be screened for qualifying skills and requirements, be cleared on a criminal background check, be matched to a program requiring those skills, and be invited to training. These activities are referred to singularly or collectively as Application/Recruitment and Placement. Before training, selected applicants attend a pre-departure orientation, an activity which has undergone many changes in the last two decades. In the thesis, this phase is called Staging. The next phase, Pre-service Training, serves as both a preparation and a qualification process. Those who do not qualify are "deselected" and do not become Peace Corps Volunteers. Since they are not yet Volunteers, those undergoing training are called Trainees. Those who successfully complete the Pre-Service Training are then invited to become Peace Corps

Volunteers, at which time the two years of Volunteer service begin.

Chapter Organization

The first chapter was devoted to a description of the project development and research methodology. Chapter 2 presents three major historic occurrences and analyzes the impact they had on the context and environment in which gays and lesbians experienced the Peace Corps. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are organized according to sequential phases used in the questionnaire: Application/Recruitment and Staging, Pre-Service Training, and Volunteer Service.

Sequential phases were used as the organizing rationale because they represent delimited periods of time with unique types of interactions between Volunteers-to-be (or Volunteers) and representatives of the Peace Corps. Although the time between applying to the Peace Corps and receiving an invitation to training can extend over many months, few applicants during that time have face-to-face encounters with a Peace Corps representative. Most communication is by correspondence or by telephone. The staging process, while providing personal encounters with Peace Corps representatives, is of very short duration; the longest stagings were held over five days, while the current staging lasts two and one-half days. Pre-service training for the last twenty years has been largely conducted either in the country of destination or a third country overseas.

This intensive 10 - 14 week preparation phase provides the Volunteer-in-training with the first comprehensive exposure to all of the types of people who will form part of the future Volunteer's life -- other Volunteers, local Peace Corps staff, training staff, and Host Country Nationals.

At the end of pre-service training, the final selection of candidates for Volunteer service is conducted. Volunteer service, traditionally two years in length, places the Volunteer in direct and almost exclusive relationships with Host Country Nationals. The people who live in the locale where the Volunteer is assigned become the Volunteer's primary community. Because each of these phases has uniquely distinguishing characteristics and is designed to perform discreet functions within the whole Peace Corps process, the impact of each phase on the experiences of lesbians and gays is similarly unique.

However, for several reasons, less analysis is devoted to the application/recruitment and staging phases than to pre-service training and Volunteer service. The survey respondents' recollections of the earlier phases were less vivid and more tenuous. Personal interactions with Peace Corps representatives during application/recruitment and staging were, and are, much more nominal than during pre-service training and Volunteer service. Stagings, or other forms of pre-departure events, did not become regularized until the early 1970s, yet they never became standardized. Both the objectives and the formats of staging events have been in continual evolution over the last

twenty years, thereby reducing the degree of commonality experienced by the respondents.

Conversely, more consistency is present in the nature and form of the pre-service training and the Volunteer service phases since the early 1970s. These undoubtedly were also the more memorable phases for the survey respondents, since their answers were more definitive and confident. The nature of participation was the final determinant in concentrating the analysis more on the pre-service training and Volunteer service phases. The first two phases are characterized by actions on the individual, while the remaining phases are characterized by actions in concert with the individual. In the recruitment/application phase, the Peace Corps evaluates a candidate's suitability for service. In the staging phase, pre-departure orientation information is given to those invited to training. Both of these phases are marked by relative passivity on the part of candidates. To the contrary, the pre-service training and Volunteer service phases encourage the active participation of Volunteers and require much higher levels of reciprocal efforts. Increasing levels of personal investment throughout the phases yield more certain and durable memories. The tables presented in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 consistently indicate higher frequencies of responses in the pre-service training and Volunteer phases of the questionnaire than in the application/recruitment or staging phases.

CHAPTER II

SIGNIFICANT TRENDS AFFECTING LESBIANS AND GAYS IN THE PEACE CORPS

During Peace Corps' thirty year life span, significant social and political changes affecting gays and lesbians in the U. S. and within the Peace Corps itself have occurred. Although this study does not attempt to correlate the survey results with specific evolutions in conditions affecting gays and lesbians, three such conditions do merit mention. The beginning of Peace Corps' second decade coincided with the advent of the Gay Liberation movement in the U. S. Also at the onset of the second decade, the Peace Corps radically modified its philosophy and practices regarding training qualification standards and practices. In the 1980s, the Peace Corps implemented a number strategies designed to diversify its Volunteer population through recruitment efforts aimed at a number of minority populations.

The Advent of the Gay Liberation Movement

Peace Corps had already been operating for a decade prior to the advent of the Gay Liberation Movement in the 1970s. In order to understand the magnitude of the movement's impact on lesbians and gays, a brief synopsis of the legal climate affecting gays and lesbians during the 1960s is in order, for it is within this climate that gays and lesbians served in the Peace Corps during its first ten years.

The Civil Service Commission and the courts. The Federal government's personnel policies, through the Civil Service Commission, persisted as they had been reaffirmed by a U.S. Senate report (1950):

> The regulations of the Civil Service Commission for many years have provided that criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral or notoriously disgraceful conduct, which includes homosexuality or other types of sex perversion, are sufficient grounds for denying appointment to a Government position or for the removal of a person from the Federal Service...(p. 1).
>
> There is no place in the United States Government for persons who violate the laws or the accepted standards of morality, or who otherwise bring disrepute to the Federal service by infamous or scandalous personal conduct. Such persons are not suitable for Government positions and in the case of doubt the American people are entitled to have errors of judgment on the part of their officials, if there must be errors, resolved on the side of caution. It is the opinion of this subcommittee that those who engage in acts of homosexuality and other perverted sex activities are unsuitable for employment in the Federal Government. This conclusion is based upon the fact that persons who indulge in such degraded activity are committing not only illegal and immoral acts, but they also constitute security risks in positions of public trust (p. 19).

In 1957, Frank Kameny, a World War II veteran, was fired from his job with the Army Map Service because the government said it had learned of his homosexuality. Kameny fought a lonely and unsuccessful battle in the lower courts to have his job restored. In 1960, abandoned by his attorney, Kameny petitioned the Supreme Court for a hearing, arguing in a brief of his own writing that "the Civil Service Commission's policy on homosexuality is improperly discriminatory, in that it discriminates against an entire group, not considered as

individuals, in a manner in which other similar groups are not discriminated against, and in that this discrimination has no basis in reason" (Marotta, 1981, p. 23). The Supreme Court denied the petition.

Throughout the 1960s several more isolated and equally unsuccessful litigations against the Civil Service appeared in Federal Courts around the country. Momentum was building, however. In 1969, the U.S. Court of Appeals of the District of Colombia ruled that "federal civil service employees may not be fired for being homosexual unless a 'reasonable connection' is shown between private proclivities and their effect on a given job." Specifically, the court said that "the Civil Service has neither the expertise nor the requisite anointment to make or enforce absolute moral judgments" (Kepner, 1969, p.4).

In spite of continuing pressure brought on it by litigation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not until July, 1973 that the Civil Service Commission announced new guidelines rescinding its previous ban on hiring homosexuals for civilian federal government jobs. Aiken (1975) reported that new guidelines stated:

> Court decisions require that persons not be disqualified from federal employment solely on the basis of homosexual conduct. The Commission and agencies have been enjoined not to find a person unsuitable for federal employment solely because that person is a homosexual or has engaged in homosexual acts.
>
> Based upon these court decisions and outstanding injunction, while a person may not be found unsuitable based on unsubstantiated conclusions concerning possible embarrassment to the federal service, a person

> may be dismissed or found unsuitable for federal employment where the evidence establishes that such person's sexual conduct affects job fitness (p. 4).

As part of the process of selecting a pool of qualified Volunteers, the Peace Corps, through the Civil Service Commission, conducted background investigations of all applicants invited to training. As part of this investigation, fingerprints were checked against FBI files to determine the presence of arrest records. Often this investigation was not completed until candidates were already in training programs. At that time, most of the states still carried "sodomy laws," which permitted the police to routinely arrest homosexuals on morals charges. In many cities around the country, gay bars were routinely raided by the police, the bars closed and the patrons arrested. No one will ever know how many otherwise qualified gay and lesbian citizens were denied access to the Peace Corps or deselected during training because their sexual orientation had given them a criminal record. Rice (1985), reported that "the FBI discovered a confessed [emphasis added] homosexual among the first group of [Peace Corps] Trainees at Iowa State University; he was deselected" (p. 160).

The Stonewall riots. Throughout the 1960s, advocacy efforts (concentrated primarily on employment protection) were sponsored by relatively small groups formed in the 1950s by highly committed people. These groups, such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis operated in Los Angeles and New York

City. Although they had a national agenda, they were virtually unknown to the gay population outside of those cities. The truly nation-wide gay activism, or gay liberation, (and the subsequent broadening of advocacy concerns into all areas of civil rights for gays and lesbians) dates, at least symbolically, to what became known as the Stonewall Riots.

On June 27, 1969, as they had done many times before, the New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich village. This raid, however, did not proceed routinely. The patrons fought back, an action which the press covered. The disturbances continued for the next several nights.

One month later, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was organized. Blumenfeld and Raymond (1988) report that in the early 1970s GLF groups were forming on campuses across the country. They go on to trace the founding of the Gay Activists Alliance (p. 303), the establishment of gay and lesbian community service centers in cities across the country and the creation of the Lambda Defense and Education Fund (p. 310), and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (p. 311).

> By the mid 1970s a grassroots network was tightly in place to facilitate communication and coordinate activities. Lesbians and gays had not only attained "minority" status, but also were well on their way to constituting a genuine political constituency. In the area of pressure politics, their voice was becoming louder (p. 316).

This virtual self-transformation from the obscurity of no status at all to the formation of consciousness as a minority group undoubtedly affected the lesbians and gays who, by the mid-1970s, were applying to the Peace Corps. Gay liberation engendered gay pride. Gay pride engendered increased assertiveness on the part of gays and lesbians, as well as decreased tolerance for victimization, prejudice, or simply being ignored.

From "Stable" to "Able": The Abandonment of the Psychiatric Selection Model

"Prior to final selection, applicants had to withstand the rigors of a Peace Corps training program during which they were continuously assessed. Poor performance during training, health problems, psychological instability, or general unsuitability were all potential grounds for 'deselection'" (Rice 1985). Although many staff members were involved in the selection process, from its inception it was controlled by resident and visiting psychiatrists and psychologists.

Each training program had resident psychologists and or psychiatrists (the number varied according to the size of the trainee population) who were called Field Assessment Officers (FAO). It was the responsibility of the FAO to assemble pertinent information from the various staff about the progress of each trainee. According to Cotton (1975), the FAO was:

> ...responsible for administering any tests required during the first week [of training] as well as peer rating forms [discussed below] about the fifth and

> tenth weeks. He also conducted interviews with each Trainee, meeting regularly with the training staff in order to follow the progress of each Trainee, preparing a detailed assessment report, and referring diagnostic problems to the psychiatrist or physician....The psychiatrist, in addition to interviewing referrals, or making routine interviews of all Trainees in certain projects, conducted several group meetings for Trainees which he structured as he wished (p 14).

During training, Trainees were required to take personality tests. Peace Corps required the administration of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) to every Trainee, and the Strong Vocational Interest Blank was later added as a requirement (Cotton, p. 22).

At the mid-point and at the end of a training program, a staff psychologist, known as the Field Selection Officer (FSO), would visit from Peace Corps Washington. The role of the FSO was to constitute a "selection board" comprised of some of the training staff, the FAO and the FSO, who chaired the board. The board reviewed all of the data from tests, interviews and staff comments. On the basis of this review, the FSO decided which Trainees would remain in the program and which would be deselected.

The mental health profession saw great opportunity in the Peace Corps' commitment to psychiatrically-based assessment models. Morris and Dillon (1963) enthusiastically proclaimed,

> [Peace Corps training] has been viewed as an unparalleled opportunity to put into widespread practice some mental health concepts. Formal recognition of the importance of mental health practices was shown in the development of the Peace Corps training program, in which instructors and

> students participate in a curriculum containing considerable emphasis on the mental health of the individual and the group (p. 226).

Menninger (1964) saw both challenge and opportunity for the psychiatrist to:

> ...apply some principles of preventive medicine toward the goal of maintaining good mental health. Dealing almost entirely with emotionally-healthy individuals, the psychiatrist must anticipate which prospective volunteers will be harmed by an experience as a volunteer overseas, either directly, or indirectly by being inadequate to meet the demands of such service and being unable to function effectively. In addition, the psychiatrist has the responsibility to prepare those persons who appear capable to meet the challenge of an overseas assignment to better cope with the emotion reactions or "culture shock" they will inevitably experience (p. 530).

While most professionals serving as FAOs or FSOs espoused a commitment to preventive mental health as a support tool for the Volunteers when overseas, what stuck in the minds of Trainees was the constant questioning, probing, observing and public displays of taking notes on clipboards exhibited by the assessment staff. Trainees frequently complained about the anxiety they felt about being observed, analyzed and interviewed so constantly. They considered selection to be "clandestine, inhumane and arbitrary," a process of "torture and hellish apprehension" (Rice, 1985, p. 165).

The anxiety of gay and lesbian Trainees in this psychiatrically-driven environment must have been particularly acute. It was no secret to gays and lesbians in the 1960s that the mental health professions officially considered homosexuality a sickness. In a manual for psychiatrists working for the Peace

Corp, Caplan (1962) published a list of psychoses, psychoneuroses and personality disorders which, if diagnosed, were grounds for rejection from the Peace Corps. Among the personality disorders listed are character disorders. One of the character disorders is "overt homosexuality or other forms of sexual deviant practices such as exhibitionism, transvestism, voyeurism, etc." (p. 14a). This list came directly from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual II of the American Psychiatric Association, which did not remove homosexuality as a classified disorder until 1973 (American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

To compound the paranoia gays and lesbians must have felt in that kind of training environment, they were also at risk in being too candid with their peers. Twice during the training program, Trainees were required to complete peer nomination forms. Each Trainee had to list the five members of the training group (outside of the Trainee and the Trainee's spouse) most likely to succeed as a Volunteer, and the five least likely to succeed. Reasons were to be stated for both lists. This information was collected, collated, and incorporated into the materials used by the selection boards. The psychologists took this instrumentation so seriously that any Trainee refusing to fill out a peer nomination form was subject to (but not always object of) deselection. Rational gays and lesbians would not be likely to risk disclosure about sexual orientation to peers who had the capacity to relegate them to the bottom rankings of the peer nominations.

The Peace Corps' concern about sending overseas only those volunteers mentally prepared to handle such an experience was no doubt genuine and well conceived. No one can argue, either, with the intention to provide Volunteers with some practical tools for protecting good mental health once overseas. Yet the system created for implementing these ideas was in some ways doomed from the start. Several hundred psychologists and psychiatrists worked for the Peace Corps in selection activities. Most of them were faculty members of the universities which played host to the training programs during the 1960s. As faculty members, they attended to the training programs while still carrying out their academic duties, thereby reducing their involvement to several hours weekly. Trainees felt that they were being judged by people who didn't know them very well. Worse still, very few of these staff had themselves ever been overseas, or ever experienced the kind of "culture shock" which they projected onto Trainees judged incapable of handling it. Finally, most of these staff readily acknowledged that the substance of their motivation for participating in Peace Corps selection was to test unproven theories of stress and adaptation to foreign environments (Morris et al., p. 226).

The Peace Corps (1970) abandoned this selection system because of the overwhelming negative reputation it had acquired. Unable to weigh the benefits of such a system against its obvious flaws, the Peace Corps concluded that "one thing is certain, the bad things got enormous publicity both on paper and more

importantly by word of mouth between the Trainees in one program and succeeding groups of volunteers" (p. 1). Continuing the litany of unresolvable problems with staff psychiatrists and psychologists were conditions of alienation between psychologists and other staff members, absence of relevant personal experience, pervasive climates of fear in the training centers, labeling of Trainees in clinical terms which had little meaning or utility for Peace Corps staff in the field, and authoritarianism (pp. 2-5).

The replacement selection system developed by the Peace Corps emphasized several important concepts (Houser, 1970). First, the training project was to be viewed "as a process of enabling an individual who has been selected for training to become qualified as a Volunteer. The process should be one of "qualifying" and "failing to qualify" rather than "deselection" (p. 3). Next, Trainees would be expected to meet established, explicit performance criteria associated with job performance. Furthermore, Trainees themselves would be involved in the selection process, converting it to a collaborative dynamic of self-selection activities combined with supportive feedback from the staff. Finally, mid-term deselections were eliminated, along with all psychological testing and peer ratings.

Everyone benefitted by the demise of the old selection system, but probably no single group benefitted more than gays and lesbians. The medicalized model of homosexuality, constantly threatening to discover and deselect, was finally discredited

along with the rest of the model. Gays and lesbians were then free to demonstrate their stability and their ability through much more objective measurements in training. Moreover, when training philosophy itself is transformed from "out to hang you" to "out to help you", paranoia and fear begin to wane.

The Advent of "Special Needs" Considerations in Training

Since the mid-1980s, the Peace Corps has recognized that its recruitment effort to diversify the demographics of the Volunteer population beyond the traditional white, middle-class college graduate has consequences which ripple throughout system. In the case of pre-service training, the philosophy of attempting to qualify every Trainee for Volunteer service becomes increasingly challenging with the diversification of the trainee population. Training goals must be converted into many more instructional strategies in order to accommodate the larger variety of learning styles and constraints. Language instruction for older Trainees must take into account the added difficulty age itself can contribute to the acquisition of another tongue. Hispanic Trainees with limited English encounter difficulties with the volumes of training support materials, administrative forms and policy manuals which for years have existed only in English.

Non-traditional groups of Trainees bring atypical learning styles and characteristics to the training environment. With increasing frequency, the Peace Corps is formalizing its commitment to providing responsive, versatile training

environments in which equal opportunity to qualify for Volunteer service is a reality.

Although the language describing this commitment is not standardized, the message is clear and consistent, as indicated in the following sampling of proposal requirements issued to potential Peace Corps training contractors:

> Special Volunteers...The contractor in its proposal shall present a plan for responding to the special needs of the Trainees described below:...Spanish Speaking Trainees....Bi-lingual and/or Technically Skilled Trainees....Trainees Who Have Difficulties in Acquiring Languages (Peace Corps, 1988a)

> Special Volunteers. The Contractor shall take into consideration and be flexible in the case of special Volunteers or special Volunteer groups, such as non-English speakers, seniors, minorities, married couples, and the handicapped. The Offerors shall illustrate their understanding of such groups and propose methodologies and strategies to deal with such Volunteers (Peace Corps, 1989a)

> Special Volunteers. The contractor shall take into consideration and be flexible in accommodating Trainees with non-typical skills or needs. The Contractor shall present in the proposal a plan for responding to the special needs of the Trainees described below: Training for Non-English Speaking Trainees....Bi-Lingual or Native Speakers...Technically Skilled Trainees....Bi-Lingual and Technically Skilled Trainees....Out of Cycle Trainees, Transfers and Special Assignment Volunteer Spouses....Married Couples....Older Trainees (Peace Corps, 1989b)

In one sense, the above listings are not much more than a reaffirmation of a fundamental adult education principle which is older than the Peace Corps itself: every learner brings a unique amalgam of characteristics, experiences, skills, conditions, abilities and constraints to the training environment. Yet the appearance of the Special Needs language in Peace Corps documents

opens the door for more active questioning by gays and lesbians about requirements for responsiveness to their needs also.

Numerically, gays and lesbians probably constitute populations equal to or greater in size than other currently identified groups with special needs. According to the House of Representatives report (1990), 10% of Volunteers are over 50, 11% are married, and 7.3% are ethnic minorities. According to Kinsey (cited in Blumenfeld et al.), slightly "over 18% of adult males and slightly fewer females have at least half of their sexual experiences with a member of the same sex" (p. 80). While Kinsey found that 4% of men were exclusively homosexual, "between the ages of 16 and 65, 10% of the men met [his] criterion of 'more or less exclusively homosexual'" (cited in Sarbin & Karols, 1988, p.8). Contemporary lesbian and gay activists commonly use this 10% figure.

Despite the impossibility of accuracy regarding numbers of gays and lesbians in any given population, many respondents in this survey reported that one-third to one-half of the Volunteers in their group were gay or lesbian. Some of the staff interviewed offered similar estimates about the disproportionately high numbers of lesbians and gays who work for the Peace Corps. Impressionistic data is not reliable or quantifiable, yet to ignore it altogether is unwise.

Summary

The 1960s were a very silent, underground decade for the majority of American gays and lesbians. Legal and social repression remained unchallenged for most of the decade. Those gays and lesbians entering the Peace Corps found nothing explicit in their new environment which would encourage them to operate any less clandestinely than usual. To the contrary, the visibility and sheer numbers of psychiatrists and psychologists present in training programs, coupled with the secretive, intimidating power of the selection boards most probably drove gays and lesbians further underground.

By the mid-1970s, it is plausible that a larger segment of those lesbians and gays arriving at training programs were more open about their orientation, more confident in their sense of belonging to an identified minority (albeit an embattled one). They encountered training environments in the Peace Corps which were patently more value-neutral regarding an individual's psychological make-up. Moreover, their trainers were evaluating them for how they performed, rather than who they were.

Regarding the philosophy and implementation of training in the Peace Corps, the last decade will probably be remembered more for refinement than for innovations. The concept of Trainees with special needs is one such refinement with unusual portent for gays and lesbians. In language, if not yet in universal practice, the Peace Corps clearly understands that the dimensions of diversity extend far beyond the borders of ethnicity and

gender. The system is now capable of applying to itself the same axiom it expects Volunteers to follow in their encounters with their host culture: different is not bad, it's just different.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH RESULTS: APPLICATION AND STAGING PHASES

Despite numerous procedural and structural modifications, the process of becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer remains essentially unchanged. An application is initially screened for entrance requirements and sufficient presence of skills and experiences requested by the Host Countries Peace Corps serves. Qualified applicants are "nominated," at which time the applicant's references, medical history and absence of a criminal record are checked. Applications which pass this process are then matched to available, appropriate programs and an invitations to attend a training program are issued. According to the House of Representatives report (1990), about one in four applicants is accepted (p. 8). In 1989, some 3,600 future Volunteers entered training programs (p. 9).

Based on Kinsey's 10% figure of more or less exclusively homosexual persons (see Chapter 2), some 360 lesbians and gays successfully pass through the application process and are among those nominated and invited each year to begin Peace Corps training. What are their experiences with the recruitment and invitation process? How openly identified are they as gays or lesbians? How active have they been socially and politically in the larger gay and lesbian community? How anxious does their sexual orientation make them as they enter this new world of the Peace Corps? Do any of them make direct inquires about Peace

Corps' policy regarding lesbians and gays? What are they told? The answers to these questions are the focus of this chapter.

Survey Results From the Application Phase

According to Rice (1985), Vice-President Lyndon Johnson, in a discussion about Volunteer recruitment, gave this advice to Sargent Shriver, the first and newly-appointed Peace Corps Director: "'Do it like I did the Texas Youth Conservation Corps,' said Johnson. 'Keep out the three Cs.' 'The three Cs?,' asked the puzzled Shriver. 'The three Cs,' Johnson repeated: 'The communists, the consumptives and the cocksuckers'" (p. 142). As indicated by the discussion which follows, Johnson's third suggestion was either largely ignored or simply unenforceable.

Levels of openness. The process of coming out, or revealing to another person that one is gay or lesbian, for most is a long, cautious process. Blumenfeld et al. (1989, pp. 85-92) discuss several theoretical models which attempt to describe the various stages of coming out. All of them describe a period of confusion and anxiety followed by a period of gradual self-acceptance (which seems to be prerequisite to disclosure). The subsequent stages represent a slow journey toward reconciling the public with the private identity. Enormous risks are present for most lesbians and gays during that final journey. A gay person initially expands her or his circle of trust with a great deal of circumspection.

The survey participants were asked about their degree of openness or "being out" during the application and staging phases (Table 4).

Table 4: Levels of Openness at the Time of Application. Responses to the questions: "At the time you a) applied to the Peace Corps, and b) began staging, how open were you about your sexual orientation?"

DECADE OF SERVICE	HOW OPEN WERE YOU?	APPLICATION PHASE		STAGING PHASE	
		NUMBER OF RESPONSES	%	NUMBER OF RESPONSES*	%
1960s n = 11	Not even to myself	3	27%	2	33
	To myself only	4	36	4	67
	To a few	4	37		
	To any who asked				
	To all				
1970s n = 21	Not even to myself	6	29	6	30
	To myself only	5	24	12	60
	To a few	8	38	1	5
	To any who asked	2	9	1	5
	To all				
1980s n = 47	Not even to myself	8	17	7	16
	To myself only	9	19	20	47
	To a few	13	28	9	21
	To any who asked	15	32	7	16
	To all	2	4		

* Fewer participants responded to the staging phase than to the application phase.

The table indicates that, while the percentage seems to be dropping, some applicants even today are unaware of their sexual orientation at the time they apply. Other applicants, also in declining proportion, are aware of being lesbian or gay but have not disclosed that information to anyone at the time they apply.

Conversely, higher percentages of gay and lesbian applicants are out to more people. In the 1970s group, 47% were out to others, while 64% of the 1980s group were. It would be a mistake for recruiters or staging staff to assume that all gays and lesbians today are openly so. A direct question about sexual orientation is still threatening to some gay people. Some respondents reported that staging staff, with the best of intentions, extended a general invitation to an after-hours meeting for lesbians and gays. Those who are not open or very selectively open would find it impossible to accept such an invitation.

Levels of involvement in gay-related life. Although the percentage of openly gay and lesbian applicants increases from the decade of the 1960s to the 1980s, the Peace Corps has not attracted increasing or inordinate numbers of activists or separatists within the lesbian and gay population.

Table 5: Levels of Gay-Related Involvement at the Time of Application. Responses to the question: "At the time you applied to the Peace Corps, how involved were you in gay or lesbian political, service, religious or support organizations?" Data presented as percentage of respondents.

DECADE OF SERVICE	LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT 1 = Uninvolved; 5 = Very Involved				
	1	2	3	4	5
1960s n = 11	100%				
1970s n = 21	86	5%	5%	4%	
1980s n = 47	55	17	13	13	2

With the rise of the Gay Liberation movement and formation of activist groups during the 1970s, as presented in Chapter 2, one might expect a rise in activist backgrounds among more recent gay or lesbian Volunteers. The 1970s group, however, displays only slightly more social involvement than did the 1960s group. The promulgation of the gay rights movement across the U. S. continued throughout the 1970s, particularly during the last half of the decade, but the survey group in this decade had "not caught the wave" or didn't yet have access to the liberation movement, or simply were interested in other things. Even in the 1980s group, less than one-third of the participants described themselves as moderately active (level 3) or more. Activism within any defined population is limited to a group smaller than the whole. This data should, however, alleviate any concerns about "militant homosexuals" entering the Peace Corps with gay activist agendas.

Gay enclaves now exist in virtually every medium-size and larger urban area in the U. S. Lesbians and gays, if they choose, can now live, work, socialize, recreate and shop in an almost exclusively gay world. Is the Peace Corps attracting gays and lesbians who are separatists, who have social skills limited to interacting with people of their own kind? To the contrary, Table 6 below illustrates that lesbians and gays entering the Peace Corps have always been socially versatile.

Table 6: Friendships by Sexual Orientation at the Time of Application. Responses to the question: "At the time you applied to Peace Corps, your close circle of friends was:"

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS	1960s		1970s		1980s	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
MOSTLY GAY			3	14	4	9
MOSTLY MIXED	2	18	3	14	19	40
MOSTLY STRAIGHT	9	82	15	72	24	51
TOTALS	11	100	21	100	47	100

The 1980s group had fewer incidences of exclusively gay friendship circles than the 1970s group, and better than half had mostly straight friends. Most gay people do not live in gay enclaves, nor do they work in predominately gay environments. Most of their family and relatives are heterosexual. So are most of the people they meet in the normal course of their lives. Gay people are the most integrated of America's minorities. Moreover, it is unlikely that anyone, gay or heterosexual, with a low tolerance for heterogeneity in his or her surroundings and social relationships would even consider applying to the Peace Corps.

Interaction with recruiters. During the application process, Peace Corps recruiters ask applicants if they are involved in a romantic relationship, since an unresolved romantic

involvement could become a source of conflict for the Volunteer after going overseas. One of the 11 1960s respondents indicated a romantic involvement, none of the 21 respondents from the 1970s did, and only four of the 1980s respondents reported being in a committed relationship.

The survey requested of those who inquired about Peace Corps' policy regarding admission of lesbians or gays to report the answers they received (see Appendix A for the complete list of response choices). Not surprisingly, given the clandestine nature of gay life in the 1960s, no one in that group inquired. Nor did anyone in the 1970s group. Three people in the 1980s group inquired. All of them report being told that lesbian and gay people do serve in the Peace Corps, but they have more challenges to overcome than the average Volunteer. Two were also told that Peace Corps does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. One was told that "if the Peace Corps extended you an invitation, you could be sent to a country whose culture was more tolerant of homosexuality", but that "it would probably be better if no mention was made of your sexual orientation during the application process."

Respondents were also asked, "During your application process to the Peace Corps, were you asked about your sexual orientation (asked either in a form you filled out or by a recruiter)? If so, how did you answer the question?" Of the entire group, five male respondents reported being asked when they took their physicals at a military induction center. All

five lied. One commented, "I said 'no' because I wanted to be sure to get into the Peace Corps and was afraid that if I admitted being gay, I'd have been disqualified." Another said, "I assumed the army was more interested in knowing than the Peace Corps, so I said 'no'." None of the respondents reported being asked the question by a recruiter. One, however, reported being asked "if I had ever been in a situation where I was a minority. I remember feeling very frustrated because I couldn't answer the question honestly without risk getting rejected. Recruiters still ask this question."

Staff Perspectives From the Application Phase

Of the nine interviewed staff who had recruitment and/or placement experience, none recalled the existence of any proscriptive Peace Corps policy regarding gay and lesbian applicants. Neither could they attest to any systematic discrimination in the recruitment, placement or selection mechanisms within Peace Corps. By all accounts, the recruitment structure and recruiters themselves have always been more neutral than gay and lesbian applicants have assumed. The staff reported that with a high degree of consistency, recruiters, if asked about Peace Corps policy, respond that the Peace Corps does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Beth said, "It was simply a non-issue. When I first started working as a recruiter, I asked my boss about it and was told there was no discrimination." She also described attending a meeting several

years ago with the director of the Recruitment Office in headquarters. Newly nominated to the job, the director was presenting some personal goals for recruitment to the staff. "We don't do a thing for gays and lesbians," Beth reports the director said. Carol was proactive in her response: "Why should we discriminate? The average gay or lesbian applicant is already adept at living in two cultures, already knows about being a minority, already has higher level skills to pick up clues and read signals from the majority culture."

Some staff reported that the recruitment/placement process was better than neutral. Allen said that in the late 1970s, at the suggestion of some of the recruiters, the San Francisco recruitment office twice placed advertisements in the local gay press. Esther commented that placement people in headquarters over the years have often made attempts to place known lesbian or gay nominees in countries more tolerant of sexual diversity. However, there are not that many cases where a placement officer has options, because placement's first priority is matching skills to available positions. Gail, among others, recalled that recruiters "are smart enough to not trust that everyone above them in the evaluation and placement chain is capable of handling information about a person's sexual orientation. Since we considered the information irrelevant anyway, we saw little reason to include it in the paperwork which went to headquarters." Larry remarked, "If I interviewed someone who was obviously qualified and equally obviously effeminate, I sent the

application in. If the effeminate person was obviously immature, I'd check the references."

The sole area in which staff reported a bias against lesbians and gays is the Peace Corps policy about placing couples. As policy, Peace Corps will not place unmarried couples. While heterosexuals can, if they choose, marry in order to meet this requirement, gays and lesbians cannot. Half of the staff interviewed about recruitment reported experiences informing gay or lesbian applicant couples of this policy. To date, the issue has largely been avoided because in the instances reported at least one of the persons in the couple was otherwise not qualified for service. This is clearly not an issue for lesbians and gays only, although they are the only optionless group affected. Fran reported being involved within the last two years with what she thought would be the first test case. A lesbian couple applied. The regional recruitment office found them both qualified and sent in their nominations as a couple. The nominations were rejected in headquarters. The couple considered fighting the ruling but didn't. Said Sue, "Peace Corps will eventually have to deal with this and they'll lose."

Survey Results From The Staging Phase

By 1970, the Peace Corps had begun to relocate the sites of its training programs. Until then, most training was done on college campuses in the contiguous states, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. With the onset of competency-based training programs,

training operations were installed in the countries of destination, or at regional training centers overseas. Pre-departure training programs were then inserted between the invitation to training and the departure for the overseas training center.

In the Peace Corps argot, these pre-departure events are called Stagings. They were created in part to give Peace Corps staff a personal encounter with the participants before sending them overseas. Since many applicants go through the recruitment and placement process without face-to-face contact with a Peace Corps representative, stagings were, in part, a final screening (as a safeguard against occasional lapses in the application evaluation process which allowed glaringly unsuitable candidates into the system). Moreover, staging was an opportunity to give the participants a final reflective moment to reassess their decision to enter the Peace Corps.

Stagings have undergone numerous modifications, both cosmetic and constitutional. In the beginning, those who attended stagings then went home to await their final invitation (Pre-Invitational Staging, or PRIST). Later, stagings were conducted immediately prior to departure from the U.S. Some stagings (Center for Assessment and Training, or CAST) had final selection/deselection components and were conducted particularly for those going to countries with very hard living conditions or extremely sensitive political climates, internal or vis-a-vis the U.S. Others were primarily for orientations to the Peace Corps

and experiential previews of what to expect upon arrival in-country (Center for Reassessment and Training, or CREST). Today, most stagings are purely administrative in nature, lasting two or three days (Administrative, or ADMIN; also known as Pre-departure Orientation, or PDO).

Levels of openness. Table 4 above illustrates clearly how lesbians and gays tend to react upon entering an unknown environment. They go underground. In all groups the levels of openness dropped in relation to the levels at the time of application. The pattern is discernable even though not as many in each group responded to this question. In the 1960s group, 37% were out to others in the application stage and none were during staging. Similarly, those open to others in the 1970s group dropped from 47% to 10%. In the 1980s group the reduction was from 64% during application to 37% during staging. The fact that gays and lesbians approach unfamiliar situations cautiously is appropriate behavior under normal circumstances and particularly appropriate for an individual entering the Peace Corps. Lesbians and gays experientially and intuitively understand the wisdom of reducing vulnerability while "getting the lay of the land." It is reasonable to expect that lesbians and gays would repeat this retreat behavior upon entering their host country's culture, thereby reducing initial risks both to themselves and to the Peace Corps.

Disclosure by others. Upon entering an unfamiliar situation, a gay or lesbian initiates a subtle reconnaissance: "How tolerant a place is this?"; "How welcome am I?"; "Who will come to my defense?"; "Who's available to me as a confidant?" While answers to these questions are obtainable through observation and listening, gays and lesbians do appreciate verbal clues from those around them. The following table summarizes the results of the survey questions, "During staging, did any other Trainees tell you they were gay or lesbian?" and "During staging, did any staff members tell you they were gay or lesbian?"

Table 7: Incidence of Disclosure by Others During Staging. Responses to the question: "During staging, did any other Trainees or staff tell you that they were gay or lesbian?" Data presented as number of responses.

DECADE OF SERVICE	OTHER TRAINEES		STAGING STAFF	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
1960s	1	5	0	6
1970s	0	0	0	0
1980s	8	35	2	41

The data is difficult to interpret. Fewer than one in five respondents learned of the existence of another gay or lesbian person during staging. This low incidence of discovery could easily be attributable to the short durations of staging programs (the longest were about five days). Furthermore, stagings tend to be highly structured with formal schedules extending into the evening hours. Objectively, there is little available informal time, the kind of time most suited to disclosure dynamics.

Reasonable as these conjectures are, a case can also be made for wondering if intention, rather than time and structure, is the real culprit.

Levels of concern. To be effective, the subtle reconnaissance mentioned above requires more time than the duration of staging events allow. Gays and lesbians are therefore more dependent on verbal clues to inform them about the relative safety of their new setting. In the absence of these verbal clues, in the absence of a perceived intention to make them welcome, the logical conclusion is that they are at risk. This supposition is supported by the data in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Levels of Concern and How They Changed During Staging. Answers to the questions: 1) "During the staging process, how concerned were you about being a gay or lesbian person in the Peace Corps?", and 2) "If you experienced any level of concern, how did that level change as a result of the staging?" *

DECADE OF SERVICE	Question 1 LEVEL OF CONCERN: (1 = Not Concerned; 5 = Very Concerned)	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	Question 2 LEVEL OF CHANGE IN CONCERNS BY THE END OF STAGING (BY NUMBER OF RESPONSES)**		
			GREATLY OR SLIGHTLY REDUCED CONCERNS	NO CHANGE	GREATLY OR SLIGHTLY INCREASED CONCERNS
1960s n = 6	Level 1	1			
	Level 2	1	1		
	Level 3				
	Level 4	1			1
	Level 5	3	1		1
1970s n = 20	Level 1	6			1
	Level 2	8		7	1
	Level 3	2	1		1
	Level 4	1		1	
	Level 5	3		2	1
1980s n = 45	Level 1	11		5	
	Level 2	8	3	5	
	Level 3	11	3	4	4
	Level 4	7	4		3
	Level 5	8	4	3	1

* Example for reading the table: In the 1980s, 11 Trainees rated themselves as having Level 3 concerns; reading across, by the end of Staging, 3 of those 11 experienced a reduction in the level of their concerns, 4 of the 11 experienced no change in their level of their concerns, and 4 felt an increase in their level of concern.

** All respondents who selected a level of concern in Question 1 did not respond to Question 2.

Sixty-seven percent of the 1960s group, 30% of the 1970s group and 57% of the 1980s group reported level 3 concerns or higher about being a gay or lesbian person in the Peace Corps. Of the four respondents from the 1960s who indicated how their concerns had changed by the end of staging, two said their concerns had decreased and two said their concerns increased. In the 1970s group, of the 15 indicating levels of change, 67% experienced no reduction in their level of concern and 27% said their concerns actually increased. Of the 58 respondents to the second question, 41, or 71% felt their concerns had remained unresolved or had actually increased.

Incidence of gay-related topics. Why do such a high proportion of lesbians and gays experience no resolution of the concerns they bring to the staging? As mentioned above, in unfamiliar circumstances of short duration, gays and lesbians are unusually dependent on verbal clues or unambiguous behavior from others to inform them about how at risk or welcome they are. In the case of staging, verbal clues could be direct references made to lesbians and gays during presentations of orientation topics. Table 9 below indicates an almost virtual omission of such references.

Table 9: Incidence of Gay-Related Topics During Staging. Answers to the question: "Did the staging program include topics or information with direct references to gays or lesbians in the Peace Corps?" Data presented as number of responses.

DECADE OF SERVICE	TYPE OF STAGING	TOTAL RESPONSES	NUMBER "YES"	NUMBER "NO"
1960s	No Affirmative Responses From This Group			
1970s	No Affirmative Responses From This Group			
1980s	PRIST	1	0	1
	CAST	8	3	5
	CREST	24	2	22
	ADMINISTRATIVE	4	1	3
	NONE	4	0	4
	DON'T KNOW OR REMEMBER	5	2	3
TOTALS		46	8	38

One hundred percent of the 1960s and 1970s groups, and 83% of the 1980s group did not recall any staging topics or information with direct references to gays or lesbians in the Peace Corps. There are probably many reasons. The shortness of the staging program could make recollection of it more difficult. Staging occurs immediately before departure for the host country. The excitement, anticipation and nervousness associated with the proximity of embarking on the Peace Corps adventure is certainly distracting and probably reduces attentiveness to the staging itself. A third reason is that the staging program may in fact be deficient in either the quantity or the quality (or both) of the messages directed at gays and lesbians.

Those reporting gay or lesbian-specific staging content provided the following elaborations:

> During our discussion on "relationships" in the Peace Corps, the following was stated: "If you are gay or lesbian, you better prepare yourself for two long years of loneliness."
>
> I vaguely remember comments that, while gays and lesbians were admitted to service, homosexuality was not well accepted in [host country]. Therefore visible homosexual expression could be expected to compromise a Volunteer's effectiveness.
>
> Topics of sexuality and customs were discussed one afternoon.
>
> We received a packet of materials; included was one paragraph urging gays to reconsider or think over their Peace Corps commitment. It pointed out that support systems we might have developed in the States would be absent. It was kind of token.
>
> We were made aware of a gay/lesbian support group in [host country].
>
> A meeting was announced for minorities. I went, but the focus was on minorities only. I chose not to ask where the other lesbians were. Later I found out that a gay man had spoken privately to [a staff member].
>
> It was a page in the staging manual, in with the other pages about Volunteers with special concerns (older Volunteers, married couples, ethnic minorities). The issue was never mentioned aloud.
>
> Topic brought up in a question and answer session hosted by Volunteers from [host country].

The staging manual page mentioned in several of the above comments appears in the Peace Corps (1990a) workbook for staging participants. In a section which presents considerations unique to special Volunteer groups, this list appears under the heading "Possible Issues for Homosexual Volunteers":

> Local laws may prohibit homosexuality, or it may be immoral according to local norms;
>
> Many cultures consider homosexuality a taboo. There are certainly homosexuals, but hardly the level of acceptability as in the States;
>
> Host country acceptance of homosexuality among nationals may be quite different than their acceptance of homosexuality among foreigners;
>
> Styles for hair, earrings on men, certain mannerisms and clothes which are acceptable in the States, may be highly suspect in a different culture;
>
> There may or may not be support for a homosexual lifestyle with Peace Corps. Homosexual Volunteers may serve for two years without meeting another Gay Volunteer or supportive staff member. Straight Volunteers and staff may not be able to give needed support;
>
> Lesbians will have to deal with constant questions about boyfriends, marriage and sex (as do all women). Wearing an "engagement ring" may help;
>
> Most Host Country Homosexuals [sic] will probably have migrated to the larger cities, while most PCV [Peace Corps Volunteers] are posted in rural sites. Relationships with Homosexual Host Country Nationals can happen, but as with all cross-cultural relationships, it may not be easy;
>
> AIDS (SIDA in French and Spanish) is a critical issue in many countries. There is a backlash being felt by Gay American men for supposedly bringing the disease into Latin America;
>
> Civil Liberties are either non-existent or ignored; homosexuals may be hassled in bars or in the streets;
>
> Gay men must deal with machismo: talk of conquest(s), girl watching, and dirty jokes (pp. 10-11).

The merits of such a list will not be questioned here. Its very existence is encouraging. The issue is not its adequacy but rather its employment. Is it discussed or merely there for the

reading? If reading it produces in the mind of a gay or lesbian Trainee second thoughts about continuing on to country, is there a designated staff member available for counseling? What indications are given about how the pre-service training program will assist gay people in dealing with the issues listed? The list is generic; is country-specific information also available? If not, will it be available in country? The question about how pre-service training programs deal with gay and lesbian-specific topics is the subject of the next chapter.

Summary

All the available evidence suggests that the Peace Corps' recruitment and placement mechanisms are value-neutral regarding gays and lesbians. The same is true for staging programs. Yet gays and lesbians are not necessarily inclined to view neutrality as an indication of support or acceptance. Nor are they prone to interpret silence as benign. They may very well need to see and hear more explicit declarations of inclusiveness and of appreciation for diversity.

Lists of potential problems or issues facing non-traditional Volunteers certainly underscore the Peace Corps' recognition of how complicated diversity is. However, the underlying message of such lists, in the absence of any others, is that diversity is not only complicated, it is problematic. Where is the coin's other side? Is not diversity also a positive condition to be appreciated?

Diversity enriches. Diversity makes the whole of a population multidimensional. Diversity is as much a gift as a curse. Diversity makes possible the more complete fulfillment of Peace Corps' second statutory goal: "to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served" (House of Representatives, 1990, p. 20).

The evidence does suggest that many gays and lesbians complete the first two phases of their Peace Corps journey (application and staging) with little or no resolution of whatever concerns they brought with them. The responsibility of addressing and resolving those concerns (which, in many cases have in fact increased during the staging) is then transferred by default to the pre-service training program.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH RESULTS: PRE-SERVICE TRAINING PHASE

The Evolution of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training today has three major components, commonly referred to as "language," "tech" and "core." Trainees learn the major language of their Host Country. Many are also required to learn a second language indigenous to the regions of the country where they will work. Those Trainees entering pre-service training as generalists (without a professional or trade skill) receive technical training in their area of assignment. Skilled or professional Trainees learn how to accommodate their expertise to local conditions. The core curriculum has many components: cross-cultural adaptation; area studies about the Host Country; personal health, well-being and safety; the role of the Volunteer in development work; the role of women in development. The goal of the core curriculum is to provide Trainees with a battery of intra- and interpersonal skills coupled with the intercultural adroitness necessary to work effectively and appreciatively in the Host Country culture. Pre-service training by mandate not only prepares Trainees for Volunteer service; it also selects Trainees to become Volunteers and deselects others. Pre-service training is a qualifying process.

Since the 1970s, most pre-service training is conducted entirely in the Host Country or in regional training centers

overseas. The contrived, abstract interaction with the "target culture" experienced by those Volunteers who trained on U.S. college campuses during the 1960s was thus replaced by a highly experiential, reality-based training system. For example, in many locations Trainees live with local families during the 10 - 14 weeks of pre-service training. Language acquisition continues after the classroom in the more natural setting of a home. In most training centers, the majority of the staff are Host Country Nationals. Trainees no longer wait until they are Volunteers for the opportunity to interact with large numbers of people from the Host Country. Those in charge of the selection process no longer had to speculate over how a Trainee might behave in the target culture. They could observe the behavior first-hand in the real context.

A second major change in pre-service training at the end of the 1960s was in the way Trainees were selected (the process of deciding which Trainees had successfully completed training and would be invited to become Volunteers), or deselected. The psychiatrically-based selection process had become so controversial as to be insupportable (see Chapter 2). Central to this controversy was the inordinate reliance on psychological tests. "In the absence of much personal experience on the part of the psychologists as to what constituted the ingredients of a successful tour of duty overseas, they tended to focus upon the mental health and personality of individuals" (Peace Corps, 1970, p. 3). While Trainees clearly understood being deselected on the

basis of objective criteria (inability to learn the Host Country language, for example), they lived in constant fear of deselection on irrelevant grounds. Training had become "a three month ordeal...where practically all they thought about was the threat of deselection" (pp. 11-12).

Chapter 2 discusses how traumatic this personality-based selection system was for gays and lesbians. The perceived danger for them was very real: their selection was in the hands of people from professions which believed homosexuality was a personality disorder. Those same people followed a Peace Corps manual which listed homosexuality as grounds for dismissal (Caplan, 1982). Ironically, the perceived fear was disproportionate to the actual danger.

Carl, Ed, Frank, Harold, Mark, Gail, Craig and Fred (interviews) were unanimous in their opinion that there was never an official Peace Corps policy in the 1960s about deselection of homosexuals. In the absence of official policy, unofficial policy was established by the training staff. By unofficial policy, homosexuality was not grounds for deselection. Training staff often withheld from the FAOs and FSOs any knowledge they had about the homosexuality of Trainees (although those interviewed acknowledged that rarely in those days did any homosexual Trainee disclose that fact).

Those interviewed who had served as FSOs or FAOs reported that the overwhelming majority of psychologists and psychiatrists working in Peace Corps training were enlightened professionals

who paid little attention to homosexuality. They understood their role to be the diagnosis of severe mental health issues which had a disabling potential for the Trainee as a Volunteer. Ed commented that he had conducted "hundreds of deselection interviews. Never once was homosexuality the reason." This sentiment was repeated in all the interviews.

Injustices in the old selection system did occur. The Peace Corps (1970) reported that the "horror stories about egregious blunders in selection seemed to mount from year to year" (p. 1). However, there is no evidence that these blunders were anything but random errors caused by the least experienced and by the most tyrannical of the selection officers. They were not the norm, nor were they limited to the lesbian and gay population. Carl said that his greatest embarrassment over the selection boards was their treatment of women: "We deselected women by the droves for being 'unconsciously seductive'. To me, the biggest evils committed by the selection boards were gender-related."

In 1970, a new selection model accompanied the relocation of training to in-country sites. Among the premises on which the new policy was established (Houser, 1970), three were particularly transcendent for the lesbian and gay population:

> The emphasis in training should be on the development of individual capabilities and commitment to the job ahead; a positive approach focusing on relevant performance factors.
>
> Trainee self evaluation should be a major component of the selection process. This self evaluation should be encouraged and nurtured by Peace Corps staff in terms of the individual's capability to perform satisfactorily in the job in the host country, his commitment and ability to stay for two years, and

> whether Volunteer service is the best decision for him at this time in his life.
>
> ....All evaluation and selection must be in terms of the individual's capability to perform effectively in the specific program, job and country for which he is being trained (pp. 1-2).

This new selection policy established evaluation criteria indifferent to sexual orientation as a state of being, although it was still relevant for considerations regarding effective performance. The 1960s selection procedures, strictly interpreted, did contemplate deselection on the basis of a gay person <u>being</u> gay. Worse still, the individual was the object of the selection process, not the subject. The new selection policy did make Trainees the subjects of selection, mandating their integral involvement with staff in the process of mutually evaluating their suitability for service. The fundamental question had been transformed from "Can a gay person become a Peace Corps Volunteer?" to "Can I as a gay Volunteer perform effectively?"

The expectation that Trainees would be full and active participants in their own evaluation obligated the pre-service training system to divulge the qualification standards that Trainees were required to meet. Trainees and staff would use the same performance standards to measure the Trainees' progress toward qualification. If a Trainee was expected to make an informed, rational, objective decision by the end of training about his or her own suitability for service, then the training program was obligated to provide the Trainee with all the

information and the experiences necessary to reach that decision confidently and reliably. How well do pre-service training centers "perform" in providing the information and the experiences necessary for lesbian and gay Trainees to reach a decision about Volunteer service? The answer to this question emerges, in part, from the survey results.

Survey Results

Levels of openness. The trends regarding levels of openness in the Chapter 3 discussion about the application and staging phases continue in the pre-service training phase, as indicated in Table 10.

Table 10: Levels of Openness During Pre-Service Training. Responses to the question: "During pre-service training, how open were you about your sexual orientation?"

DECADE OF SERVICE	HOW OPEN WERE YOU?	PRE-SERVICE TRAINING PHASE	
		NUMBER OF RESPONSES	%
1960s n = 11	Not even to myself	3	27
	To myself only	8	73
	To a few		
	To any who asked		
	To all		
1970s n = 21	Not even to myself	5	24
	To myself only	10	48
	To a few	4	19
	To any who asked	2	9
	To all		
1980s n = 48	Not even to myself	7	15
	To myself only	15	31
	To a few	9	19
	To any who asked	11	23
	To all	6	12

Three trends are immediately evident. There is a decline in the number of Trainees entering pre-service training who are unaware of their sexual orientation. About 25% of the 1960s and 1970s respondents said that they entered training ignorant of being lesbian or gay, while only 15% of the 1980s group were unaware of their orientation. The number of Trainees who are out to no one but themselves is also declining. Almost three-fourths of the 1960s participants were in that category; in the 1980s group fewer than one-third were out to themselves only. The third evident trend is that increasing numbers of gays and

lesbians are out to others. No one in the 1960s group was, but 28% were to some degree public in the 1970s group, and well over half of the 1980s group were.

These trends should be encouraging to those training center staff who are committed to meeting the needs of all the minority groups in training. One of the principles of adult education is that learners should be full participants in the identification of their learning goals. A second principle is that the life experiences learners bring to the training are important resources which should be applied to the new learning process. Finally, the goals of the learning should reflect the desires of the learner as well as the ideas of the instructor (Kemp, 1985, p. 49). Yet developing learner-centered, experientially-based training strategies for an invisible, silent, non-quantifiable population is difficult, if not impossible. These principles are simply inapplicable if the learners themselves cannot be identified, or their silence cannot be broken. Now, however, training staff have the opportunity to apply these principles to at least the self-identified portion of the gay and lesbian Trainees in a group.

The access is theoretical in that, even in the 1980s group, the overwhelming majority of respondents did not make unsolicited declarations about their sexual orientation -- only 12% said they were out <u>To All</u> (without being asked). How successful trainers are in enlisting lesbian and gay participation in their own needs identification process still depends in large part on trainers'

abilities to establish a climate of trust and security for those Trainees.

The above discussion notwithstanding, it is erroneous to conclude that, given the right conditions, all gays and lesbians are predisposed to disclosure. Many lesbians and gays (particularly older ones or those in "sensitive" professions) have led double lives throughout their adulthood; they have developed perfectly workable mechanisms for maintaining an anonymous private life which never encroaches on the public arena. While gay activists consider a double life politically incorrect, those lesbians and gays for whom this pattern is well established are unlikely to abandon the pattern when they enter training.

The access trainers have to gays and lesbians is also theoretical for another reason discussed in Chapter 3. Most lesbians and gays depart from staging with their original concerns intact and some depart for training more concerned than ever. The stagings in recent years have distributed printed material about the potential difficulties minorities and special needs Volunteers face as they enter the Peace Corps. Much of the information is sobering. Moreover, the respondents reported almost unanimously that few or insufficient attempts were made in staging to correlate those generalized difficulties with country-specific information. Many Gays and Lesbians arrive at training unaware of how many of those potential difficulties they will actually face in their country of assignment. Moreover, they

could very well have concluded from their staging experience that this information can be treated in a "handout" but not discussed. Such a conclusion would discourage Trainees from publicly seeking out the specific information they need.

Disclosure by others. By the time training begins, Trainees have been together as a group for only a brief period of time, but a long enough period for affinity groups to begin emerging. Lesbians and gays have begun their reconnaissance to determine how many "brothers and sisters" are in the group. Given the increasing openness of Trainees demonstrated in Table 10, this reconnaissance should prove more fruitful. Table 11 shows that gays and lesbians do find each other in training.

Table 11: Incidence of Disclosure by Others During Pre-Service Training. Responses to the question: "During pre-service training, did any other trainees or staff tell you that they were gay or lesbian?" Data presented as number of responses.

DECADE OF SERVICE	OTHER TRAINEES		TRAINING STAFF		PEACE CORPS STAFF	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
1960s	2	9	0	11	0	11
1970s	2	19	2	19	1	20
1980s	20	24	4	44	5	43

By the 1980s, almost half of the respondents learned of other gay and lesbian Trainees in their group. Predictably, the 1960s and 1970s respondents were considerably more isolated from

each other. In terms of a training center's attempts to meet the needs of lesbian and gay Trainees, the existence of this network of lesbians and gays known to each other is certainly advantageous. Those who are more publicly open are potential links to those who are not. Many participants reported that they resorted to their own resourcefulness to obtain, outside of the formal training program, the gay-related, country-specific information they wanted. In turn, they communicated that information to their less adventurous colleagues. Similarly, some took the initiative to privately seek out information from a training staff member, which they then communicated to others in the group. This pattern gives training centers other options besides direct communication for dissemination of information.

The table indicates that disclosure on the part of training center and Peace Corps staff is even today very limited. There are several possible explanations. All Trainees are Americans, whereas in most countries there are more Host Country Nationals than Americans on the staff of training centers and among the in-country Peace Corps employees. This fact is not meant to imply that other countries have less incidence of homosexuality in their populations, thereby reducing the likelihood or the proportion of lesbian and gay staff. Several studies (Bullough, 1976; Howells, 1984; Marshall & Suggs, 1971; [cited in Sarbin & Karols, 1988]) indicate that "the world-wide prevalence of <u>exclusive</u> same-gender orientation is estimated as three to five percent in the male population, regardless of social tolerance"

(p. 8). It is likely, however, that Host Country Nationals have different values and customs about levels of disclosure. Few other cultures tolerate the level of openness accepted in certain areas of the U. S. Plausibly, Host Country Nationals simply do not feel at liberty to disclose their gayness.

This cultural proscription on disclosure is a two-edged sword. Gay and lesbian Host Country National staff are the "ideal subject matter experts" for informing Trainees about the Host Culture's attitudes, mores and sanctions regarding homosexuality. More importantly, they can serve as behavioral role models regarding levels of discretion and circumspection that will be required of the Trainees in order to conduct themselves in culturally appropriate ways. All cultures react differently to the idea and the reality of homosexuality. In some cultures, its existence is denied altogether, while in others, recognition takes only derisive forms. Some allow for same-sex involvement during certain periods of life, yet severely discourage such relationships outside of those periods. Others reveal patterns of tolerance similar to those found in the U.S.; i.e., along liberal/conservative, urban/rural and religious/secular lines.

All lesbian and gay Trainees, regardless of their level of openness, have to face survival questions related to their Host Culture. Gay and Lesbian Host Country Nationals on the Peace Corps or the training center staff are potentially the very best of resources, yet, paradoxically, they may feel unable to help,

at least overtly. One respondent, who did not recall gay and lesbian issues being directly addressed in training, did remember learning after training that "one of our trainers was a lesbian. I learned this from a gay Volunteer who later in our service came out to me. The trainer had filled him in informally about issues regarding gay Volunteers."

Incidence of gay-related topics. This reluctance to be open on the part of lesbian and gay staff members could, in part, be ameliorated by the type of climate set within the Peace Corps office and within the training center -- both of these settings are "in, but not of" the Host Culture. As such, climates can be established which both acknowledge the necessity of confronting sensitive topics and give permission to treat them dispassionately and objectively. This type of climate-setting, to be established, requires structure as well as intent. Part of that structure is derived from the "special needs" concept (discussed in Chapter 2), whereby a training center is expected to address all of the diversity issues represented in the Volunteer population.

The most significant component of the training program for addressing these issues is the core curriculum. As they interact with the Host Culture, older Trainees, ethnic minorities, married couples and the physically challenged will potentially encounter dimensions of the Host Culture not experienced by the "traditional" Volunteer. The Peace Corps expects its training

centers to recognize and address the potential for those encounters during the delivery of the standard pre-service training topics. However, since lesbians and gays are not yet consistently understood as a special needs category, whether their issues are specifically addressed in the core curriculum is at the discretion of each training center and the Peace Corps staff in-country. The survey asked respondents to identify, from a list of standard core curriculum topics, occurrences of lesbian and gay references. They were also asked to rate the understanding and sensitivity with which those references were made. Table 12 summarizes the responses.

Table 12: Incidence and Appropriateness of Gay-Related Topics During Pre-Service Training. Answers to the question: "Which of the following pre-service training topics included direct references to gays or lesbians in the Peace Corps?" Distributions are expressed as a percentage of those who responded.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING TOPICS	NO DIRECT REFERENCES			DIRECT REFERENCES BUT PRESENTED WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING OR SENSITIVITY			DIRECT REFERENCES PRESENTED WITH UNDERSTANDING AND SENSITIVITY		
	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 48	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 48	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 48
1. Host culture norms and values	82%	81%	72%	9%	14%	19%	9%	5%	5%
2. Male and female roles in the host culture	82	86	77	18	9	21	0	5	2
3. Host culture belief systems about masculinity and femininity	64	67	60	27	24	36	9	9	4
4. Host culture belief systems about diversity and tolerance for variations from behavior and life style norms	73	67	79	18	28	17	9	5	4
5. Host culture values and norms about same-sex friendships (non-sexual) and accepted levels of intimacy in those friendships	37	67	64	54	28	28	9	5	8
6. Host culture values and norms about opposite-sex friendships (non-sexual) and accepted levels of intimacy in those friendships	55	81	87	36	14	11	9	5	2
7. Host culture values and norms about dating and romantic relationships	64	81	89	36	14	9	0	5	2
8. Host culture values and norms about disclosure of personal information, separation of work and private life, individual privacy	73	81	85	27	10	13	0	9	2
9. Host culture values and beliefs about personal integrity and dignity	73	81	98	18	10	2	9	9	0
10. Peace Corps Policies	82	81	85	18	10	13	0	9	2
11. Personal health, nutrition and disease prevention (including AIDS education and prevention)	100	100	68	0	0	19	0	0	13
12. Rape prevention and personal safety	91	90	87	9	10	11	0	0	2
13. Stress management and coping skills	91	95	94	9	5	6	0	0	0
14. Establishing and nurturing emotional support relationships with other Volunteers	73	85	85	27	10	6	0	5	9

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PRE-SERVICE TRAINING TOPICS	NO DIRECT REFERENCES			DIRECT REFERENCES BUT PRESENTED WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING OR SENSITIVITY			DIRECT REFERENCES PRESENTED WITH UNDERSTANDING AND SENSITIVITY		
	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 48	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 48	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 48
15. Establishing and nurturing emotional support relationships with Peace Corps staff	82	90	94	18	5	2	0	5	4
16. Host country's legal system, laws and law enforcement practices which affect Volunteers	91	81	85	9	14	15	0	5	0
17. Romantic involvements between Volunteers	82	81	96	18	10	2	0	9	2
18. Managing unresolved issues left behind when joining Peace Corps	91	90	98	9	10	0	0	0	2
19. Information about an existing in-country Gay and Lesbian Volunteer support group	100	100	83	0	0	4	0	0	13

Table 12's most obvious revelation is that training centers have not improved markedly either in the frequency or in the quality of the references made to lesbians and gays within standard pre-service training topics. In fact, for 12 of the 19 topics, the 1980s group reported fewer references than did the 1960s group. Moreover, the 1980s group reported fewer references than the 1970s group in 10 of the 19 topics. More than three-fourths of the 1980s respondents reported no references to gays or lesbians in 16 of the 19 topics. Simultaneously, Trainee perception of the sensitivity and understanding underlying the references made about gays and lesbians has not improved over time. The 1980s group actually reported less sensitivity and understanding than did the 1960s group in five of the topics, and fewer than the 1970s group in nine of the topics. When rated for sensitivity and understanding, the responses even from the 1980s group exceeded 10% for only two of the 19 topics.

These low frequencies of references and even lower incidences of references made with sensitivity and understanding are disconcerting, given that one of the goals of pre-service training is to provide each Trainee with adequate information and sufficient experiences to make a confident self-selection decision. The data indicates that lesbian and gay Trainees are very apt to encounter a significant paucity of basic information about how their lives will potentially be affected by the Host Culture's formal and informal relationship to homosexuality.

This silence on the part of the pre-service curriculum exists despite increasing numbers of gays and lesbians entering training who are at least situationally open about their sexual orientation. Over half of the 1980s respondents were out to others, and more than a third were out to anyone who asked or to all. This fact could imply a degree of complicity on the part of lesbian and gay Trainees who, being open, still do not insist that their concerns be addressed. It could also mean that requests are indeed made but then ignored. Trainees may also fear possible homophobic reactions among staff members which could lead to deselection. A more convincing explanation, however, emerges from earlier discussions in this thesis about the caution gays and lesbians exercise when they are in unfamiliar environments, and their inclination to wait for overt, explicit clues from the members of that environment about how circumspect or clandestine they should be.

The 19 topics listed in the questionnaire do not by any means represent the totality of opportunities that training centers have to address issues relevant to lesbians and gays. Rather, these topics were chosen because they are routinely incorporated into pre-service training programs, regardless of the country. They were also chosen to avoid possible speculation that addressing special needs involves the development of additional curricula. Pre-service training's obligation to accommodate special needs can be fulfilled in large part by

simply making the existing curriculum more inclusive, as illustrated in the following examples.

According to the respondents, in many cultures the normal (or permitted) levels of spiritual, emotional and physical (but nonsexual) intimacy in same-sex friendships far exceed those operant in the U.S. culture. For gays and lesbians, those levels can be easily misconstrued. Conversely, heterosexual women in the U.S. frequently comment that friendships with gay men are comfortable because they are free of sexual overtones. In cultures laden with sexual aggressiveness in opposite-sex friendships, many of the gay respondents reported that their apparent ease around women made them seem more romantically attractive.

The increasing numbers of lesbians and gays who are willing to be open about their sexual orientation must learn about the Host Culture's norms that govern disclosure of personal information. The characteristic candor valued in the U.S. culture in most cases will need dramatic curtailment. Privacy, restraint and self-containment are more appreciated values in many cultures which consider undisciplined the American compulsion to "tell all".

Just as in the U.S., some countries' legal codes criminalize homosexuality, but not all of them enforce those codes uniformly. Conversely, there are societies with no criminal codes about homosexuality whose social aversions and sanctions are endemic.

Lesbians and gays should know about the legal and social constraints which can affect them.

It is equally necessary for gays and lesbians to clarify their relationships with the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps (1973) stated that "the Peace Corps makes every effort to prevent an individual who might engage in sexual perversion from becoming a Volunteer. A Country Director who learns that a Volunteer has attempted or participated in sexual perversion will arrange for that Volunteer's return to Washington for termination" (section 237, p.4). This policy was not superseded until 1988, when the text was amended to read:

> Sexual Behavior. The matter of Trainee or Volunteer sexual behavior is of course a highly personal one. However, because of the social and political implications of inappropriate behavior, it is important that Peace Corps standards be clear. To this end, Country Directors shall ensure that Volunteers understand host country sexual mores (customs on dating, pre-marital experience, single parent maternity and paternity, etc.) and the consequences for Volunteers and the Peace Corps program if these mores are violated. Care should be exercised to assure that decisions made in these areas are based upon adequate programmatic grounds. When possible, policy in this area should be provided in writing to the Volunteers and Trainees (Peace Corps, 1988b, section 204, p. 4).

Since the 1973 manual did not elaborate on types of sexual perversions, definitions were apparently entrusted to each Country Director. Fifteen years later, the rewritten policy removed the assumed correlation of homosexuality to perversion and replaced it with relativized codes of conduct illustrated by exclusively heterosexual examples. If this policy is in fact provided in writing to Trainees during pre-service training, gays and lesbians will remain uninformed about how it affects them.

Relationships with other Volunteers are commonly addressed in two ways during pre-service training: romantic involvements and personal support networks. The data from Table 12 suggest that in neither case are gays and lesbians often referenced in these topics. Gays and lesbians do in fact have romantic relationships with other Volunteers -- that possibility exists for them as well as for the heterosexual Volunteers. It is unwise, however, for training staff to assume that treating the subject of heterosexual involvements among Volunteers will adequately cover the considerations which overlay a romantic involvement among gays or lesbians. Romance aside, the Peace Corps does encourage Trainees to develop skills which will permit them to serve as emotional support providers to others in their group. This encouragement is not an attempt to force friendships, but rather an acknowledgement that Volunteers do come to rely on each other for emotional support in ways that might not be available within the Host Culture.

Gays and lesbians do not assume that everyone else in their group will be able to accept diversity in sexual orientation, which thereby becomes a real or perceived barrier to dependence on other Volunteers for support. While respondents to the survey reported only occasional negative reactions from other Volunteers to the disclosure of being gay, lesbians and gays enter training uncertain about how tolerant their group is, and again will wait for demonstrative signs that they can trust being involved in the emotional support training. As one respondent said,

> I was nervous the first few weeks [of training], being thrown into a group of people I didn't know. Their reactions could have made my life miserable. I had committed two years of my life...and I couldn't afford losing an American friendship because of prejudices, especially when I knew that there weren't that many Americans and that you didn't get to pick your working colleagues or site mates.

Only three respondents reported that a currently serving gay or lesbian Volunteer had spoken to their groups during pre-service training. As with gay or lesbian Host Country Nationals, gay or lesbian Volunteers can be invaluable resources to Trainees, yet the data suggests that this resource is rarely offered.

Levels of concern. Pre-service training's apparent inattention to issues affecting lesbians and gays would predictably leave those Trainees with unresolved concerns at the end of the training. Table 13 supports this prediction.

Table 13: Levels of Concern and How They Changed During Pre-Service Training. Answers to the questions: 1) "At the beginning of pre-service training, how concerned were you about being a gay or lesbian person in the peace corps?", and 2) "If you experienced any level of concern, how did that level change as a result of the pre-service training?"*

DECADE OF SERVICE	Question 1 LEVEL OF CONCERN: (1 = Not Concerned; 5 = Very Concerned)	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	Question 2 LEVEL OF CHANGE IN CONCERNS BY THE END OF PRE-SERVICE TRAINING (BY NUMBER OF RESPONSES)**		
			GREATLY OR SLIGHTLY REDUCED CONCERNS	NO CHANGE	GREATLY OR SLIGHTLY INCREASED CONCERNS
1960s n = 11	Level 1	1			
	Level 2	2		2	
	Level 3	2	1		1
	Level 4	3	1	1	1
	Level 5	3	1	1	1
1970s n = 20	Level 1	5		1	
	Level 2	6		5	1
	Level 3	5	1	3	1
	Level 4	2		1	1
	Level 5	2	1	1	
1980s n = 48	Level 1	13		4	2
	Level 2	7	2	4	1
	Level 3	14	7	4	3
	Level 4	10	4	5	1
	Level 5	4	1	2	1

* Example for reading the table: In the 1970s, 6 Trainees rated themselves as having Level 2 concerns; by the end of Pre-Service training, 5 of those 6 experienced no change in the level of their concerns, while 1 felt an increase in the level of concern.

** Question 2 received fewer responses than question 1.

The discussion of Table 13 will be limited to the 1980s group, as it is the most numerous and represents the most contemporary data for illustrating the relationship between omission of gay and lesbian related material in pre-service training and how levels of concern change in gays and lesbians by the end of training. Of the 48 respondents, 28 (62%) remembered entering pre-service training with moderate to high levels of concern about being lesbian or gay in the Peace Corps (levels 3-5). By the end of training, 12 (43%) of the 28 reported a reduction in their level of concern, 11 (39%) reported no change, and 5 (18%) experienced an intensification of their concerns. Twenty entering Trainees recalled experiencing low levels of concern. Of the 13 in this group who also indicated how their concerns had changed, only three reported an increase. Perhaps the most pertinent question to ask about these results is why 57% of those who entered training concerned about sexual orientation issues finished training with those concerns unresolved or intensified.

One plausible explanation is that concerns remained or increased because the Trainees received accurate, sobering information about how much their lives would be curtailed for the ensuing two years. If this explanation were true, then the pre-service training programs could perhaps take credit for meeting the goal of addressing the issues of this special needs group. After all, larger numbers of open gays and lesbians now enter training, and their level of openness will almost certainly need

to be restrained within the Host Culture's context. For those Trainees who were unaware of the degree of prejudice and discrimination present in the Host Culture, cognizance of those conditions could, and should, increase levels of concern. However, the survey results indicate that levels of concern remained unchanged or increased not because of what was said, but because of silence and omission or because of insensitive treatment of the subject.

In spite of the almost universal omission of gay and lesbian references within the core curriculum, many Trainees do reduce their levels of concern by the end of training. The most likely explanation is that those Trainees have capitalized on their own resourcefulness to obtain the information they need outside of the formal training structure. The Peace Corps considers the ability to independently problem solve a valuable and necessary skill for all Volunteers to have. Lesbians and gays often contend that they have developed, by sheer necessity, exceptional abilities to identify hidden information networks and to seek out information discreetly and informally. Employing these abilities during pre-service training is certainly one viable tactic for becoming informed about issues of personal concern, but doing so in what is as yet an unfamiliar culture is not without risks. Training centers should encourage all Trainees to pursue independent investigations about matters of personal interest, but they should also take seriously their role in risk reduction by providing access to safe sources of information or help.

Staff Perspectives

The staff comments about pre-service training's treatment of gay and lesbian issues were very consistent. Three major points emerged: the willingness to treat these issues exceeds the ability to do so; there is confusion about how to treat the issues within the training environment; and, since the end of the 1970s, there has been almost universal agreement that sexual orientation per se is an irrelevant factor when staff deliberate about a Trainee's suitability for service. As with the staging programs, pre-service training centers, at least in the last decade, appear to be more benign environments regarding sexual orientation than gays and lesbians realize.

Few staff, particularly among Americans, disagree with the philosophy that, in order to enjoy an equal opportunity to qualify for Volunteer service, special needs Trainees require unique efforts from the staff. Over the last several years, the Peace Corps' research and evaluation activities regarding married couples, ethnic minorities, older Volunteers and the physically challenged have produced an initial body of specific knowledge about the unique challenges these groups face. Since no such research about lesbians and gays has been conducted, staff feel ill-prepared to develop gay-specific components within the core curriculum. While most training centers maintain resource libraries, none of the staff could recall the existence of any gay- or lesbian-related resource books. The access to human resources is also limited, although some staff reported that this

problem is more one of utilization. Gary reported that in 20 years of involvement with training programs, he rarely found a training staff in which at least one member was not gay or lesbian. However, for reasons discussed earlier in this chapter, gay or lesbian staff are often reluctant to be formally identified as resources, and other staff are equally reluctant to ask them.

The confusion about how to treat gay and lesbian issues within the training environment is largely due to the bicultural, transitional nature of the training centers. On the one hand, staff expect that Trainees at the beginning of training will conduct themselves primarily according to American cultural patterns. Yet, during the course of the training program, staff also expect to see evidence that Trainees are able to culturally condition their behavior in compliance with Host Country norms. Many of the interviewed staff remembered cross-cultural conflicts among training center staff about the appropriateness of treating gay and lesbian issues. Another explanation, then, for the infrequent references to gays and lesbians during pre-service training is that training center staff have selected silence as the best choice for internal conflict resolution.

Several of the staff interviewed believe that there are indeed messages which should be delivered to gay and lesbian Trainees. Eric recalled that while directing a pre-service training program in the 1980s, the Peace Corps Country Director expelled two gay Volunteers from the country. The lesbians and

gays in the training group became alarmed about serving as Volunteers under such a prejudiced Director. Eric, a gay man himself, worked hard to help the Trainees understand that the Volunteers were not expelled for being gay -- they were expelled for indiscretion. His counsel to the Trainees: "Assimilate first, explore later. Go into your Volunteer service as a muted pattern, not as a checkerboard." Jerry observed that although many of the issues facing lesbians and gays are faced by all Volunteers, gays and lesbians are likely to experience those issues more intensely and to have fewer options for reducing the impact of those issues. Specifically, he mentioned isolation, loneliness, inability to express feelings, conflicts with Host Culture value systems, and expectations generated by the Peace Corps staff and other Volunteers. Several staff (and a number of survey respondents) expressed a belief that pre-service training programs should assist all Trainees through the process of abandoning domestic agendas they may have brought to the Host Country, but which are not compatible or appropriate agendas for guests of another culture to be advocating. Among many other examples of such agendas was gay rights.

It is also clear from the staff interviews that the outlook is improving for attending to lesbian and gay concerns during pre-service training. Many underscored their own commitment to ensuring that a comprehensive and inclusive set of examples be developed and utilized for each core curriculum theme. Art, Carl, Carol, Denise, Eric, Gary, Mark and Nancy all told

anecdotes about their efforts to promote that commitment during training-of-trainers activities. Most believe that the resistance to broach gay and lesbian themes is diminishing, even among Host Country National trainers. Carl remarked that the African trainers on his staff had a difficult time "believing that homosexuality was not just an American phenomenon. There were many more gay Africans than they wanted to realize, but their denial of it is slowly fading. The denial started to atrophy when I asked them why their languages had so many words for it [homosexuality] if it didn't exist." The number of staff who report advocacy efforts on behalf of including lesbian and gay references in the core curriculum is indeed encouraging. However, this advocacy is still more atypical than normative, and it remains locked in the realm of personal beliefs and values. Until it can be expressed as an endorsement of Peace Corps policy, it will always be vulnerable to rejection by a dissenting majority of training staff.

Summary

Pre-service training is the final preparation and selection phase toward becoming a Volunteer. During this phase, the Peace Corps and training center staff must make every effort to ensure that, by the end of training, Trainees are linguistically, technically and culturally prepared to serve members of another culture effectively and sensitively. It is also the task of the

Peace Corps and the training centers to deselect those Trainees who do not meet the qualification standards.

For some 20 years, the Peace Corps has expected Trainees to be full, responsible and accountable participants in the preparation and qualification process. Yet the process can never be completely egalitarian. Trainees begin training quite heavily dependent on staff for information or access to information about the Host Culture. Without that information, Trainees are disadvantaged in their ability to measure their own suitability for service in that culture. No Trainee can make a conscious, reliable personal decision about becoming a Volunteer without cognizance of the sacrifices and adjustments which will be required.

Unquestionably, training centers must facilitate a process in which Trainees become largely independent and self-reliant by the end of training. However, this is not a process of removing support systems from the Trainees, but rather a gradual substitution of the transitional training center culture by the Host Culture itself. During this process, Trainees need to understand clearly how much they will need to change in order to survive and thrive in the Host Culture, and to then decide if that degree of change is acceptable. The survey results indicate that gays and lesbians, in regard to sexual orientation concerns vis a vis the Host Culture, the Peace Corps and other Volunteers, are largely disenfranchised from this process.

While most training centers do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, they also do not make very serious or effective efforts to include gays and lesbians in the core curriculum topics with themes about relationships to people, to cultural norms and laws, to Peace Corps policy, or to health and emotional well-being. There is evidence that the characteristic resourcefulness gay and lesbian Trainees demonstrate in seeking out answers to their survival concerns has compensated for the negligence of the training centers. This evidence is pursued in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH RESULTS: VOLUNTEER SERVICE PHASE

Survey Results

The volunteer service phase is the longest and most complicated of the phases considered in this study. Volunteers leave the controlled, safe and self-contained environment of pre-service training to begin two years of relatively unstructured, solitary and loosely-supervised service. They will encounter challenges they have never faced before. Their interactions with the people around them will be sometimes confusing, often frustrating, and rarely predictable. The unfamiliarity with their surroundings and the intricacy of the cultural fabric which envelops them can be disconcerting and disorienting at first. For a gay or lesbian Volunteer, this new life is further complicated by survival issues related to their sexual orientation.

According to some of the survey results presented in Chapter 4, many gays and lesbians begin their two years of Volunteer service incompletely informed about what life will be like for them in the Host Culture. Logically, then, one could expect to find that, as Volunteers, they flounder. Given the inadequacies of pre-service training identified in Chapter 4, how well do lesbians and gays function as Volunteers? How difficult is it for them to work successfully, to establish meaningful social and professional relationships with Host Country Nationals and with other Volunteers and Peace Corps staff? Do they live out their

service deprived of the intimacy of same-sex friendships and romantic involvements? How do they find their way?

Answers to these questions begin to emerge from the survey results. Since the nature of Volunteers' relationships with the people around them is so multidimensional, these interactions are isolated and analyzed as discreet units in the following discussion.

Levels of openness. As explained in Chapter 1, eligibility for the survey was restricted to those who had come out at some point during their Peace Corps experience. Some of them did not come out until they were Volunteers. In the 1970s and 1980s groups, 24% and 15% respectively were still unaware of their sexual orientation when they began Volunteer service. An additional 48% and 31% respectively had come out only to themselves. The levels of openness during the Volunteer service phase, however, changed dramatically, as illustrated in Table 14.

Table 14: Levels of Openness During Volunteer Service. Responses to the question: "During your volunteer service, how open were you about your sexual orientation?"

DECADE OF SERVICE	HOW OPEN WERE YOU?	VOLUNTEER SERVICE PHASE	
		NUMBER OF RESPONSES	%
1960s n = 11	Not even to myself		
	To myself only	7	64
	To a few	4	36
	To any who asked		
	To all		
1970s n = 21	Not even to myself		
	To myself only	8	38
	To a few	10	48
	To any who asked	3	14
	To all		
1980s n = 48	Not even to myself		
	To myself only	10	21
	To a few	20	42
	To any who asked	12	25
	To all	6	12

While only 36% of the 1960s group were open to others, fully 62% were in the 1970s group. The major difference between the two groups is that by the 1970s, some gay and lesbian Volunteers relinquished absolute control over who knew about their sexual orientation, and were willing to disclose that fact To Anyone Who Asked. This relaxation of control was fully exercised by the 1980s, when 12% of the respondents were out To All. Overall, the trend toward more openness documented in the previous phases continued during Volunteer service. Of the 1960s group, 36% were out to others, 62% of the 1970s group were, and 79% of the 1980s

group were willing at some level to disclose their sexual orientation.

Given the operant social and political conditions in the 1960s described in Chapter 2, the marked increase in openness between the 1960s and 1970s groups is not surprising. However, the comparisons become more difficult to interpret between the 1970s and 1980s groups. The number of Volunteers who were open only To a Few dropped only slightly, from 48% to 42%, yet the number of those open To Anyone Who Asked almost doubled. A population of lesbians and gays Open To All appeared for the first time during the 1980s. Several tentative conclusions can be offered about these trends.

Although the percentages of gay and lesbian Volunteers willing to be open about their sexual orientation continue to rise over time, there is little evidence that large numbers of indiscriminately or carelessly open lesbians and gays enter the Peace Corps. The vast majority are still judicious about disclosure. It is safe to conclude that lesbians and gays are no more disinclined to take cross cultural sensitivity seriously than the Volunteer population at large.

This commitment to discretion is evident in another way as well. Of the 1980s group, only 12% were Open to All. It is not the goal of every gay and lesbian person to become totally candid about their sexual orientation. For many gay people, sexual orientation remains a very private matter.

With the 1980s group, the full spectrum of openness appears for the first time during the Volunteer service phase: from Volunteers who have not yet discovered their gayness to Volunteers who feel no restraints about disclosure. Clearly "gayness" is as multidimensional as "straightness."

Disclosure by others. Lesbians and gays discovering others like themselves among the Volunteer population is another continuing trend from previous phases. Table 15 indicates that this trend is in fact quite accelerated.

Table 15: Incidence of Disclosure by Others During Volunteer Service. Responses to the question: "During your volunteer service, did any other volunteers or Peace Corps staff tell you that they were gay or lesbian?" Data presented as number of responses.

DECADE OF SERVICE	OTHER VOLUNTEERS		PEACE CORPS STAFF	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
1960s n = 11	1	10	0	11
1970s n = 21	9	12	2	19
1980s n = 48	35	13	5	43

Over the three decades, there is a notable increase in the percentage of lesbians and gays who meet each other during Volunteer service. Only one of the 11 respondents (less than 10%) in the 1960s group met another gay Volunteer, while 43% of the 1970s group met other gays and lesbians. By the 1980s, the rate jumped to 73%, a figure consistent with the earlier data

that 79% of that group were to some degree out to others. On the other hand, the rate of disclosure by Peace Corps staff to Volunteers appears to have remained virtually flat for the last 20 years, in that 9% of the 1970s group and 10% of the 1980s group reported such disclosures. The static incidence of Peace Corps staff coming out to Volunteers is not surprising given the low frequency of contact they have with each other. The House of Representatives report (1990) indicated that in some countries the ratio of Volunteers to staff is so high that "some Volunteers do not receive more than one visit [from a Peace Corps staff member] in their tour and some get none" (p. 17). A Volunteer's primary resource for affiliation, support and friendship relationships is unquestionably the Volunteer population, not the Peace Corps staff.

Sources of support. In most countries, the friendships and supportive relationships formed among the lesbian and gay Volunteers occur in an unstructured, informal manner. There are, however, a growing number of countries where gay and lesbian Volunteers have established at least loosely organized support groups, as Table 16 indicates.

Table 16: Participation in Gay-Specific Volunteer Support Groups. Responses to the questions: 1) "During volunteer service, were you aware of an in-country gay or lesbian volunteer support group?", and 2) "Were you involved?" Data presented as number of responses.

DECADE OF SERVICE	AWARE OF A SUPPORT GROUP?		INVOLVED IN SUPPORT GROUP?	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
1960s n = 11	0	11	0	11
1970s n = 21	1	20	1	20
1980s n = 48	13	35	10	3

None of the 1960s respondents could recall a support group for gays and lesbians in their countries of service, and only one of the 21 (less than 5%) 1970s respondents knew of such a group. Thirteen of the 48 (27%) 1980s respondents knew of support groups; three of them chose not to participate. It is reasonable to assume that not all Volunteers will have an interest in participating in such a support group, particularly those with more restricted levels of disclosure. Others may not participate because of distance. Many volunteers live in remote areas with difficult access to the capital or to regional cities where such support groups tend to meet. Others may not participate simply because they prefer to conduct their service in relative isolation from other Americans, and would therefore be disinclined to join Volunteer support groups. As one survey respondent remarked, "About 90% of my time I was fairly recluse

and stayed in my village -- I never expected the Peace Corps or Host Country Nationals to provide support in this area." Another respondent, who served in an Arab country, explained that she:

> "...had to spend 24 hours a day trying to remain a respected woman, much less a lesbian. I'm a Christian, white woman who happens to be lesbian -- too many minorities piled on top of me to worry too much about lesbianism. I ordered books from women's presses in London to keep me entertained and updated -- they delivered fast. I wouldn't have joined Peace Corps unless I was secure about my sexual preference. Peace Corps isn't the most ideal place to try new aspects of a lifestyle."

Six countries were represented among the 13 affirmative responses in the 1980s group. Five others were mentioned in the staff interviews. Currently the Peace Corps operates in about 70 countries. Although that number fluctuated throughout the decade, it is probably reasonable to conclude that a lesbian and gay support group exists in about one of five or six Peace Corps countries. This rough estimate is not meant to imply that in the other four or five Peace Corps countries lesbians and gays find no support. Many survey respondents reported that, while no organization existed per se, they did in fact develop supportive relationships with other gay and lesbian Volunteers.

Some of these support groups are sanctioned by the in-country Peace Corps office, permitting them to post announcements and publicize in the local Volunteer newsletter. Other groups have looser organizational structures, meeting sporadically without seeking the support of the local Peace Corps office. Some were organized by the Volunteers, some at the initiative of a Peace Corps staff member.

Whatever their degree of structure, these groups exist to meet a common set of needs. As mentioned in Chapter 4, gay and lesbian Volunteers may experience more intensely than other Volunteers such adjustment issues as isolation, loneliness, inability to express feelings, conflicts with Host Culture value systems, and expectations generated by the Peace Corps staff and other Volunteers. Moreover, fewer options may be available to them for reducing the impact of those issues. The following comments from the survey help to illustrate this point:

> When I came out to myself [during Volunteer service] I felt desperately alone. I did not feel that there was anyone, any other compatriot, to whom I could relate culturally, that I could turn to for support. If Peace Corps had addressed gay and lesbian issues in an affirming and supporting manner, I could have saved myself a lot of angst in knowing that I could turn to someone, a staff member or another Volunteer or health staff for some support or for resources.
>
> [As a Volunteer] I was just coming out...and felt I couldn't bring up this subject with anybody. Being in a Muslim country, I felt very intimidated as a woman and the added aspect that I was lesbian seemed even more overwhelming. While my Peace Corps experience was worthwhile in many ways, I clearly felt it was detrimental to me in accepting my sexual orientation.
>
> I didn't have the slightest idea where to turn when I had a problem. That person, or outlet, was never made available to me. Looking back now, that's a scary thing!
>
> Two days before I left for Peace Corps I was attacked because I was a lesbian. This scared me, and I'm sure had a lot to do with my decision not to tell anyone that I was gay....I had no idea how I would adjust to a new lifestyle [Volunteer service]. I cried myself to sleep more nights than I care to remember -- mostly because I was afraid to get close to anyone. For the first time in my life I felt totally on my own and had to count on myself to fulfill all my emotional needs. I withdrew very, very deep back into the closet [keeping sexual orientation a closely-guarded secret].

> Peace Corps as I experienced it offered no support for gay and lesbian Volunteers. I felt it was a subject not to be brought up. I often felt that Peace Corps was administered [in-country] by a fairly homophobic group.
>
> While I generally feel that being lesbian made me much more open to diversity and less judgmental of others, I also felt frustration and dissatisfaction at not feeling free to be more open with other Volunteers and my [Host Country] friends about relationships, hopes, desires and attractions.

Those Volunteers who participated in support groups were almost unanimous (12 of 13) in declaring that the groups had a positive effect on the quality of their Peace Corps experience. "Without the support of the other gays and lesbians, I doubt if I would have stayed, or if I did, I would have been much less happy," wrote a 1985 respondent. A 1988 Volunteer said that he was a part of a group which "turned out to be as supportive a network as one was likely to find anywhere."

Gay and lesbian Volunteer support groups can also serve as resources to in-country training centers. They could be invited to introduce themselves to new training groups and to offer help to the lesbian and gay Trainees. From the survey and staff interviews, five Peace Corps countries are known to do this now. This is an effective way for training centers to provide Trainees with information resources they need for assessing the magnitude of the adjustments they will have to make in order to survive in the Host Culture. In many cases the training centers would be merely formalizing what already occurs clandestinely, as one respondent related:

> Overall, I felt the underground support group sustained me in times of need. I don't know if I could have survived my Peace Corps commitment if I had been alone and isolated as a lesbian in a different culture. Because we were underground, we had no formal way of alerting new Volunteers that such a network existed. Rather we kept an eye out for suspected gay Volunteers and through friendships networked our support, although it was not always gracefully operational. The old "how do you know if someone else is gay?" and "how do you know if they want to know whether a group exists?" were common problems. Had we not felt such a homophobic climate from the Peace Corps, it would have been much easier to have an "out" group for everyone involved.

The respondents found support outside of the groups as well. Several reported that they knew of at least one in-country Peace Corps staff person (and not always a gay person) to whom they could turn for help or friendship. "We all certainly need to know where we can go if we need to. [Country name] had a psychologist on the staff. She made herself available to me and I felt secure with that," wrote one. Another survey participant said that his Peace Corps supervisor "was gay and a friend. He was supportive both professionally and personally." Still another Volunteer remembered feeling particularly supported when her Peace Corps supervisor "came out and offered emotional support to gays in the field through the Volunteer newsletter." Heterosexual Volunteers were occasionally cited in the survey as another source of support, although in frequency of mention they ranked third after other lesbian and gay Volunteers and Peace Corps staff. This source of support may be under-utilized. Several respondents mentioned that, in retrospect, they now believe many of their heterosexual Volunteer friends would have been supportive had they known; at the time the respondents just

didn't feel confident enough to test those friendships by coming out. "I do believe fellow Volunteers would have been accepting and supportive," said one respondent. Another commented, "I found the openness and acceptance from most Volunteers to be very helpful. I became confident with being gay..."

The support lesbian and gay Volunteers are able to find comes not only from the ranks of Peace Corps Volunteers and staff. Many also connect with gay people within the Host Culture, as indicated in Table 17.

Table 17: Participation in Gay-Specific Host Country Subcultures. Numbers of volunteers aware of and involved in a Host Country National lesbian or gay subculture.

DECADE OF SERVICE	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS AWARE	% OF TOTAL GROUP	NUMBER INVOLVED	% OF AWARE GROUP
1960S n = 11	7	64	3	43
1970s n = 21	13	62	8	62
1980s n = 48	28	58	12	43

Table 17 reinforces the concept presented with Table 16 that awareness does not lead automatically to involvement. Just as with the lesbian and gay Volunteer support groups, many more Volunteers were aware of a Host Country National subculture than actually took advantage of it. The reasons are probably the same as those discussed with the previous table: distance or lack of access, restricted degree of openness about sexual orientation, and disinterest.

Another striking feature of the data in Table 17 is the relative constancy in the incidences of awareness and involvement. There does not seem to be a correlation between rising levels of openness about sexual orientation and degree of awareness or involvement in the Host Country gay subculture. As a percentage, fewer Volunteers from the 1980s group knew of a Host Country gay subculture, and fewer participated in it, than those from the 1970s group. One possible explanation emerges from the growing numbers of gay and lesbian Volunteers who are out to each other, and who are forming support groups. These Volunteers may prefer the relative safety, expediency and comfort of supportive relationships among their own, without the additional efforts required to meet those needs within a complicated, and potentially hazardous, Host Culture framework. Lesbian and gay Volunteers do not want to take risks which have a potential for damaging their own or the Peace Corp's reputation and effectiveness. This explanation is consonant with the many statements from survey respondents that their first allegiance as Volunteers was not to the satisfaction of their own needs, but to their work and to the goals of the Peace Corps.

While the percentage of the surveyed Volunteers aware of a gay subculture in their Host Country remained constant over the three decades, the number of countries represented increased from six in the 1960s to 11 in the 1970s and to 13 in the 1980s. The majority of the respondents believed that their involvement in the Host Country subculture had as positive effect on their Peace

Corps experience as did their involvement in a Volunteer support group.

In addition to affiliations with support groups, the survey also sought information about involvements with "significant others." Since the 1970s, slightly less than half of the survey respondents reported being involved in a primary same-sex relationship, as Table 18 reveals.

Table 18: Incidence of Primary Same-Sex Relationships During Volunteer Service. Percent of Volunteers reporting involvement in a primary same-sex relationship during their service, and with whom.

INVOLVED WITH:	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 48
A Volunteer In-country	9%	0%	21%
A Volunteer in Another Country		5	2
A Host Country National	19	38	17
An Expatriate (Resident Foreigner)			2
Other (Unexplained)			2
No Primary Relationship	72	57	56

In spite of the increasing numbers of gay and lesbian Volunteers out to others and aware of others, the percentage of survey respondents involved in a primary same-sex relationship was almost identical for the 1970s and 1980s groups. Although the percentages of those involved in relationships remained flat during the last two decades, the type of partners did change dramatically. More than twice as many 1970s as 1980s Volunteers were involved with a Host Country National, while involvement with another Volunteer in-country jumped during the same period

from 0% to 21%. Given the concurrent increase in numbers of lesbian and gay Volunteer support groups, this change in types of partners seems to support the argument made earlier that Volunteers prefer the simpler and easier alternative of being involved with each other.

Effect of gayness on the quality of life and work. Relationships of any sort, romantic, sexual, affinative or professional, are more complicated and stress-laden when developed in the context of a foreign culture. Not only are relationships more complicated, they are also transitory, since Volunteer service is customarily just two years. The survey asked a number of questions related to how the participants viewed the impact of their sexual orientation on the personal and professional relationships they had as Volunteers.

Volunteers interact with many types of people in a variety of contexts. Both working and personal relationships are established with their Peace Corps supervisor and other in-country Peace Corps staff, with their Host Country National counterpart (a professional with whom the Volunteer is assigned to work), and with the people in their sites. Tables 19 - 22 summarize the survey responses to appraisals of how being gay or lesbian affected those relationships.

Table 19: Effect of Gayness on Host Country Counterpart Relationships. Responses to the question: "Think about your personal qualities which you attribute to being gay or lesbian. What kind of effect do you believe those qualities had on your ability to:" Data is presented as percentages of those responding.

TYPE OF ABILITY	KIND OF EFFECT	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 47
WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR HOST COUNTRY COUNTERPART	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	0%	0%	15%
	NO EFFECT	36	52	51
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	64	48	34
SOCIALIZE WITH YOUR HOST COUNTRY COUNTERPART	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	18	38	19
	NO EFFECT	18	38	45
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	64	24	36
DEVELOP A FRIENDSHIP WITH YOUR HOST COUNTRY COUNTERPART	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	18	19	17
	NO EFFECT	18	43	53
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	64	38	30

The overwhelming majority of respondents (exceeding 80% in all but one instance) felt that their gayness had either no effect at all, or a positive one on their relationships with Host Country counterparts.

Table 20: Effect of Gayness on Relationships with Site Residents. Responses to the question: "Think about your personal qualities which you attribute to being gay or lesbian. What kind of effect do you believe those qualities had on your ability to: Data is presented as percentages of those responding.

TYPE OF ABILITY	KIND OF EFFECT	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 47
WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH THE PEOPLE IN YOUR SITE	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	0%	0%	10%
	NO EFFECT	36	62	64
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	64	38	26
SOCIALIZE WITH THE PEOPLE IN YOUR SITE	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	9	30*	24
	NO EFFECT	36	40*	55
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	55	30*	21
DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS WITH THE PEOPLE IN YOUR SITE	SOMEWHAT OR VERY NEGATIVE EFFECT		14	19
	NO EFFECT	45	43	55
	SOMEWHAT OR VERY POSITIVE EFFECT	55	43	26
			*n = 20	

As with their counterparts, the respondents overwhelmingly felt that their gayness was either a neutral or a positive factor in their relationships with people in their site. Only two major types of negative impact were reported. Women who worked in Arab countries felt much more challenged by the rigidly defined and subservient nature of gender roles. Although lesbianism further complicated relationships with the people in their sites, it was not a principal factor. In a variety of Host Countries, some of the men remembered being very uncomfortable with the sexually

aggressive and demeaning conversations about women that were customary among their Host Country male friends and acquaintances. Others related how imaginative they had to be in creating plausible excuses for not joining their friends on routine excursions to brothels.

Table 21: Effect of Gayness on Relationships With Other Volunteers. Responses to the question: "Think about your personal qualities which you attribute to being gay or lesbian. What kind of effect do you believe those qualities had on your ability to:" Data is presented as percentages of those responding.

TYPE OF ABILITY	KIND OF EFFECT	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 47
WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHER VOLUNTEERS	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	9%	5%*	6%
	NO EFFECT	82	60*	66
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	9	35*	28
SOCIALIZE WITH OTHER VOLUNTEERS	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	18	14	26
	NO EFFECT	27	48	36
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	55	38	38
DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHER VOLUNTEERS	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	9	9	13
	NO EFFECT	27	62	47
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	64	29	40
			*n = 20	

Consistent with the previous two tables, relationships with other Volunteers were largely unaffected by gay or lesbian qualities. As noted earlier, most of the 1970s and 1980s

respondents felt that other Volunteers were generally accepting and tolerant of their gay colleagues.

Table 22: Effect of Gayness on Relationships With Peace Corps Staff. Responses to the question: "Think about your personal qualities which you attribute to being gay or lesbian. What kind of effect do you believe those qualities had on your ability to:" Data is presented as percentages of those responding.

TYPE OF ABILITY	KIND OF EFFECT	1960s n = 11	1970s n = 21	1980s n = 47
WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR PEACE CORPS SUPERVISOR	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	18%	0%	15%
	NO EFFECT	55	76	66
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	27	24	19
WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHER PEACE CORPS STAFF	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE	9	0	7*
	NO EFFECT	55	71	80*
	VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	36	29	13*
				*n = 46

Many of the respondents indicated their conviction that the in-country Peace Corps staff were unsympathetic or actually hostile towards lesbian and gay Volunteers. Table 22, however, indicates that being gay or lesbian did not have a significant negative impact on relationships with staff. This apparent contradiction might be explained by the infrequency of contact that Volunteers have with staff in many countries where distances are great, sites are isolated, and the Volunteer-to-staff ratio is very high.

Some general comments relevant to the four preceding tables can be made. The 1960s and 1970s groups reported no negative effects in relationships with people in their sites or with their counterparts, yet they did report some negative impact from their relationships with the in-country Peace Corps staff and with other Volunteers. The most probable explanation is that they remained absolutely silent about their sexual orientation to Host Country Nationals, but decided to "test the waters" with disclosure to other Volunteers or to staff, with some resulting negative reactions.

Curiously, the 1970s group displayed slightly higher overall percentages of benign or beneficial effect ratings than did the 1980s group for relationships with other Volunteers and with Peace Corps staff. The increased availability of support groups and greater access to other known gay people may account for this. Given the availability of support groups and other gay and lesbian Volunteers, they may simply have invested less time and effort in developing relationships with non-gay Volunteers and staff.

It is clear throughout all four tables that the largest group of respondents believed that their self-perceptions of gayness had no effect on their abilities to establish effective working and social relationships with the people around them. The second largest group believed that their self-perceptions had a positive effect on those same abilities. A very small number,

exceeding 15% only once, believed that their abilities were affected negatively.

When asked to specify the kinds of personal qualities they attributed to being lesbian or gay, the most frequent responses were: sensitivity; awareness of differences among people; ability to accept greater ranges of diversity; empathy for the disenfranchised, powerless and oppressed; and non-judgmentalness. Many commented that lesbians and gays enter the Peace Corps with a battery of cross cultural skills already well-developed. One respondent said, "The coming out process forces one to appraise one's own culture with an objectivity that leads to insights in all types of personal interactions. It essence, it forces us to become aware of belonging to another culture beneath the mainstream; such skills are useful when moving into another culture [as a Volunteer]." Another cited his "heightened sensitivity and concern for other's differences, struggles and suffering. Because of my own struggle and pain, I had the ability to relate to others, to listen, to be open and supportive, and to understand in a compassionate manner."

A few respondents dissented from the idea that there are unique attributes or special qualities associated with being gay or with "gay consciousness." One respondent reacted by saying, "It's hard to isolate gay gifts or qualities because, if I have any, I consider them mine and I don't know how they would differ if I wasn't gay." Still another remarked:

> I integrated very well into [Host Country] society, and I don't think being gay or straight has anything to do

> with my being able to do so. In fact, I think attributing social skills or personal characteristics solely to sexual orientation is dangerous. My personal characteristics and social skills are a result of a combination of factors including sexual orientation. To attribute personal characteristics to any one factor is to demean the others.

While there is no consensus on whether gays and lesbians indeed possess special qualities or gifts in larger quantities than other people, most of the respondents thought so.

Effects of gayness on performance and satisfaction. The survey was limited to Volunteers who had completed their two years of service without, of their own accord, terminating early. Although many respondents reflected that being gay or lesbian made their Volunteer service more challenging, they in fact persevered. At what cost? Is there any reason to believe that lesbian and gay Volunteers consider the quality of their work was impeded by their sexual orientation? Even if they were satisfied with their efforts as Volunteers, do they think retrospectively that sexual orientation diminished their own sense of satisfaction and fulfillment derived from Peace Corps service? Tables 23 and 24 present answers to these questions.

Table 23: Effect of Gayness on Work Performance. Responses to the question: "What kind of effect do you think being gay or lesbian had on your ability to perform successfully as a Peace Corp Volunteer?" Data is expressed as the number of those responding, organized according to level of openness about sexual orientation during Volunteer service.

LEVEL OF OPENNESS ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE EFFECT			NO EFFECT			VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE EFFECT		
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1960s	1970s	1980s
To Myself Only	1		1	3	4	7	3	4	7
To a Few	1		1		6	9	3	4	10
To Any Who Asked			1			5		3	6
To All			1			1			4
TOTALS	2		4	3	10	22	6	11	22
	Total, "Negative Effect": 6 of 80 7%			Total, "No Effect": 35 of 80 44%			Total, "Positive Effect": 39 of 80 49%		

Almost half of the survey population felt that their gayness had a positive effect on their ability to perform successfully as a volunteer. Whether or not gays and lesbians actually do possess special qualities (or qualities in more abundance than other Volunteers) which enhance their performance, almost half of the survey participants believe that they did possess those qualities as Volunteers, and that those qualities made a difference.

Another 44% of the entire group felt that gayness had no effect at all on their ability to perform successfully. This is not worse than believing in a positive effect. Given the extraordinarily difficult, complex and sensitive cross cultural attitudes about homosexuality in which gay and lesbian Volunteers work, the neutrality with which they view the effect of their orientation on successful performance is also a triumph. Only 7% of all respondents felt that their gayness had a negative effect on the success of their performance.

The level of openness during Volunteer service does not seem to be a major variable in the assessment of performance. About half of the 1980s group in the first three levels of openness felt their gayness had a positive effect on their performance. At the most open level, To All, four of the six respondents (67%) indicated a positive effect.

The results summarized in Table 23 encourage predicting that the survey respondents would also believe their gayness was either value-neutral or a positive contributor to the sense of

satisfaction and fulfillment about Peace Corps service. Table 24 confirms that prediction.

Table 24: Effect of Gayness on Personal Satisfaction and Fulfillment. Answers to the question: "What kind of effect do you think being gay or lesbian had on your own sense of satisfaction and fulfillment as a Peace Corp Volunteer?" Data is expressed as numbers of those responding, and organized according to level of openness about sexual orientation during Volunteer service.

LEVEL OF OPENNESS ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION	VERY OR SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE EFFECT			NO EFFECT			VERY OR SOMEWHAT POSITIVE EFFECT		
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1960s	1970s	1980s
To Myself Only	2		1	4	3	3	1	5	5
To a Few	1	1	7		4	2	3	5	11
To Any Who Asked			1			3		3	7
To All						1			5
TOTALS	3	1	9	4	7	9	4	13	28
	Total, "Negative Effect": 13 of 78 17%			Total, "No Effect": 20 of 78 25%			Total, "Positive Effect": 45 of 78 58%		

The results summarized in Table 24, while confirming a similarity between assessments of performance (presented in the previous table) and levels of satisfaction and fulfillment, nevertheless differ in a significant way from Table 23. Unlike Table 23, here there is some positive relationship between level of openness and the sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. The 1980s group presents the clearest and most pertinent illustration of this relationship.

In order from the lowest to the highest levels of openness, the rating of Somewhat or Very Positive Effect increases from 55% to 83% of the participants in those levels. This finding is not presented to suggest that all gay and lesbian Volunteers should strive for total openness about their sexual orientation; it does suggest that those Volunteers who do not ignore or attempt to suppress entirely their gayness may view their Volunteer service with a greater sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

When the Volunteer service is appraised for sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, only 25% of all respondents felt that being gay had no effect at all, down from 44% in Table 23. This decline in the perceived neutrality of sexual orientation may indicate that it is easier to devalue one's sexual orientation in relation to job performance than it is in relation to one's sense of self-worth and personal achievement.

Staff Perspectives

Due to authorization and funding constraints, no attempt was made to interview currently serving Peace Corps staff overseas. The material garnered from interviews with former overseas staff may therefore be somewhat dated. The content of the interviews about the Volunteer service phase was most substantial in two areas: concerns about training for in-country Peace Corps staff, and concerns related to helping gays and lesbians adjust their expectations and their behavior to culturally appropriate levels.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, many in-country Peace Corps staff appear more willing than able to work directly with lesbian and gay Volunteers towards resolution of their needs. Presently, the training that Peace Corps provides to overseas-bound staff does not include by policy any skill development for working with gays and lesbians. Those interviewed who conduct staff training reported that, because of personal convictions, they address gay and lesbian issues. Denise explained that among staff trainers today, there is a cadre of people who consistently present lesbian and gay concerns. For counseling skills training, she prepares case studies which include such questions as, "How would you help a Volunteer who is just coming out?" She believes that sensitivity and awareness training are needed now as much as ever. During a recent staff training session, a discussion ensued on how personal biases affect abilities to listen accurately. One participant, nominated as a Peace Corps Country

Director, said, "I have a lot of trouble around fags and dykes." According to Denise, a third of the people in the room were gay.

Esther also believes that staff need help developing the skills and comfort levels necessary to deal effectively with diversity issues of all kinds, including those related to lesbians and gays. She believes that the recruitment end of the Peace Corps is supplying the field with a more diverse Volunteer population than in-country staff are prepared to accommodate. "Eventually," she said, "the support mechanisms have got to catch up to the recruitment mechanisms."

In general, Peace Corps in-country staff have made significant progress in their abilities to manage diverse Volunteer populations and to adroitly resolve issues of controversy. As Ron put it, "Something very positive is going on in the Peace Corps in relation to diversity." This positive trend further supports the need to standardize the diversity components of overseas staff training, since new staff will in all likelihood face gay and lesbian issues of diversity among Volunteers in their countries of assignment. As Todd put it, "I have never been in a Peace Corps country where I didn't meet a gay Volunteer within two days."

Because the number of more openly gay Volunteers is increasing, many of the staff interviewed feel that Peace Corps in-country staff must learn how to assist those Volunteers in the process of adjusting expectations and behavior. Todd believes that lesbians and gays must realize how severely limited the Host

Culture may be in its ability to openly accommodate them, explaining that "no one can be too demanding of a Host Culture" regarding personal agendas or nontraditional lifestyles. This opinion was seconded by Art, who observed that "it's still a reality that many countries around the world have very harsh laws regarding homosexuality."

In spite of these concerns, there was a general consensus among those interviewed that gay and lesbian Volunteers have good skills and instincts in the face of these "clear and present dangers." Carl, reflecting on his years as a Country Director, remarked that he dealt with "many, many problems with inappropriate Volunteer social behavior, but never with gays and lesbians." Todd said, "You have to be so circumspect in foreign cultures regarding romantic and sexual involvements. Gays are good at that -- it's part of their survival skills."

Summary

Gay and lesbian Peace Corps Volunteers serve their Host Countries successfully. They consider their job performance to be unimpeded by the fact of their gayness. Moreover, they complete their service with a significant sense of personal satisfaction and fulfillment. They have not allowed their sexual orientation to encumber or strain their professional and social relationships with the people around them. They unobtrusively have their share of romantic involvements, some with Host Country Nationals, more with other Volunteers.

No correlation could be established in this study between the rising levels of openness about sexual orientation and inclinations to push the Host Culture beyond its limits of tolerance for homosexuality. Perhaps, then, these Volunteers do not represent the confrontational segment of the U.S. gay subculture, since they seem to place their sexual orientation in a position subservient to the philosophy and goals of the Peace Corps. They manifest a high degree of integrity in their motivations for becoming Volunteers, and protect their own and Peace Corps' reputation in their countries of service.

Lesbian and gay Volunteers demonstrate initiative and resourcefulness in finding and/or creating support networks which satisfy enough of their needs to keep sexual orientation from becoming a reason to terminate their service early. Many, in fact, survive without access to these support networks. They are simply willing to suspend for two years those aspects of their lives which the Host Culture would find intolerable.

CHAPTER VI

VALUING DIVERSITY: ENCOMPASSING GAYS AND LESBIANS

References were made throughout the preceding chapters to the limitations imposed or self-imposed on the research. However, limitations are often the incubators of possibilities for future research. In spite of the limitations, the research did yield a wealth of information, and the very act of describing existing conditions often produces, as a side effect, insights into how those conditions could be improved. What are, then, the possibilities for future research, and in which areas could the Peace Corps immediately begin to enhance the attention it pays to lesbian and gay concerns?

The Need for Additional Research

One of the most glaring deficiencies in this network survey is the under-representation of women -- less than 20% of the respondents were women. While some cross cultural adjustment issues affect both male and female Volunteers, there are also numerous and very significant ways in which women are challenged differently than men are by the Peace Corps experience. It stands to reason, then, that lesbians and gays will also have differentiated experiences as Volunteers. No bivariant analysis was contemplated for this project, but future research should first strive for parity in the participation of women, and then be attentive to gender variations in the responses. Since those potential variations will need analysis and interpretation, the

participation of a female researcher would be highly advisable in order to reduce the possibility of male bias and to bring a different perspective to the research. Belenky, et al. (1986) point out that:

> The potential for bias on the part of male investigators is heightened by the recurring tendency to select exclusively or predominantly male samples for research. This omission of women from scientific studies is almost universally ignored when scientists draw conclusions from their findings and generalize what they have learned from the study of men to the lives of women. If and when scientists turn to the study of women, they typically look for ways in which women conform to or diverge from patterns found in the studies of men (p. 6).

Another deficiency in this study was its treatment of gays and lesbians as a single-minority class. It did not pursue the unique situations of gay people who are older, married, or belong to an ethnic minority, or who are physically challenged. Diversity within the Peace Corps Volunteer population is not unidimensional. Further research should inquire about the experiences of those lesbians and gays who are multiple minorities.

Snowball sampling techniques provide few mechanisms for managing variables within the target population unless they are very large surveys from which representative selections can be made. This survey exercised no control over the proportion of respondents by country of service, nor did it attempt to weight the results according to relative size of the Volunteer populations in those countries. Operationally, the Peace Corps is divided into three very large geographical regions. The

enormous differences in cultural contexts of countries within these regions vis-a-vis gay and lesbian issues makes a regional organizational scheme unwise for additional research. However, an exponential increase in the survey base would permit a selection more equitably representative of countries and some analysis of country-specific issues.

This study's framework was a historical overview of the emergence of explicit gay and lesbian related issues and concerns. Moreover, it was designed for execution without the necessity of seeking the Peace Corps' express authorization. For both of these reasons, the survey's target population was returned Volunteers. The trends identified in this study support the need to conduct research among a sampling of currently serving Volunteers and U.S. regional office, headquarters and in-country Peace Corps staff and consultants. Finally, the survey was limited to returned Volunteers who completed their tour of service (with the exception of three questionnaires submitted by currently serving Volunteers); in other words, to returned Volunteers who were successful in overcoming whatever detrimental effects they experienced because of their gayness. As yet there is no available mechanism for determining how many lesbian and gay Volunteers early terminate because they were unable to resolve the challenges they faced. Volunteers who early terminate are asked by the Peace Corps to select from a 70-item list (Peace Corps, 1990b) the reason(s) why they were unable to complete their service. None of the 70 reasons mention inability

to function or to receive support as a lesbian or gay person. Considering the Peace Corps' chronic challenge to reduce attrition rates, research into sexual orientation as the reason for early termination could prove valuable.

The Need for Enhancement Efforts

Throughout this thesis care has been taken to identify evidences of change and improvement in the Peace Corps' attention to gay and lesbian matters. Conditions are unquestionably better now than they were even 10 years ago. Moreover, prospects are encouraging for continued improvement, in part because the Peace Corps is under a self-imposed mandate to diversify the Volunteer population, and in part because both the survey and the staff interviews alluded to a growing predisposition within the Peace Corps to view diversity issues favorably. Gayness is one of the forms of diversity present in the Peace Corps since its very beginning, but has remained the one that still is not officially recognized, acknowledged or addressed routinely. Gay and lesbian concerns are now more likely to receive attention, not in isolation, but as one of the many other emerging issues of diversity which the Peace Corps faces.

The improvements in conditions for lesbians and gays highlighted in this thesis were, for the most part, engendered by individual initiative, not by policy; therein lies their vulnerability. The life expectancy of these improvements and the creation of additional enhancements are both contingent on

individuals' willingness to assume that the Peace Corps' silence on the matter is a de facto permission to effect change.

Among Peace Corps headquarters and overseas staff, and among consultants under contract, those who believe lesbian and gay concerns need better attention act accordingly. Those with moral or philosophical aversions to homosexuality also act accordingly. Lesbians and gays are caught in the cross fire of mixed messages. The survey respondents repeatedly described the anxieties they experienced due to the unresolved ambiguity of their status within the Peace Corps. Fortunately for gay people, the body of individually initiated practices regarding lesbians and gays in the Peace Corps is overwhelmingly in their favor.

Nevertheless, practices unsupported by policies are not enforceable, even when they represent, as is the case here, a consensus. For example, while it is clear that the Peace Corps does not in practice discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in either recruitment of Volunteers or hiring of staff, its nondiscrimination policy does not include sexual orientation. Furthermore, the Peace Corps' goals related to minority recruitment include women, ethnic minorities, the physically challenged, and older people. These demographic categories have been, in practice, directly translated for training purposes into designated Special Needs groups of Trainees. Lesbians and gays are lost in the translation. As a practice, some training programs do strive to attend to lesbian and gay concerns. The survey results suggest a strong case for

elevating these training practices to the level of training policy by designating gays and lesbians as another Special Needs group.

The Peace Corps recently formed an in-house group called the "American Diversity Task Force" which was commissioned to develop front-end strategies for the recruitment of larger numbers of minorities and to recommend and create back-end support mechanisms for those minorities as serving Volunteers. According to members of the task force, its first priority was the development of strategies and support mechanisms for ethnic minorities. Listed on its future agenda are similar developments for other the other minority and divergent groups mentioned above, including gays and lesbians. How these remaining agenda items of the Task Force will be prioritized and scheduled is unknown, but at least the promise of more formalized attention to lesbian and gay matters now exists.

The survey produced many specific suggestions about how the Peace Corps could expand and improve the support it provides to the gay and lesbian population. In the discussion which follows, those suggestions are presented by phases. The discussion is limited to enhancement activities which could be implemented conservatively, without unduly challenging the current level of tolerance within the Peace Corps system. They are suggestions based on existing (although not necessarily widespread) practices. The author's suggestions related to staff training are presented at the end of the discussion.

Application/recruitment, placement and staging phases. The survey indicated that recruiters are not consistent in what they say to gay and lesbian applicants about Peace Corps policies and practices. In general, recruiters do inform applicants that the Peace Corps does not discriminate in practice on the basis of sexual orientation. The inconsistencies are most pronounced in two areas: the recruiter's level of comfort, as perceived by the applicants, in the presence of gay people; and what is told to applicants about how sexual orientation may influence their chances for succeeding in the Peace Corps. The respondents suggested that recruitment offices have available gay-sensitive recruiters, and that consistency of content be improved in the delivery of information.

A more highly-charged suggestion is related to recruitment of couples. According to Peace Corps policy, couples are assumed to be heterosexual and must be married in order to serve together. Gay and lesbian couples are locked in a Catch-22, since Denmark is currently the only nation in the world which offers civil marriages to same-sex couples. Ultimately this policy is as likely to be challenged by unmarried heterosexual couples as by same-sex couples.

The survey generated many comments in favor of changing the policy. In actuality, only five survey respondents were in a committed relationship at the time they applied to the Peace Corps, and none of them reported attempting to challenge the policy. Moreover, the policy will certainly stand as long as it

can't be challenged by a nontraditional couple who both qualify for Peace Corps service on all other counts. The rigidity of this policy seems ironic given the existence of cohabiting same- and opposite-sex couples in the Volunteer population.

Regarding placement of qualified applicants, the survey respondents frequently suggested that efforts be made to place lesbians and gays in countries more tolerant toward the idea of homosexuality. Chapter 3 cited references attesting to the informal existence of this practice in Peace Corps's placement office. Gay-sensitive placement is a good idea, but it obviously cannot rank above the placement office's first task of matching skills to available "slots."

The principal suggestion from the survey about improving the content of staging events for lesbians and gays is to make the information provided to them more country-specific. Mention was made in Chapter 3 of a generic list of possible challenges to gays and lesbians which is distributed at staging. More useful would be a country-specific information packet elaborated jointly by staff and lesbian and gay Volunteers serving in those countries. Host Country Nationals from both the training center and the Peace Corps office should figure prominently among the staff involved. The packet should include an appraisal of the Host Culture's level of repression or tolerance towards gay people, a description of how much behavior modification is required of gay and lesbian Volunteers, and specific reassurances

about the availability of gay-sensitive contacts among Volunteers and Peace Corps and training center staff.

To some degree staging still functions as the final stateside opportunity for participants to change their minds about continuing the journey towards Volunteer service. Many gays and lesbians arrive at staging apprehensive about what awaits them. Objective, truthful country-specific information can, depending on its content, alleviate some of those concerns or provoke a reassessment about the advisability of serving as a gay person in that particular country. In either case the interests of gay people can be better served than they currently are.

Pre-service training phase. The most frequent comment from survey respondents about pre-service training was that gays and lesbians and their concerns were rarely, if ever, mentioned. Lesbian and gay Trainees lived in a state of uncertainty about how open they could be to training staff and to other Trainees, and were often unable to ascertain how tolerant or hostile the training environment was. As mentioned in Chapter 3, gay people often wait for explicit overtures of welcome when they are in an unfamiliar setting. Most training centers are not hostile environments for gay people, but the message is not getting across. Silence is not interpreted as tolerance but as oversight or exclusion. Training centers should adopt communication

strategies which make their tolerance and acceptance unambiguously clear.

Table 12 in Chapter 3 presented a list of 19 common core curriculum topics which have sub-themes relevant to lesbian and gay concerns. The survey results indicated that those sub-themes rarely surface in the delivery of the core curriculum topics. There is clearly work to be done in giving form and substance to the appropriate references to gays and lesbians within those topics (and within future curriculum development efforts) and to further ensure that those references become regularly incorporated into topic presentations. It is not enough to include those references only when there are known gays and lesbians in a training group. The surest probability is that there are lesbians and gays in every training group. If they are not open about it, they are simply not identifiable -- but they are there nonetheless. Moreover, the staff interviewed who work with staging and pre-service training activities consistently argued in favor of routinely treating the broad dimensions of diversity, whether or not all of those dimensions are present in a particular training group. To the contrary, individuals would be not be prepared to face diversity issues which are absent from their own group but which do exist in the larger world of Volunteers and Host Country Nationals which they are entering.

Training centers could also take greater advantage of existing Volunteer and Host Country gay and lesbian support groups, or, in their absence, of known lesbian and gay

Volunteers. They can serve as invaluable information resources for gay and lesbian Trainees. They can also serve as resources for training sessions on interpersonal relationships, helping skills, and developing empathy for marginalized and oppressed groups. Again, training centers should take the initiative in inviting these groups or Volunteers. Gay people are often sensitive about being viewed as promoters of their own agenda. Training center outreach would show respect for this sensitivity.

Volunteer service phase. Those survey respondents who participated in gay and lesbian support groups were almost unanimous in acclamations about how beneficial the groups had been for them. They envision the day when such support groups exist in every Peace Corps country. There seems to be no consensus on how much involvement the in-country Peace Corps office should have in the support groups, but the sentiment is absolute that such groups should encounter no objection from the Peace Corps. Since Volunteer populations are transitory, such support groups would not enjoy stability or continuity of leadership. In that sense, these groups probably need to rely on the Peace Corps office for some stabilizing services, such as access to the Volunteer newsletter.

Many respondents reported that they knew of in-country Peace Corps staff who were gay or lesbian but not out for fear of negative reactions from other staff. Justifiably, the respondents expect the in-country Peace Corps offices to be

exemplary models of environments which openly appreciate and support diversity. This is apparently not the case in many countries.

According to the survey results, the majority of the respondents, during the entire course of their Volunteer service, never knew whether there was a gay-sensitive person on the staff; moreover, the local Peace Corps' silence on the matter discouraged them from inquiring. All of the respondents who knew of a supportive staff person spoke passionately about how comforting that access had been to them. Volunteers should not have to guess about the existence of a gay-sensitive staff person. That information should be readily forthcoming from the Peace Corps office itself.

The Office of Special Services in the Peace Corps is currently developing a mental health specialist training program, whose goal is to ensure that at least one staff member in every in-country Peace Corps office has a solid foundation in counseling skills. That person would be a logical candidate to serve as a safe contact for gay and lesbian Volunteers. However, at this time the training program in formulation does not include gay-related sensitivity training. It should.

The Need for Expanded Staff Training

References to gay and lesbian concerns now appear in various staff training settings. As mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, many staff and contract trainers have made a personal commitment to

including gay and lesbian concerns in the training they conduct. This is still a matter of personal choice; if there is no advocate on the training team, the subject is not likely to come up. The survey respondents and interviewed staff consistently expressed consternation over leaving to chance the inclusion of gay-related subject matter in staff training.

The gay-related training currently presented to staff is largely skill-based and situationally oriented. For example, recruiters learn how to ask applicants about their domestic relationships using language free of heterosexual assumptions. Overseas-bound staff, in sessions on managing diversity, are presented with case studies or role plays designed to illustrate how personal biases can interfere with listening skills. This type of training should be routinely included, not left to chance. It makes explicit the fact that staff will be dealing with gay people, and it promotes the elimination or reduction of value judgments from interpersonal communication processes. What this type of training cannot offer is a self-contained basic education course about homosexuality.

The body of scholarly works about gays and lesbians and their lives, particularly in the U.S., has grown enormously in recent years. Many colleges and universities now offer courses in gay and lesbian studies. Gay and lesbian history has come into its own as an acknowledged discipline. Many anthropological works exist about how homosexuality is treated in scores of other cultures. These resources should be tapped in order to create a

basic education course for the Peace Corps staff. Such a course could provide a dispassionate, objective setting in which to present what is known and what is not known about those whose primary affiliation drives are toward members of their own sex.

This course could present a survey of all the theories which attempt to explain the existence of homosexuality. It could provide an overview of how the major world religions theologically and operationally treat human sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular. It could illuminate the interrelationships among bias, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. The nature of homophobia could be analyzed. Information about gays and lesbians in the Peace Corps could be imparted. Skill-building training exercises do have a role to play in helping people confront their own biases, but those exercises alone are not enough. A serious, comprehensive educational effort is also needed. The material and human resources are available to create such an effort. Whether the Peace Corps could realistically sponsor such an effort undoubtedly rests on a variety of political and budgetary considerations not addressed directly by this research project.

Gay-related education and training efforts for staff must not overlook the unique dilemma, discussed in Chapter 4, in which Host Country National staff often find themselves. They frequently experience the discomfort of standing in the intersection where two cultures merge. Their tolerance of American cultural patterns must be sufficient to accommodate

values and beliefs which their own culture may view as anathemas. Furthermore, they are expected to serve with equanimity as escorts into their own culture for Americans, both staff and Volunteers. This unique and irreplaceable role Host Country Nationals play in the Americans' cross cultural adaptation process must be acknowledged and honored through their inclusion in the educational efforts mentioned above.

Summary

Peace Corps Volunteers, regardless of their technical specialty, are trained to be facilitators of change. They are expected to learn first how to appreciate their Host Cultures' traditional ideas and practices, and to then look for culturally compatible alternative ways of thinking and doing which could improve the quality of life for those they serve. For a Volunteer, the Peace Corps is also a Host Culture. Logically, then, Volunteers approach their association with it in much the same way--honoring traditions and introducing change. The traditions within the Peace Corps responsible for its benign neglect of lesbians and gays certainly have easily understood historical antecedents; but the waves of diversity have reached the Peace Corps' shore, and the time for change is now.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

GAYS AND LESBIANS IN THE PEACE CORPS

INSTRUCTIONS:

This questionnaire is organized according to chronological phases in the Peace Corps: Recruitment/Application, Staging, Pre-service Training, and Volunteer Service. Some questions are repeated in each phase, so please make your answers specific to the phase in which the question appears.

If a question allows for multiple answers, you will see the instruction: "Check all that apply". If that instruction does not appear, please select the one response which most closely approximates your answer.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Name (optional)** _____

2. **Year of Birth** _____

3. ____ **Male** ____ **Female**

4. **Please provide the following information about your Peace Corps service (multiple listings are provided in case you served in more than one country, but please list first the country on which you will base your survey responses):**

   A. Country of Service: _____
   B. Dates of Service: From (month/year): _____ To (month/year): _____
   C. Program Assignment: _____
   D. Site (check one): ____ City ____ Rural Town ____ Village

   A. Country of Service: _____
   B. Dates of Service: From (month/year): _____ To (month/year): _____
   C. Program Assignment: _____
   D. Site (check one): ____ City ____ Rural Town ____ Village

   A. Country of Service: _____
   B. Dates of Service: From (month/year): _____ To (month/year): _____
   C. Program Assignment: _____
   D. Site (check one): ____ City ____ Rural Town ____ Village

PART II: INFORMATION ABOUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS

5. **At the time you applied to the Peace Corps, what did you consider your sexual orientation to be?** (NOTE: On the scale, completely heterosexual = 0; completely homosexual = 6.)

   Completely Heterosexual 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Homosexual

6. **At the time you applied to the Peace Corps, how open were you about your sexual orientation?**

   A. ____ Not even to myself
   B. ____ Only to myself
   C. ____ To a few people only
   D. ____ Open to anyone who asked
   E. ____ Open without being asked

7. **At the time you applied to the Peace Corps, how involved were you in Gay or Lesbian political, service, religious, or support organizations?** (Note: On the scale, "Uninvolved" = 1; "Very Involved = 5)

   Uninvolved 1 2 3 4 5 Very Involved

8. **At the time you applied to Peace Corps, your circle of close friends was:**

   A. ____ Mostly Gay or Lesbian
   B. ____ Mostly straight
   C. ____ Equally mixed

9. **During your application process to the Peace Corps, were you asked about your sexual orientation (asked either in a form you filled out or by a recruiter)?**

   ____ No ____ Yes

   IF YOU CHECKED "YES", please state how you answered the question:

10. **During your application process to the Peace Corps, did you discuss your sexual orientation with a Peace Corps recruiter or other Peace Corps representative?**

    ____ No ____ Yes

    A. IF YOU CHECKED "YES", what were you told? (Check all that apply):

       1) _____ You should reconsider -- Peace Corps service would be too difficult
       2) _____ Gay and Lesbian people serve in the Peace Corps, but they have more challenges to overcome than the average Volunteer
       3) _____ Peace Corps does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation

4) _____ Gay and Lesbian people have success rates in the Peace Corps equal to or better than the Volunteer population at large
5) _____ Gay and Lesbian people have lower success rates in the Peace Corps than the Volunteer population at large
6) _____ The person you were talking to acknowledged being Gay or Lesbian and having served successfully in the Peace Corps
7) _____ At your request you could be put in touch with returned Gay or Lesbian Peace Corps Volunteers or Peace Corps staff
8) _____ During your training program you would get help in identifying the issues you would face being a Gay or Lesbian Volunteer
9) _____ If Peace Corps extended you an invitation, you could be sent to a country whose culture was more tolerant of homosexuality
10)_____ It would probably be better if no mention was made of your sexual orientation during the application process

11) Please list below any other responses you received:

11. At the time you applied to the Peace Corps, were you in a committed Gay or Lesbian relationship?

____ No ____ Yes

IF YOU CHECKED "YES":

A: Did you and your partner both apply?
____ No ____ Yes

IF YOU CHECKED "NO" TO #11A, GO TO #12.
IF YOU CHECKED "YES" TO #11A, CONTINUE WITH #11B AND #11C.

B. Did you and your partner declare desires to serve together?
1) _____ No
2) _____ Yes, and we applied as an openly Gay or Lesbian couple
3) _____ Yes, but we did not reveal our relationship

C. Did you and your partner ultimately serve together as Volunteers?
1)_____ No
2)_____ Yes, but not in the same country
3)_____ Yes, in the same country but not in the same site
4)_____ Yes, in the same country and in the same site

PART III: INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE DURING STAGING

12. "Staging" is a term Peace Corps uses to describe a pre-departure orientation event held in the U.S. shortly before training begins. What kind of staging did you receive?

____ CREST ____ CAST ____ ADMINISTRATIVE ____ None ____ Don't Remember

13. Did the Staging program include topics or information with direct references to Gays or Lesbians in the Peace Corps?

____ No ____ Yes

IF "NO", GO TO # 14; IF "YES", CONTINUE WITH # 13 A, B, and C.

A. Please describe the topics or information:

B. Overall, what was the reaction of the other Trainees to the topics or information which had direct references to Gays and Lesbians in the Peace Corps?

1	2	3	4	5
Mostly Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Reaction	Somewhat Positive	Mostly Positive

C. Overall, what was the reaction of the Staff to the topics or information which had direct references to Gays and Lesbians in the Peace Corps?

1	2	3	4	5
Mostly Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Reaction	Somewhat Positive	Mostly Positive

14. During staging, how open were you about your sexual orientation?

A. ____ Not even to myself
B. ____ Only to myself
C. ____ To a few people only
D. ____ Open to anyone who asked
E. ____ Open without being asked

15. During staging, any other Trainees tell you they were Gay or Lesbian?

____ No ____ Yes

16. During staging, did any staff members tell you they were Gay or Lesbian?

____ No ____ Yes

17. **By the end of staging, did any Gays or Lesbians (open or closeted) in your group decide to go home?**

____ No ____ Yes ____ Don't Know

IF "YES":

Did any of those Gays and Lesbians who left disclose publicly or privately that their decision to go home was related to doubts about being able to survive in the Peace Corps as a Gay or Lesbian person?

____ No ____ Yes

18. **During the staging process, how concerned were you about being a Gay or Lesbian person in the Peace Corps?** (NOTE: On the scale, "Not at all" = 1; "Very" = 5)

A. Not at all concerned 1 2 3 4 5 Very concerned

B. If you experienced any level of concern, how did that level change as a result of the staging process?

1	2	3	4	5
Greatly Reduced	Slightly Reduced	No Change	Slightly Increased	Greatly Increased

PART IV. INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PRE-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM

[NOTE: Pre-service training is the period of time (usually about three months) during which you receive language, technical and cross-cultural training. Pre-service training immediately precedes the time when you are sworn in and begin your two years of service as a Volunteer.

19. **Please give an approximate percentage for how much of your pre-service training was conducted in each of the following locations (the percentages should total 100):**

A. ____ In the U.S.
B. ____ In another country but not your country of assignment
C. ____ In your country of assignment

20. Which of the following pre-service training topics included direct references to Gays or Lesbians in the Peace Corps? Using the guide below, circle the most appropriate number next to each topic.

Circle #1: No direct references to Gays and Lesbians
Circle #2: Direct references, <u>BUT</u> the presenter demonstrated little understanding of, or a sensitivity about Gays and Lesbians
Circle #3: Direct references <u>AND</u> the presenter demonstrated an understanding of, and a sensitivity about Gays and Lesbians

A.	Host culture norms and values	1	2	3
B.	Male and female roles in the host culture	1	2	3
C.	Host culture belief systems about masculinity and femininity	1	2	3
D.	Host culture belief systems about diversity and tolerance for variations from the norms set for behavior and life-style	1	2	3
E.	Host culture values and norms about same-sex friendships (non-sexual) and accepted levels of intimacy in those friendships	1	2	3
F.	Host culture values and norms about opposite-sex friendships (non-sexual) and accepted levels of intimacy in those friendships	1	2	3
G.	Host culture values and norms about dating and romantic relationships	1	2	3
H.	Host culture values and norms about disclosure of personal information, separation of work and private life, individual privacy	1	2	3
I.	Host culture values and beliefs about personal integrity and dignity	1	2	3
J.	Peace Corps policies	1	2	3
K.	Personal health, nutrition and disease prevention (including AIDS education and prevention)	1	2	3
L.	Rape prevention and personal safety	1	2	3
M.	Stress management and coping skills	1	2	3
N.	Establishing and nurturing emotional support relationships with other Volunteers	1	2	3
O.	Establishing and nurturing emotional support relationships with Peace Corps staff	1	2	3
P.	Host country's legal system, laws and law enforcement practices which affect Volunteers	1	2	3
Q.	Romantic involvements between Volunteers	1	2	3
R.	Managing unresolved issues you left behind when you joined Peace Corps	1	2	3
S.	Information about an existing in-country Gay and Lesbian Volunteer support group	1	2	3

21. Overall, what was the reaction of the other Trainees to the above topics which had direct references to Gays and Lesbians in the Peace Corps?

1	2	3	4	5
Mostly Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Reaction	Somewhat Positive	Mostly Positive

22. Overall, what was the reaction of the training staff to the topics or information which had direct references to Gays and Lesbians in the Peace Corps?

1	2	3	4	5
Mostly Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Reaction	Somewhat Positive	Mostly Positive

23. During pre-service training, how open were you about your sexual orientation?

A. ____ Not even to myself
B. ____ Only to myself
C. ____ To a few people only
D. ____ Open to anyone who asked
E. ____ Open without being asked

24. During pre-service training, did any of the other Trainees tell you they were Gay or Lesbian?

____ No ____ Yes

25. During pre-service training, did any of the training staff tell you they were Gay or Lesbian?

____ No ____ Yes

26. During pre-service training, did any Peace Corps staff members tell you they were Gay or Lesbian?

____ No ____ Yes

27. By the end of pre-service training, did any Gays or Lesbians (open or closeted) in your group decide to go home?

____ No ____ Yes ____ Don't Know

IF YES:

A. Did any of those Gays and Lesbians who left disclose publicly or privately that their decision to go home was related to doubts about being able to survive in the Peace Corps as a Gay or Lesbian person?

____ No ____Yes ____ Don't Know

28. At the beginning of pre-service training, how concerned were you about being a Gay or Lesbian person in the Peace Corps? (Note: On the scale, "Not at all" = 1; "Very = 5)

Not at all concerned 1 2 3 4 5 Very concerned

A. If you experienced any level of concern, how did that level change as a result of the pre-service training?

1	2	3	4	5
Greatly Reduced	Slightly Reduced	No Change	Slightly Increased	Greatly Increased

PART V. INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR LIFE AS A VOLUNTEER

29. Think about your personal qualities which you attribute to being Gay or Lesbian. What kind of effect do you believe those qualities had on your ability to:

(Using the guide below, circle the most appropriate number next to each item)

Circle #1: Very Negative Effect
Circle #2: Somewhat Negative Effect
Circle #3: No Effect
Circle #4: Somewhat Positive Effect
Circle #5: Very Positive Effect

A.	Work effectively with your Host Country counterpart	1	2	3	4	5
B.	Socialize with your Host Country counterpart	1	2	3	4	5
C.	Develop a friendship with your Host Country Counterpart	1	2	3	4	5
D.	Work effectively with the people in your site	1	2	3	4	5
E.	Socialize with the people in your site	1	2	3	4	5
F.	Develop friendships with the people in your site	1	2	3	4	5
G.	Work effectively with other Volunteers	1	2	3	4	5
H.	Socialize with other Volunteers	1	2	3	4	5
I.	Develop friendships with other Volunteers	1	2	3	4	5
J.	Work effectively with your Peace Corps supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
K.	Work effectively with other Peace Corps staff	1	2	3	4	5

30. During your Volunteer service, how open were you about your sexual orientation?

A. ____ Not even to myself
B. ____ Only to myself
C. ____ To a few people only
D. ____ Open to anyone who asked
E. ____ Open without being asked

31. During your Volunteer service, did any other Volunteers tell you they were Gay or Lesbian? (Other than the ones who told you during staging or pre-service training.)

____ No ____ Yes

32. During your Volunteer service, did any of the Peace Corps Staff tell you they were Gay or Lesbian? (Other than the ones you knew about during staging or pre-service training.)

____ No ____ Yes

33. During your Volunteer service, did any Gays or Lesbians in your group decide to go home early?

____ No ____ Yes ____ Don't Know

IF YES:

A. Did any of those Gays and Lesbians who left disclose publicly or privately that their decision to go home was related to doubts about being able to survive in the Peace Corps as a Gay or Lesbian person?

____ No ____ Yes ____ Don't Know

34. During your Volunteer service, from about how many people in the following groups did you experience anti-Gay prejudices?

	From Most	From Many	From A Few	From None
A. Other Volunteers:	1	2	3	4
B. Peace Corps Staff:	1	2	3	4
C. Host Country Counterpart:	1	2	3	4
D. Host Country Nationals:	1	2	3	4

35. How often during your Volunteer service did you believe that being Gay or Lesbian put you in physical danger? (Note: On the scale, "Never = 1; "Always" = 5)

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

36. During your Volunteer service, did you become aware of an in-country Gay or Lesbian Volunteer Support Group?

____ No ____ Yes

IF "YES":

A. Were you involved in the support group?

____ No ____ Yes

IF "YES" TO A, ANSWER B and C:

B. To your knowledge, about how many of the following people expressed affirmative opinions about the existence of the support group?

	All	Most	Many	Few	None
1. Other Volunteers	1	2	3	4	5
2. Peace Corps Staff	1	2	3	4	5

C. What effect did that involvement have on the quality of your Peace Corps experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Effect	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive

37. During your Volunteer service, did you become aware of a Gay or Lesbian sub-culture among Host Country nationals?

____ No ____ Yes

IF "YES":

A. Were you involved in that sub-culture?

____ No ____ Yes

IF "YES" TO A:

B. What effect did that involvement have on the quality of your Peace Corps experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Effect	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive

38. During your Volunteer service, were you involved in what you considered to be a primary same-sex relationship?

A. ____ No
B. ____ Yes, with another Volunteer in-country
C. ____ Yes, with a Volunteer serving in another country
D. ____ Yes, with a Host Country National
E. ____ Yes, with an expatriate working in-country
F. ____ Yes, with (describe the type of person if not included in the above categories):

39. What kind of effect do you think being Gay or Lesbian had on your ability to perform successfully as a Peace Corps Volunteer?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Effect	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive

40. What kind of effect do you think being Gay or Lesbian had on your own sense of satisfaction and fulfillment as a Peace Corps Volunteer?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	No Effect	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive

PART VI. OPTIONAL NARRATIVE COMMENTS

If you are willing to take the time, I would appreciate your written responses to any of the considerations listed below. Please number your responses according to the item you are answering.

(1) The process of filling out this questionnaire has perhaps induced you to relive at least some of your experiences as a Volunteer. Please feel free to elaborate in narrative form clarifications you want to make about any of your responses.

(2) Please describe your beliefs about whether or not Peace Corps could improve its support of Gays and Lesbians during any of these phases: Recruitment, Staging, Pre-service Training, Volunteer Service.

(3) Describe what you believe are the gifts or special qualities you brought to your Volunteer service because you are Gay or Lesbian.

(4) Describe occasions when you felt particularly supported or abandoned as a Gay or Lesbian Volunteer.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWED STAFF AND JOBS HELD BY DECADES

Note: All jobs are field-based except those followed by a Headquarters (HQ) designation. In some cases, offices rather than positions are listed to comply with anonymity criteria.

FIRST NAME PSEUDONYM	1960s	1970s	1980s
ALLEN		Field Recruiter	Field Recruiter
ANN			RPCV; Desk Officer (HQ)
ART	Pre-service training	Pre-service training	Regional Training Officer; In-country Training Director; Country Director
BETH	PCV	PCV; Field Recruiter	Field Recruiter; Evaluation (HQ)
BOB	Overseas Training Development Officer	Overseas Training Development Officer	
CARL	PCV; Pre-service Training	Pre-service Training; Country Director	Office of Training and Program Support (HQ)

FIRST NAME PSEUDONYM	1960s	1970s	1980s
CAROL		PCV	PC Fellow (HQ); Associate Country Director; Desk Officer (HQ); Information Collection and Exchange (HQ); Special Programs (HQ); Placement (HQ)
CRAIG	Field Assessment Officer; Regional Selection Officer		
DAN	Field Assessment Officer; Regional Assessment Officer		
DAVID		PCV	Office of Special Services (HQ)
DENISE	Pre-service training	Pre-service training; Regional Training Office; Program and Training Officer	Staging trainer; Staff trainer

FIRST NAME PSEUDONYM	1960s	1970s	1980s
ED	Field Selection Officer		
ERIC		PCV	Desk Officer (HQ); Staging (HQ)
ESTHER			PCV; PC Fellow (HQ and overseas); Associate Country Director; Desk Officer (HQ); Placement (HQ)
FRAN		PCV	Regional Recruitment
FRANK	Field Assessment Officer	Training and Development Officer; Program and Training Officer; Evaluation (HQ)	Evaluation (HQ)
FRED	PCV	Desk Officer (HQ); Associate Country Director; Country Director	

FIRST NAME PSEUDONYM	1960s	1970s	1980s
GAIL	Field Selection Officer (HQ); Management Information Office	Placement (HQ)	Placement (HQ)
GARY	Pre-service training Director	Regional Training Center Director	
HAROLD	Field Assessment Officer		
HELEN			Regional Program and Training Officer (HQ); Office of Special Services (HQ)
JEAN	Special Assistant to the Director(HQ); Program Officer (HQ); Operations Officer (HQ); Training Officer (HQ)		
JERRY		Placement Evaluation (HQ); Training and Evaluation	Staff Training for Office of Special Services and Medical Office

FIRST NAME PSEUDONYM	1960s	1970s	1980s
JOHN	PCV	Placement (HQ); Area Office Manager	Area Office Manager
KEVIN	PCV; Desk Officer (HQ); Country Director		
LARRY	PCV	Placement (HQ)	
MARK	PCV; Pre-service Training		
NANCY	Pre-Service Training	Pre-Service Training	Staff training; Staging trainer; Close-of-Service workshops
PAUL		Office of the General Counsel (ACTION) (HQ)	Office of the General Counsel
TODD	Country Director	Country Director; Staging trainer; Associate Country Director	Pre-service Training

APPENDIX C

TOPICS EXCLUDED FROM THE RESEARCH

AIDS. In most Peace Corps countries, AIDS is predominantly a heterosexually transmitted disease. Yet in the U.S. during the 1980s, the population most affected by AIDS was gay men. The Peace Corps faced agonizing policy decisions regarding testing, liability, and medical costs. Host Countries were wrestling with immigration reform designed ostensibly to prevent the introduction of the disease. The Peace Corps undoubtedly received pressure from these participating countries to insure that all entering Volunteers were free of the disease. Since from the early 1980s the gay male population in the U.S. was considered to be the most at risk, suddenly the issue of homosexuality could no longer be treated casually by the Peace Corps. HIV screening of applicants and AIDS education efforts directed at serving Volunteers and Peace Corps staff were both implemented. The underlying association of same-sex behavior with the transmission of AIDS within the applicant population could very well have relegated considerations of within the Peace Corps to an exclusively medical model, treating sexual orientation primarily as a behavioral issue.

The "Causes" of Homosexuality. Blumenfeld and Raymond (1989) discuss a variety of theories which claim to explain the causes of homosexuality. Broadly classified, these theories have biological, psychoanalytic or environmental frameworks. They conclude their discussion by asserting that, while homosexuality is not normative, "to label homosexuality a result of a 'genetic

aberration' or a biological 'mistake' or a mental 'disorder' or 'willfulness' or a 'breakdown in the normal family' or a hormonal 'imbalance' is to cease to describe the phenomenon and instead to make a value judgement" (p. 146). Lesbians and gays do serve as Peace Corps Volunteers, which is the only relevant fact for this research.

Moral and Religious Positions About Homosexuality. Whether homosexuality is immoral, sinful, or evil as judged by people with strong religious convictions about this subject is not considered in my research. As a gay man, I clearly have my own opinions about such convictions. However, I made conscious efforts to keep the survey value-neutral in terms of moral considerations.

Legal and Legislative Considerations. Public debate in the U.S. over the inclusion of sexual orientation in civil rights legislation at the municipal, state and national levels has certainly intensified during the last decade. The central issues of this debate are well documented but are not treated directly in this thesis.

Bisexuality. Several survey participants asked why I had not included scales for those who are bisexual. The question is valid. I believe in the continuum theory of sexuality. Discussing the experiences of lesbians and gays in this project

does imply an either/or presupposition that a person is either a homosexual or a heterosexual. I believe the research which indicates that people fall along a continuum, with the majority falling somewhere between exclusive homosexuality or exclusive heterosexuality. The scope of this project simply could not handle that many variables.