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Dimensions of Cosmopolitanism: Patriotism and Disaffection Among U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers

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In a globalized world, how do individual people navigate experiences with difference? How do they internalize cosmopolitan values? Using a large mixed-methods data set, this article explores the ways that individuals can be both cosmopolitan and nationalist at the same time. It does so by operationalizing cosmopolitanism, and analyzing how it develops among U.S. Peace Corps volunteers. This article distinguishes two patterns. Patriotic cosmopolitans, although they become sensitive to global context throughout service, come to identify more with U.S. values. They become particularly connected to ideas of freedom, choice, and administrative efficiency, and deeply supportive of the existing institutional and political order. Disaffected cosmopolitans come to see those same values as troublesome considering their identities as global citizens, and dis-identify with the United States because of them. The different types of cosmopolitanisms yield different types of relationships with the state, which express in different patterns of professional engagement and voluntarism.

Keywords Cosmopolitanism; development; Peace Corps; nationalism; patriotism

INTRODUCTION

Cosmopolitanism has been regarded on the left as a desirable trait since at least the eighteenth century (Pieterse 2006). With the advent of globalization, conversations about it have reached a fever pitch in social science. As a connected, open-minded global community—so the story goes—we expect that a cosmopolitan attitude will help us to become more thoughtful citizens (Baillie Smith et al. 2013), more agentic (Weenink 2008), better leaders, more empathic (Running 2013), better businesspeople (Robertson and Wind 1983), and even better cooks (Cappeliez and Johnston 2013). And these ideas have historical resonance: from Kant’s vision of a “perpetual peace” to Marx’s worker paradise in which a global community could triumph over capitalist interests (Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann 1997; Marx and Engels 2014; Turner 2002).

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As if to emphasize its inherent normative value, cosmopolitanism is frequently contrasted in the literature, explicitly and implicitly, with nationalism—which is seen, in turn, as a reactive, xenophobic, closed-minded response to threats that arise from difference (Barber 1992; Brett and Moran 2011; Dubnov 2010; Huntington 1993; Pollock et al. 2000). Nationalism, in this line of thinking, undercuts the open-mindedness upon which a healthy international society must rest (cf. Beck 2002).

And yet, as the world makes sense of what it means to be globalized, such sanitized juxtapositions make less and less intuitive sense. The question thus emerges: how do individual people—whose realities are messy and complicated—navigate experiences with difference? How do they internalize cosmopolitan values? This article joins an emergent chorus of voices exploring the way that individuals can hold both global and local affinities (see also Appiah 1997; Calhoun 2007; Lamont 2000; Lamont and Aksartova 2002); I analyze the varieties of cosmopolitanism that exist between the binary of “cosmopolitan” and “nationalist” or “patriot.” I do so by looking at a paradoxical institution that explicitly uses a national(ist) program to foster cosmopolitan sensibilities in young U.S. citizens, and arguably for nationalist ends: the U.S. Peace Corps. This article’s purpose is to look at varieties of cosmopolitanism, explore their origins, and consider what they mean for how we live. In other words, the goal is to tease out how cosmopolitanism articulates in people’s lives, and to explore the theoretical implications that flow from this.

This article proceeds in six parts. First, I provide a theoretical background, and a brief empirical orientation of the Peace Corps itself. After describing my data, I present my results in two sections. I conclude with a theoretically oriented discussion of cosmopolitanism, and the implications of my findings for research and practice.

BACKGROUND

The notion of “cosmopolitanism” has taken hold to describe how human society adjusts its social values in response to globalization (Kendall, Woodward, and Skrbis 2009; Roudometof 2005; Skrbis, Kendall, and Woodward 2004). In its lay form, “cosmopolitanism” represents some version of open-mindedness and multiculturalism. In its theoretical instantiation, cosmopolitanism refers to a “dual identity and a dual loyalty”—to both the world of possible political configurations, and to the territorial state (Beck, Sznaider, and Winter 2003: 16). It is a process “of self-transformation in which new cultural forms take shape and where new spaces of discourse open up, leading to a transformation in the social world” (Delanty 2000: 88), which prioritizes a commitment to universals.

Research on cosmopolitanism has divided into three broad strands. The first is methodological (Beck 2004; Skrbis et al. 2004), and describes a social science that no longer embraces the nation as the unit of analysis, but rather analyzes global flows, ranging from communications (Castells 2011) to culinary trends (Cappelierz and Johnston 2013). Methodological cosmopolitanism constitutes a “revolution in the social sciences” (Beck 2002: 18), and is an attempt to make them reflective of the world they study.

The second strand of research on cosmopolitanism has to do with the structure of institutions; it uses the normative frame of cosmopolitanism to think about how society could or should work under globalization (cf. Held 2009). In this stream of thinking, cosmopolitanism is a “moral commitment to universals” (Ignatieff 1995) that frames research and helps analysts describe new patterns in the social world. Cosmopolitan political theory, for instance, posits that states have an obligation to recognize universal community (Linklater 1998); cosmopolitan justice, in turn, regards individuals as the ultimate units of moral concern, and as entitled to equal consideration regardless of nationality or citizenship (Tan 2004: 136).

The third strand of research—to which this article contributes—is comprised of inquiries into people’s lived experiences of cosmopolitanism and culture in the global era (cf. Beck 2000). Cosmopolitanism, in this sense, although it retains a moral commitment to universals, is also a language to analyze law, democracy, identity, and citizenship in an increasingly globalized world. This tradition explores how interconnectedness articulates and manifests in the lives of regular people, including an emergent strain on “ordinary cosmopolitanisms” (Brett and Moran 2011; Lamont 2000; Lamont and Aksartova 2002; Skrbis and Woodward 2007). In sum, this perspective looks at the lived dimensions of this global/national duality, and affords scholars some traction in understanding how people respond when globalization alters their lives.

In all three strands, although to varying degrees, a theoretical and empirical distinction persists between ideas of cosmopolitanism (which have a “nice, high-minded ring” to them (Himmelfarb 1996: 77) and suggest an inherently utopian feeling of bonding and multiculturalism (Kendall et al. 2009: 12) on the one hand, and nationalism and its tendency to “produc[e] evil in the world” on the other (Pollock et al. 2000: 578; see also Kunovich 2009). The pervasiveness of this juxtaposition within the literature is old, but was reinvigorated in Nussbaum’s (1994) provocative contrast of “patriotism and cosmopolitanism.” Beck, for instance, refers to nationalism as one of the “enemies” of cultural cosmopolitanism (Beck 2002; see also Mazlish 2005).

And yet such stark theoretical contrasts map imperfectly onto people’s lived experiences; this article joins the emergent strand of research exploring how individuals can be—and indeed, must be—cosmopolitan and nationalist at once. This tradition has attempted to make sense of the experiences of ordinary people—non-elites, who are often perceived to have insufficient cultural reflexivity to maneuver in a truly “cosmopolitan” way (Nava 2002: 88; see also Featherstone 2002; Lamont 2000). As Brubaker and Cooper suggest, we must move beyond “clichéd constructivism” (2000: 11) to examine how cosmopolitan identities actually become real for people; this article answers Roudometof’s call to “outlin[e] the ... qualitative features [of cosmopolitanism] that can be observed in individual attitudes” (2005: 118). The point is that the real world and the lives of individuals are complicated, and multiple identities, loyalties, and feelings are routinely experienced simultaneously. Understanding these processes assists in creating a more sensitive model of how cosmopolitanism is lived.

To pursue this question, I take up the paradox of cultural cosmopolitanism and nationalist sensibility as instantiated in a single organization. I look at the case of people whose experience is not, in fact, fully cosmopolitan in orientation (after all, the Peace Corps places a great deal of importance on the existence of national borders) but who are encouraged to develop a

cosmopolitan perspective on their own lives and citizenships. As a program, the Peace Corps embodies what has been described elsewhere as “a struggle at the heart of liberal theory, where a genuine desire for equality as a universal norm is tethered to a tenacious ethnocentric provincialism in matters of cultural judgment and recognition” (Pollock et al. 2000: 581). The “encounters with difference” that the Peace Corps facilitates are very much dependent on the existence of national boundaries, but oriented toward the “nice, high-minded” outcome for the people who participate. In other words, it promotes a type of cosmopolitanism that has a “moral mission” (Van Der Veer 2003). The worldly vision within the Peace Corps is thus always framed by a stolid adherence to ideas of national sovereignty.

The differences in cosmopolitanisms that I analyze, as we will see, turn on the perceived function and role of institutions in the attitudes of individual citizens. This finding helps us parse the ways in which cosmopolitanism—as an individual phenomenon—is linked to an institutional regime.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS: FROM EXPATRIATES TO COSMOPOLITANS?

The Peace Corps is a national voluntary service program of the U.S. government; it sends volunteers abroad (to developing countries) for two-year service placements. Established in 1961, and fully resonant with a pervasive cultural frame of developmental idealism (Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle 2015) and neighborly cultural exchange, the organization’s work is typically related to social or economic development in pursuit of its three concurrent goals. Those goals are: “1) Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; 2) Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, [and] 3) Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of

TABLE 1
Number of Volunteers by Region and Work Area, 1965

	<i>Latin America</i>	<i>Near East / South Asia</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Far East</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Agriculture	437	424	136		7
Rural community action	1600	369	396	190	20
Urban community action	903	60	34	8	8
Elementary education	53		665	265	8
Secondary education	461	970	2673	199	33
University education	292	4	64	45	3
Adult education	16		33	22	1
Health	754	101	162	338	11
Public works	56	99	176		3
Public administration	33	48	58		1
Vocational education	95	72	130	19	2
Physical education	204		24		2
Multipurpose		1			1>
Lawyers			15		1
Total	4904	2148	4566	1086	100

Source. Compiled from Peace Corps (1965).

Americans” (Peace Corps 2012: 201). Volunteers are all U.S. citizens. They are usually in their early twenties, and receive a basic living stipend and full medical benefits during their service, as well as a modest readjustment when they finish. In 2014, volunteers were placed in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, Central Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. As of this writing, more than 230,000 people have served in the Peace Corps; there are 7,376 volunteers in the field today (Peace Corps 2018).

Volunteers’ service areas have shifted over the course of the Peace Corps’ history, reflecting both the changing needs of the host countries and the changing skill sets of the volunteers themselves. At the Peace Corps’ inception, there was a good deal more focus on agriculture and infrastructure than there has been since the turn of the century. Table 1 provides information from four years after the Peace Corps’ founding.

Fifty years later the work areas are framed differently, becoming both more centralized, and more focused on economic development and the teaching of English. A relatively heavy emphasis on education has been consistent throughout, but public administration and public works in particular have been largely phased out. In 2014, the global distribution of volunteers was as shown in Table 2.

American expatriates, even those who only expatriate temporarily, are different from the expatriates of many other countries. Namely, they are usually White, relatively wealthy, and politically liberal (Boller and Halbert 2015), frequently belonging to categories of “accidental migrants”—those who stumbled upon an intriguing work opportunity, or followed a spouse abroad (Costanzo and Klekowski von Koppenfels 2013). This contrasts with demographics of expatriates or immigrants from elsewhere in the world, who frequently leave their home countries in search of better employment or educational prospects. American emigration is not correlated with economic disruption within the United States; rather, some argue that it points to a “rupture between the individual and the polity” (Finifter 1976: 31). This suggests that we should be particularly sensitive to the political and social motives and consequences of American experiences overseas. Most Americans migrating are not politically oppressed but a largely White, well-educated group enjoying many economic opportunities (Dashefsky 1992).

This description aptly fits most Peace Corps volunteers throughout time and space: throughout the agency’s history, volunteers have been primarily young, well-educated, and

TABLE 2
Volunteers by Work Area Globally, 2014

<i>Work Area</i>	<i>% Volunteers</i>
Education	38
Health	24
Environment	12
Community economic development	9
Youth in development	9
Agriculture	5
Peace Corps response	3

Source. Author’s compilations from Peace Corps (2014).

White. They typically belong to the U.S. middle class—which makes them elite by global standards but solidly in the middle within the U.S. cultural and economic frame of reference. Nearly two-thirds of all volunteers in the 1960s (at the Peace Corps’ inception) were men. Sixty-three percent were men in the 1970s. But the gender trend has reversed in the past 50 years; 62 percent of all volunteers were women in the 1990s and two-thirds of volunteers were women in 2013. Although levels of education have been rising in the United States over the past 50 years, Peace Corps volunteers are still disproportionately highly educated. In general, however, the striking thing about Peace Corps volunteers is how little they—or their motivations—have changed over the 50 years of the organization’s history.

Peace Corps volunteers are also intrinsically motivated, and throughout the half-century of the organization’s history, have typically joined the program to express some set of civic commitments (Kallman 2015). In this sense, they are similar to others doing national service: research at both domestic and international levels has shown that a desire to serve the public interest is a strong factor in committing to national service or volunteer work (Georgeou 2012; Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise 2010; Perry and Wise 1990; Rainey 1982). In some cases patriotism plays a critical role in the composition and quality of volunteer forces (Burke, Fossett, and Gais 2004; Lakhani and Fugita 1993). This literature, although scattered, provides precedent for thinking about normative motives in international service work, and in my sample, a conception of service and a conception of country are both at play.

For my interlocutors, Peace Corps often represents an ideological compromise between national service and political values. Combined with social processes of globalization and cosmopolitanism, these dynamics make the Peace Corps volunteer a unique group—ideologically motivated, yet sharing meaningful characteristics with other American expatriates. As an organization, the Peace Corps fundamentally shapes the kind of experience that its volunteers have. It is a cosmopolitan program that is designed and deployed for nationalist ends, and provides a mechanism for young people to be patriotic without being “bad” or “closed-minded.” It facilitates travel and placement, shapes volunteers’ experience in various ways, and frames and contextualizes local history and politics for its volunteers. This history and context, however, is dramatically shaped by an explicit prohibition on “political” analyses or engagement. For instance, one of the countries that I visited teetered precariously on the brink of civil war; despite the tanks in the streets and large protest encampments throughout the capital city, Peace Corps staff were explicitly disallowed from analyzing the dimensions of the crisis for volunteers.

METHODS

This article draws on 127 in-depth interviews with Peace Corps staff, as well as current and returned Peace Corps volunteers (RPCVs), and government officials. I interviewed staff in Washington, DC, and former staff who were also Peace Corps volunteers. Interviews took place over the phone and in person over a period of nearly two years, from 2012–2014.

I make use of qualitative field observations in Peace Corps offices in three countries that I shall call Europea, Caribbenea, and Africana. In each site I conducted between three and

TABLE 3
Survey Respondent Demographics

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Author's Data (2013–2014)</i>	<i>Official Peace Corps Numbers (2011)^a</i>
% Female	63	66
% Male	37	34
% Volunteers with at least a 4-year college degree	98	98
% Volunteers of a minority background	13	17

^a (Bridgeland et al. 2011).

four weeks of qualitative field observations, adhering, to the extent possible given the short time frame, to the norms of ethnography. After obtaining permission to visit the office, I went every day for at least part of the day. I attended as many staff meetings as permitted, and observed both the meetings and the office environment in general. I also conducted formal interviews with office staff in all three offices. In addition, I observed a different Peace Corps program in each country. In Caribbenea, I traveled a short distance outside the capital to observe at a remedial language training (targeting the group of volunteers that had been in country for 10 months and who were struggling with language acquisition). In Europea, I attended a mid-service training that took the most committed volunteers for a five-day period of language refreshers (widely considered a treat among current PCVs for its retreat-like feel). In Africanea, I traveled to a summer camp held by volunteers in the southern part of the country, to observe five days of activities at a boy's camp.

This article also draws on a survey ($N=2,833$). Peace Corps volunteers are government employees; their information is confidential and no sampling frame exists, making them a hidden population (Atkinson and Flint 2001). To address this, I designed a sampling approach using a targeted snowball sample in a Web-based survey distributed via interest groups and listservs. I used a carefully seeded snowball sample (Atkinson and Flint 2001) in order to gain access to my respondents.

To get the broadest response rate possible, I mapped theoretically where this research was to be conducted (Watters and Biernacki 1989), meaning that I identified where I was likely to find potential respondents (RPCVs). I organized my universe of responses into three categories, including country of service (such as RPCVs of Ghana), geographical location at home in the United States (such as RPCVs of Pennsylvania), and interest/identity group (such as RPCVs of color, RPCVs at the State Department, RPCVs who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning [LGBTQ], etc.). Within each category I sought out as many virtual sources as possible, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and listservs managed by the National Peace Corps Association (Choe et al. 2009; Sadler et al. 2010). The NPCA manages formal RPCV groups for every country of service and most states; I emphasized contact with these groups, as well as with social networking sites (primarily Facebook and LinkedIn groups). I then sent an invitation to the owners or managers of these groups—between one and five people per group in most cases—describing the project briefly and asking them to disseminate the survey to their groups. E-mails only bounced from six of the 76 countries of service, and from four of the 51 U.S.-state groups.

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

This survey had an *N* of 2,833, and a gender, race, income, and age distribution that is very similar to Peace Corps’ numbers, suggesting that my sample is, demographically at least, representative of the general population of RPCVs (Table 3).

Finally, I conducted document analysis of Peace Corps organizational documents (including training materials, letters and correspondence, policy manuals, and the like), as well as historical documents pertaining to the organization’s founding (including official correspondence, legislation, and the like). I made use of digital archives, as well as archives at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum in Boston, Massachusetts.

RESULTS

Being a cosmopolitan does not mean that one is without a country or a homeland, but rather that one “has to have a certain reflexive distance from that homeland” (Turner 2002: 57). In my study, virtually all respondents exhibited this distance by the time they had completed their service, and identified as a global citizen to some extent.

However, within that global identity two distinct types of attitudes developed, which I call *patriotic* and *disaffected* cosmopolitanisms. *Patriotic cosmopolitans* come to identify more with U.S. values than they did prior to their service, even as they become identified with a global citizenry.¹ As we will see, patriotic cosmopolitans become particularly attached to ideas of freedom, choice, and administrative efficiency; they also become deeply connected to the institutions of the United States because they see the United States as furthering those values and institutions. In addition, patriotic cosmopolitanism defines being “American” to some extent as having some global perspective. Because U.S. values make at least some space for multiculturalism, young liberal Americans find space to embrace patriotism without being accused of “bad” or “closed-minded” nationalism. Among patriotic cosmopolitans, there is no proposition for radical reform of the international political landscape—patriotic civic duty consists more or less in fulfilling one’s moral responsibilities as best as one can within the existing paradigm (see also Kleingeld 1999). The patriotic cosmopolitanism I describe resonates with types of civic nationalism described elsewhere (see also Smith 1991).

The second type of normative cosmopolitanism I call *disaffected* because it internalizes a moral critique of the political arrangement; it concludes that the existing political order requires revision to be a true expression of cosmopolitan values. Disaffected cosmopolitans

come to see the same American values that patriotic cosmopolitans identify with (freedom, choice, and administrative capacity) as troublesome considering their identities as global citizens. Whereas patriotic cosmopolitans embrace ideas of freedom, efficiency, and choice, disaffected cosmopolitans see those same values (applied in the pursuit of U.S. goals) as responsible for global conflict and inequality. They dis-identify with the United States because of them. For disaffected cosmopolitans, their global identification fosters a rift between themselves and their polity because it renders them unable to support their own country's actions.

Importantly, these categories are not perfect binaries—the Peace Corps produces many effects among volunteers. However, the ideal-typical categories of cosmopolitan identity are theoretically instructive in that they can explain how and why people cultivate different types of relationships with the state, and what shape their political lives take. In the following sections, I analyze how these two cosmopolitanisms develop in the context of a state-based program.

Cosmopolitanism: Global Identification and Reflexive Distance

Peace Corps volunteers almost always come to identify internationally through their service, but that identification is often built on a preexisting set of attitudes toward the United States. Volunteers' motivations to join frequently blend some sort of patriotic and service component, which provides a fertile starting point for the development of a cosmopolitan identity. Consider the words of one returned Peace Corps volunteer (hence RPCV):

I grew up in a city where most people were[...] Asian, South Asian, Afghans. Growing up, a lot of my friends—we're all American. We're all born in the States.[...] There's still people in my group that, you ask them who they are, they wouldn't say American first. They'd say, "Oh, I'm Chinese. I'm Taiwanese. I'm Pakistani." ... [But] this country has given my family and me everything, even though half my family lives in Iran still. I associate strongly with being an American, so I wanted to both give something back, but also do my part and serve my country[...] I'm a bit liberal, perhaps politically, but I feel like this [joining the Peace Corps] was one way I could prove that—not prove—but show my love for my country, in a way. I'd be working towards objectives that I'm okay with. (RPCV 2000s, Cameroon)

For this volunteer, the Peace Corps is valuable, in part, because the objectives toward which he is working are values of internationalism, culturalism, and service. Participation becomes a way to contribute that is deeply rooted in both his American patriotism and his identity as an immigrant—a convenient expression, for him, of cosmopolitan values.

Across genders, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and nearly without exception, Peace Corps volunteers become more cosmopolitan in that they come to identify with an international community throughout their service; in some cases, they even assume multiple cultural identities. This is not possible without a concurrent, reflexive consideration of their own culture. The pattern is striking across countries and decades of service, and suggests that, regardless of how service shapes volunteers' identification with the U.S. state, it

uniformly foments a sense of global identity among its returned volunteers. One says the following:

I think learning a different culture has[...] definitely changed me. I think I can appreciate different cultures more now. Especially because I think this culture is difficult to come into from the culture as I'm used to. (RPCV 2010s, Jordan)

Another, serving three decades earlier in a different part of the world, makes similar observations:

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

Both respondents place value on the ability to identify with people from another culture, emphasizing similarity and global citizenship. A field staff member observes that these cosmopolitan values are a well-recognized product of Peace Corps service:

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

These statements could have come from virtually any respondent I interviewed, and communicate a strong sense of global identification for volunteers across time and space. If cosmopolitanism can be partly measured by self-identification, then these responses suggest that the Peace Corps is successful in creating this “different quality of people.” However, this cosmopolitanism has several variants.

Pattern 1: Patriotic Cosmopolitanism: Patriotism and Identification

The most striking pattern in my data is that many RPCVs become explicitly more bonded with U.S. values and institutions after their service, holding this nationalism alongside their newfound cosmopolitanism.² Here, the perspective that volunteers acquire during their service seems to foster appreciation for American institutions, the cosmopolitan nature of the Peace Corps itself, and American values (particularly freedom). This occurs among both volunteers who held critical views of the United States and volunteers who started their service with positive views. One reflects:

I will frequently say to any Republican or Tea Party member out there who questions, any of those who question the value of Peace Corps, I would say I saw a huge number of really eager, but somewhat naive college graduates, many of whom were—not anti-America, but who really saw the worst of America, and fixated on that more than the benefit of American politics and

American government. That changed. They left *loving* the United States of America. (RPCV 1990s, Dominican Republic)

The newly developed patriotism among RPCVs is grounded in an appreciation for the administrative capacity and values of the state. The mechanism—the crystalizing of the patriotic cosmopolitan impulse—occurs through appreciation of such institutions. The same volunteer continues:

I think we can talk about how inefficient our government is, but I have lived on a couple of continents now, and let me tell you, *show me* a government that's more efficient than ours! I think that all of these things about some issues that the United States has—I have real concerns about the United States being somewhat of a police state. Well, you step out there where[...] a lot of that control and security disappears[...]—I mean it really gives you an appreciation that we may not have it right, but we have it more right than a lot of countries. A lot of things that people railed against, well they went out and got a chance to see what it might look like if those things that they hated disappeared.

For this person, an appreciation of efficiency and security becomes paramount to his understanding of the U.S. government because of his time abroad. In addition, this appreciation shifts or reshapes his existing concerns about police overreach. Another volunteer, serving around the same time but in a very different part of the world, reflects:

[Peace Corps] makes you realize, one, what you come from. And the institutions, especially functioning institutions. Two, you're like "my government pays for me to come and do this. This is really something special!" You know? [...] It's something I'm very proud I did. And I'm proud that the government does this. (RPCV 1990s, Togo)

For this second person, it is the explicitly cosmopolitan nature of the Peace Corps program that creates a sense of pride in and commitment to the United States government. His definition of being an American consists, in part, of being a cosmopolitan; as a national program, the Peace Corps increases his identification with the American state. This finding, repeated many times, is telling: the nature of the Peace Corps as an American institution promoting cosmopolitanism provides an opportunity for young people to identify *both* as Americans and as cosmopolitans, thwarting a commonsense dichotomy between global and local identities. Another volunteer offers a similar account:

I wouldn't say I'm patriotic[...] but I did like the idea of government and what government can do for you, what you can do for government, and I'm not afraid of big government. I'm actually—maybe I *more* believe in government now because I lean more toward the left. [...] It's not just about the first goal of going in and saying this is how things should be done,[...] but also because there's the two other goals[...] it's about Americans who need to change our views about the rest of the world. We need to learn second languages; we just need to grow so much.[...] I just wish that every American could have that experience[...] I would say maybe I'm more strongly embracing that role of the government, and what its potential is. (RPCV 1980s, Thailand)

This woman's increased respect and commitment to the U.S. government is because it runs a program to facilitate acquisition of cosmopolitan values; her pride and investment in

her government grew as her cosmopolitanism did. For both volunteers, the Peace Corps supports the construction of an *American* identity that is also international to some degree—it permits them to become patriotic cosmopolitans.

Many volunteers find that after service they resonate differently with the values enshrined in U.S. institutions, particularly with the fuzzy but powerful concept of freedom. A woman, serving nearly 30 years after the previous respondent, says:

I think I appreciate our education system a lot more.[...] in Jordan, at the end of their 10th grade year, they [students] pick a specialization to study.[...] They take an entrance at the end of their high school. Then,[...] their final exam at high school determines whether or not they can go to college. [...] In the United States], just to be able to have the freedom of not having to do that, and to be able to just go to high school and do whatever. Then take the SAT, and then you can study anywhere! You can study anything! I never even really thought about that as being a freedom before. That's *such* a huge freedom. (RPCV 2010s, Jordan)

This appreciation for “freedom”—showing up here as a matter of educational choice—is repeated consistently across decades and countries of service, and applied to various dimensions of life. Such consistency in responses across cohorts is striking and persuasive. Another volunteer who served two decades earlier in West Africa says:

I definitely [became more patriotic]. Definitely, because I always took for granted that I was an American.[...] I think [Peace Corps] actually made me a lot *more* patriotic. For all of the[...] policies of the United States that may absolutely suck, or maybe all of the ways that we do things the wrong way, I think it made me very proud and happy to be an American. To be able to choose who do I want to marry. To be able to—I don't know, especially as a woman, it gave me so much relief. I think I definitely became more patriotic, not in terms of[...] our policies per se, but of our freedom. (RPCV 1990s, Gambia)

The concept of “freedom” appears as an anchoring value, and volunteers' experiences abroad have strengthened their identification with that value. For both volunteers, “freedom” represents the ability to be elective. Instead of understanding freedom as freedom *from* political repression or freedom from violence, volunteers conceive of it as the ability to make choices about their lives, ranging from marriage partners to college courses.

Freedom is not the only American value that comes into strong relief throughout the course of a typical Peace Corps service. Volunteers' “Americanness” (including individualism) often became more apparent to them during their time abroad. One who served in the 1970s recounts the following:

I went up in 1973. The U.S.'s tenth draft had just ended. I had marched against the Vietnam War. I was angry with U.S. government, and wanted to get out of America. I didn't want to be American, and I got over there, and found out how American I was, particularly in the terms of values. Which was a real shock to me, when I had to admit that I was “one of the Americans.” Living under a military dictator, I realized how much I value the liberties we have, the idea of freedom.[...] I realized how individualistic I am. I remember traveling in Africa, and[...] I'd pack enough food for me, and I'd get in the back of the pickup truck.[...] Everybody else would break up their food and start sharing it, and I had sandwiches that couldn't share very well. I realized I had only prepared for

me! It never occurred to them to prepare for just themselves; they just shared. I have other stories like that too, but the whole business is, they have this much more communal understanding of who they are, and I'm very individualistic. That's humbling. (RPCV 1970s, Congo)

This volunteer, explicitly identified as counter-hegemonic in his protest activities, finds it “humbling” when he comes to identify with the American state and the values that it propagates. And yet his choice of the word “humbling” is provocative: the sub-text of his comment is a sense that that his own appreciation for Americanness, freedom, and individualism disqualified or somehow invalidated his political critiques of other aspects of the U.S. government. Another respondent, even as she critiques of the notion of patriotism in the abstract, shows an increased acceptance of governmental initiatives:

I kind of think patriotism is silly, because it's arbitrary. I'm comfortable working for the U.S. government, but it is kind of strange, especially when you're walking through the office and you see[...] the American flag, or a photograph of Barack Obama.[...] I mean, we have the opportunity to pursue government jobs or jobs with USAID, or any different field you can imagine, you know. And sometimes I wonder if I would be interested in doing U.S. government, or politics even. (RPCV 2010s, Ukraine)

It is worth noting in this comment, however, that the volunteer does not see politics as a way to change or interrogate the government or its values, but rather a way to perpetuate them. Embedded in her tone is surprise—that as a sophisticated cosmopolitan, with an intellectual critique of arbitrary state boundaries being “silly,” she should be interested in working for the government, and that a more traditional political reverence should emerge. These volunteers are clearly self-reflective; the kind of patriotism they report is thoughtful, and has largely to do with efficiencies of the bureaucratic state, of the values that U.S. culture and statehood propagate (particularly freedom and individualism).

Despite these increased cosmopolitan values and increased appreciation for U.S. institutions, most RPCVs become visibly less critical in their engagement with the U.S. government. Rather, they become “better” citizens in a conventional sense, engaging with conventional institutions. The institutional appreciation that they generated throughout their service articulates in how they engage with the state: patriotic cosmopolitanism, in this study, creates consistent, committed, conventional citizens.

Although Peace Corps volunteers voted at a higher rate than the national average *before* their service, after service their regular voting rates continue to increase.³ It is worth noting here that voting represents at least a degree of faith in electoral politics that research suggests is not universal in American society (Leighley and Nagler 2013). As government volunteers, PCVs are also likely predisposed toward positive feelings about electoral processes. The appreciation for U.S. systems and institutions can transform their political critiques—softening them in some regards, and redirecting them toward more standardized forms of engagement.

Furthermore, volunteers' newly acquired understandings of the relative dimensions of wealth and poverty tend to not find articulation in a specific type of action or political critique, but rather in a subtle combination of global awareness, and absolution of global responsibility:

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

In an articulate expression of his own cosmopolitan perspective, this respondent describes his emergent understanding of wealth and poverty. He sees himself as fortunate in the context of a global system—this person feels lucky to *be an American*, not just to have American-style institutions. He has acquired awareness of global inequality, and simply accepts that he got lucky within an unequal system. (Simpson finds something similar among British gap-year volunteers who feel that they are fortunate in a globally unequal system; in her terms, “‘lotto logic’ is allowed to replace discussions on inequality and oppression” [2004: 689]). Similarly, RPCVs' critiques can become softer when taken in the context of the newly developing cosmopolitanism. Here we reexamine an earlier comment:

We can talk about how inefficient our government is, but I have lived on a couple of continents now, and let me tell you, *show me* a government that's more efficient than ours! I think that all of these things about some issues that the United States has—I have real concerns about the United States being somewhat of a police state. Well, you step out there where[. . .] a lot of that control and security disappears[. . .]—I mean, it really gives you an appreciation for that we may not have it right, but we have it more right than a lot of countries. A lot of things that people railed against, well they went out and got a chance to see what it might look like if those things that they hated disappeared.

The volunteer sees “it could be worse” as a reason for suspending his criticism. In his case, the understanding that “it could be worse” elsewhere justifies his relative acceptance of a domestic system with which he is uncomfortable. The finding that gratitude can actually *depoliticize* instead of *politicize* is striking, and suggests a reversal of conventional wisdom that suggests that gratitude always animates. It also suggests a pervasive idea that relatively “good” or “better” systems (political, social, or otherwise) should be exempt from critique. Another volunteer puts it succinctly: “I realized how lucky I am to be American after [Peace Corps], which I think I took for granted before” (RPCV 2010s, Suriname).

Both volunteers explicitly talk about gratitude in terms of *being born American*, as opposed to gratitude for living in a place with functional institutions and high level of security. They are not simply developing an appreciation for institutions; they are developing an explicit appreciation for the United States and a patriotic relationship with their country, even as they adopt some cosmopolitan attitudes. RPCVs' relationship with the state then settles into a conventional engagement with what they perceive to be legitimate institutions expressing legitimate cultural and political values.

Pattern 2: Disaffected Cosmopolitanism: Critique, Dis-Identification, and/or Antipathy

A second pattern emerges within my data in which respondents embrace an entirely different sort of cosmopolitanism. This disaffected attitude employs a stronger normative interpretation

that reshapes volunteers' self-and-political understandings vis-à-vis their country of origin, and fundamentally transforms their relationships with it. Among Peace Corps volunteers, however, the disaffection (and at times, antipathy) that they express toward the United States after their service comes from a deeply entrenched set of cosmopolitan feelings: they have become more critical of U.S. power, having seen U.S. behavior in a global context during their service. This disaffection is primarily grounded in a cosmopolitan critique of U.S. values and interventions, and serves to explicitly dis-identify RPCVs with the United States. They see the U.S. state as wielding (and ultimately sidelining) cosmopolitan ideals in pursuit of nationalist ends, and because of that, they come to doubt the legitimacy of the political order. Whereas cosmopolitan perspectives make some RPCVs patriotic cosmopolitans, the same dynamic fosters disaffection in others:

Just the experience of living in Mali and spending time with Malians impressed upon me a lot about American culture. Not all of it was good. Not all of it was favorable toward American culture. I came to really notice the materialism and the consumerism. You know, other stuff I had heard about and I knew what they were, I could define them for you but I don't think I had a real crystal-clear understanding of what they meant before I went to Mali. (RPCV 1990s, Mali)

For this volunteer, being abroad brought the significance of U.S. cultural practices into relief. Because of the structure of the Peace Corps (volunteers spend a great deal of time in host communities without other Americans), PCVs come into close contact and frequently internalize the cultural lessons that immersion offers. Another volunteer who also served in Mali around the same time links her own disengagement from the U.S. state to U.S. policy and values, both foreign and domestic:

I'm pretty much a failed patriot[...] I didn't find a place for myself here [in the United States] necessarily. I've always been liberal, but I think the way things are going in this country, I just find it so despicable and appalling. I know people say, this country, there's opportunity, and it's true. There *is* opportunity [... but] people after the [Boston] marathon bombing and stuff, were going "USA! USA!", and I kind of want to say, "I'm sorry, but we are not blameless here!" If somebody came and shot drones at your civilians and your women and children, I can understand why they'd be a little pissed off at the United States.

The volunteer continues, focusing her critique on U.S. foreign policy more generally:

People act as if we've done nothing wrong, and yet I think I've read enough and been overseas enough that the U.S. has a huge influence on places[...] I think a lot of what the U.S. exports is negative, not positive.[...] If I could, I'd become a Canadian, but I can't do that quite yet because of [my son].

[...] I feel like I'm much more tolerant [than most Americans]. I live in this rarefied [city/neighborhood] that's wonderful and everything, but it's not how most of the country is. I just think we have our priorities are all wrong. I'm much more of a socialist. I think that people are entitled to have health care, and that it's not okay if people don't have that[...] I'm kind of a failed patriot. (RPCV 1990s, Mali)

For this volunteer, her “failed patriotism” is specifically related to prevalent U.S. values that she perceives to perpetuate inequality. The values with which volunteers identify in the previous section—freedom and individualism—are the same values that drive some of the U.S. policymaking that this volunteer finds so troubling (for instance, the lack of universal health care). Her comments invert the increased nationalism of previous respondents: her cosmopolitan values, instead of resulting in increased identification with the U.S. state, push her further from it because she believes that the U.S. government does not behave with cosmopolitan values at heart. Volunteers in the prior section embraced the U.S. state because it encouraged cosmopolitanism. This woman sees U.S. cosmopolitanism as an empty performance.

Other volunteers learn to see inequality abroad, permitting them to understand it more deeply in the context of the United States. The experience of seeing poverty in a foreign context allows them to identify the same social processes upon their return home. For one respondent, the distance from his own cultural context brought U.S. inequality into relief:

[Coming] back into the States, and seeing my country with new eyes.[...] That really started me seeing things, and really seeing how these injustices that drove me nuts as a Peace Corp volunteer, they exist *here*. I just had long since stopped seeing them.

He continues,

The social inequity of this country.[...] I had known it, but it’s hard to explain. I had known it. I had *seen* it. But just coming back to the States and seeing it with fresh eyes. Just how some of the drug laws, and the enforcement of the drug laws, crack versus cocaine. How this just created neighborhoods that were just ripped apart[...]—that just rips the social fabric apart. (RPCV 1990s, Dominican Republic)

For this man, like many in my study, the perspective he gained in the Peace Corps permitted him to form a much more substantive and articulate critique of inequality in the United States than he had before he went abroad. Such self-reflection is not always typical of development volunteers (see Simpson 2004: 688); much development literature finds that volunteers use such experiences to emphasize differences among countries, rather than commonalities. This volunteer is self-reflective about the role of the Peace Corps in this transformation, pointing out how his increased cosmopolitan values have helped him engage with others and understand the social context in which he lives:

Peace Corps has really helped me work with different people. Not just ethnically different, but socially different. I mean, it has helped me to sit back and ask the question of, “Why are we seeing this differently?” and understand how seemingly invisible things like culture and community are so important. How they tie us together, and how their absence would just cause us to drift as a society, and how permeating that is[...] if you can’t understand a culture, at least you need to understand that there are cultural things that are happening that you *don’t* understand. (RPCV 1990s, Dominican Republic)

One African-American volunteer, serving in the 2010s, eloquently described himself as “not patriotic” due to his poor treatment at home as a person of color. However, he observed that his Peace Corps experience had helped him see how national privilege works as well:

[Before my service] I wanted to be patriotic; I'd wanted to be patriotic for a long time. *And I don't have it in me.*[...] I think now maybe it's just—it may be a bit worse.[...] I've never been patriotic[...] I'm Black, and I'm a Black male in the United States. So, I've had my fair share of discrimination, pulled over by police officers, really harassed. I almost didn't come to Peace Corps because I got a charge from a police officer for resisting arrest when I wasn't.[...] So because of this and things I've seen, I'm not patriotic. But I do think America is a very good place, has a lot of opportunities, and I'm fortunate to go abroad and be an American, because I get privileges here. Like how people speak about White privilege in the States, I'm a recipient of that, actually, based on my passport. (RPCV 2010s, Africana)

This volunteer, because of the multiple dimensions of his identity, did not bring an overwhelming sense of national commitment to his service, and indeed, identifies a falling-off of the patriotism that he *did* have. His experience might be described as an enlightened break with polity: his experience helped him see how powerful his nation is, even as racism excludes him from that power. However, during his service he reexamined the ideological values of the United States, and rather than embracing his national privilege, he became more upset that such systems of privilege exist at all. For this man, his increased cosmopolitan perspective did not produce an increased identification with the state—rather, it worsened his antipathy because it brought injustice into focus.

Another volunteer, serving 50 years prior, also found the readjustment difficult upon coming home. He reflects on the political dimensions of his reception in the United States:

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

This man served in the 1960s, during a highly politically charged time in U.S. history; he carried a set of expectations and ideals when he went into service that fell away upon his return. He describes being interrogated by DEA agents, and the coldness of the administratively competent state. The jarring encounter with security upon his arrival home, instead of making him feel safer, left a “frosty” aftertaste.

As we have seen, disaffected and patriotic cosmopolitans share a degree of global perspective, but cleave on the issue of values and institutions—the same institutions that generate connection and identification for one group generate distance and criticism for the other. The mechanism turns on volunteers' relationship to those institutions, and to the degree to which they equate them with the United States. It is worth noting here that disaffected cosmopolitans internalize more international identity than domestic nationalism, but most still retain some sort of domestic affiliation (a wholly disaffected cosmopolitan might in fact become a permanent expatriate). Regardless of the relative mix, what we see here are two very different outcomes, based on a re-weighting of identification and values that occurs within the

Peace Corps. For all respondents quoted in this section, the dis-identification with U.S. political identity turns on values and political and institutional practices. The role of U.S. institutions and values—which favorably affects some RPCVs’ perceptions of the U.S. state—causes a rupture in the case of disaffected cosmopolitans.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES: THE GLOBAL/LOCAL PARADOX

These two varieties of cosmopolitanism—while not comprehensive—help to elucidate the mechanisms by which RPCVs come to [dis]identify with the U.S. state. These varieties of cosmopolitanism also produce meaningful differences in volunteers’ personal and professional lives. In this final section, I examine how they can articulate in patterns of voluntarism and in professional life.

Employment and Professional Life

Different types of cosmopolitanism have important consequences for RPCVs’ career decisions. One volunteer—a dis-identified, highly disaffected cosmopolitan—identifies his Peace Corps experience, and the broader social understanding that he gained during it, as catalyzing his decision *not* to work for the government:

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

For this man, a close encounter with U.S. political behavior abroad triggered dis-identification with U.S. values during his service. Because of the explicit critiques that he developed alongside his cosmopolitan attitudes, he became unwilling to work within the existing political order. That decision reshaped his career (he became a professor instead).

In general, returned Peace Corps volunteers seek out prosocial employment: their clustering in areas of education, social service, and health care suggest that they embrace professional positions within relatively socially progressive industries (Figure 1).

These employment outcomes are consistent with how patriotic cosmopolitans would behave: seeking out employment within institutionalized channels for prosocial ends. Because patriotic cosmopolitans both have a moral commitment to universals but perceive the institutional structure as largely legitimate, it makes sense that they would seek out positions that permit them to work conventional jobs in prosocial arenas. The heavy clustering in education, health, and social services suggests an extension of caring professions and caring

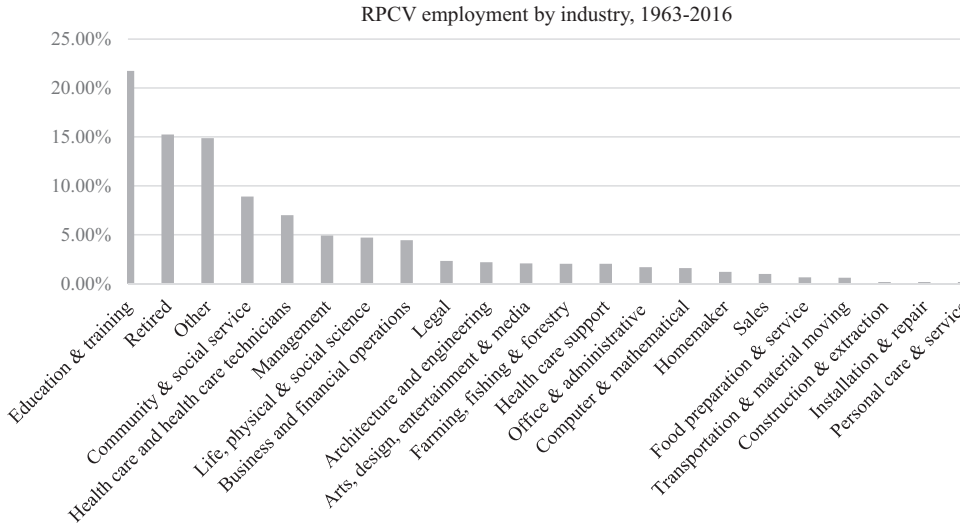


FIGURE 1 RPCV employment by industry, 1963–2016.

work (rather than structural advocacy, policy, and the like). The same themes are reflected in volunteers’ continued—and highly local—civic engagement.

There are few instances within the data of RPCVs’ explicitly combining global themes with local work. One volunteer recounts:

I felt a calling when I applied to Peace Corps. I really wanted to go to Africa. The calling I felt toward the end of my service was, “I need to go back to America and explain to my people what life in other parts of the world is all about. We really don’t have any idea about how different they are, and our understanding of cultural difference is so simplistic and limited.” In retrospect, that’s what I’ve built my whole career around. (RPCV 1990s, Mali)

For this person, who made an intentional decision to “build their career around” communication of culture, cosmopolitanism expressed as local engagement that builds global understanding. This type of reflection was highly uncommon in the qualitative data, but provides a suggestive idea of what a balance between disaffected and nationalist cosmopolitanism might look like.

Civic Engagement, Organizing, and Voluntarism

Given the cosmopolitan values that volunteers acquire during their service, one might expect for RPCVs to engage in cosmopolitan-style voluntarism upon their return to the United States—that is, voluntarism that expresses some moral commitment to universals, and that enacts an awareness of world context and an engagement with difference. However, the data tell a more complicated story. A large-scale agency assessment undertaken in 2011 found that RPCVs volunteer at much higher rates than other Americans (Bridgeland et al. 2011),

and my data corroborate this. Seventy-three percent of returned volunteers in my survey report either being somewhat or highly engaged in community or volunteer activities since their return.⁴ However, my survey provides interesting resolution on this regard; it shows that 46 percent of this volunteering happens in *more local contexts* than it did previously. Only 9 percent report working in more global contexts than they did before. It seems that the Peace Corps not only encourages people to volunteer more, but to largely do so in contexts that have more immediate (or simply more visible) consequences for their local communities.

This focus points to the same pattern of individual and local behavior that the Peace Corps encourages in volunteers throughout their service. In other words, the Peace Corps does not seem to foment the development of volunteers who help put on the World Social Forum, raise money for Amnesty International, or who crunch international trade policy data in their spare time, but rather people who work at the library, the soup kitchen, or the domestic violence shelter. This pattern does not differ meaningfully from other middle-class volunteers. However, it *does* differ from what one might expect of an internationally oriented experience that fosters cosmopolitan values and is popularly understood to transform people's worldviews. RPCVs are more secular in their voluntarism than the American population overall.⁵ Yet it is worth noting that labor organizing and political work ranks among the lowest types of volunteering that RPCVs do, and advocacy comes in only slightly higher. This pattern, as well, is at odds with the public image (and the volunteers' accounts of) the Peace Corps as catalyzing and life changing, and suggests a somewhat apolitical—or at least a-structural—approach to community work. We can see here that, although RPCVs are active in their local communities, their activities tend to be clustered around charitable or community activities, rather than political organizing, advocacy, or labor activities that include structural or political critiques (Figure 2).

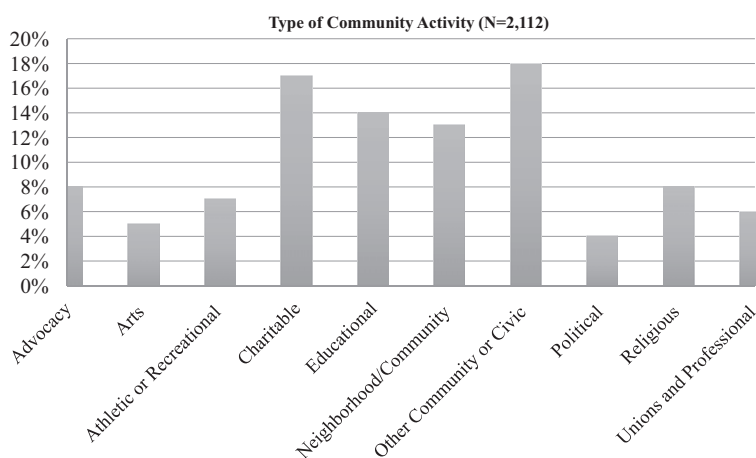


FIGURE 2 Type of community activity ($N = 2,112$).

The occupational data presented here, in combination with the voluntarism data, suggest that nationalist cosmopolitans leave as idealists and return as committed, center-left citizens. They go abroad thinking of the Peace Corps as a way to make a positive contribution as an American, and return thanking their lucky stars that *they are American* (as opposed to thanking their lucky stars that they live in a place with strong institutions and freedom). This attitude may partly explain the highly local and somewhat nonpolitical focus of their employment and volunteering: they perceive U.S. institutions and structures as largely functional, and see no reason to alter those structures.

We might further theorize the relationship between cosmopolitan nationalism and the volunteering patterns presented here in these terms: within an individualistic worldview (resonant in the United States as well as in cosmopolitan thinking), power is understood to be situated within the individual actor. The cosmopolitan notion that all people belong to a single community, coupled with the U.S.-centric notion that individuals are the most powerful unit of society, suggests that by working in your own community you are working in a global community. Individualism is, by definition, a theory of change that assigns minimal weight to the collective. Because of this, volunteers may be less inclined to work out a structural critique of political or social issues, and may choose to volunteer at the most proximate place possible—perhaps the local soup kitchen or the animal shelter. In this context, cosmopolitan values are not fomenting a structural critique but rather a hyperlocal one: the notion that “everyone just wants a good life for their kids” helps orient and justify local engagement. The data suggest that RPCVs are reengaging the idea of the national identity and the local context and strengthening their bond with country and identity, even as they develop a sense of themselves as cosmopolitans.

However, even disaffected cosmopolitans with a stronger political critique of the United States and its values have only a limited theory of a collective; rarely do their critiques find expression outside the context of formal careers and institutions. Despite their criticism of the state, their voluntarism and political activities largely occur within the classic channels of participation that the state offers. One woman—who has a highly disaffected perspective—remembers:

I felt like I [contributed] in my day job and did not do a lot of volunteering beyond that. When my kids were in elementary school I was extremely involved in school activities, but that was the parent association and school government stuff. (RPCV 1970s, Paraguay)

These patterns offer some insight into the way that Peace Corps socializes its young volunteers. RPCVs are still engaged in hyperlocal work upon their return home, in the same way that they engaged in hyperlocal work as volunteers. This suggests that, as their lives continue (and as the structure of their jobs changes) their orientation toward work and participation remains very much the same. That is, a volunteer placed in Namibia does profoundly local work for two years—and then they come home and continue to do profoundly local work in a volunteer capacity in the United States.

This finding adds an odd twist to the adage of “thinking globally and acting locally.” That is, if RPCVs were to become true cosmopolitans, they would likely find themselves organizing international labor forums or testifying for the United Nations, rather than putting on a

neighborhood parade or working with the PTA. The data suggest something else, however. RPCVs enjoy local work undertaken abroad through practices that the Peace Corps structures, and then they come home and do local work in the United States; their cosmopolitan identity articulates locally.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This article has looked at how individual people navigate experiences with difference, and how they internalize cosmopolitan values. I have explored the varieties of cosmopolitanism that exist between the binary of “cosmopolitan” and “nationalist” or “patriot,” providing theoretical and empirical resolution on what individual experiences can look like that are not pinned tightly to either extreme. Cosmopolitanism is institutionally facilitated but individually lived, and in this project I have contributed to the growing literature that analyzes how it articulates in people’s everyday lives. I have done so by looking at a paradoxical institution that explicitly uses a national(ist) program to foster cosmopolitan sensibilities in young U.S. citizens. And the results yield a number of important implications.

First, this article underscores a principal difficulty of “being a cosmopolitan”: although many people express values that are both cosmopolitan and patriotic, maintaining both a global and a local identity at once is precarious, tiring, and uncomfortable. Within these data, people’s cosmopolitan attitudes skew in one direction or another—they either lean toward the patriotic version of cosmopolitanism, or they lean toward disaffection with the United States. In both cases, however, the institutions that govern people’s lives remain national, and there are few organizational mechanisms that help them feel simultaneously connected to both a global and local polity. The Peace Corps is unique in this regard: it harnesses cosmopolitan means for nationalist goals, permitting some RPCVs to comfortably identify as both cosmopolitan and patriot, and offering an institutionalized mechanism for reconciling these dual identities.

Yet even patriotic cosmopolitans largely shy away from critical engagement with political institutions, which suggests an ongoing difficulty in being both appreciative and critical at once of one’s country. It is concerning that this increased patriotic cosmopolitanism is concurrent with a decreased critique of domestic political institutions and, at its most grave, could suggest a profound democratic flaw. Data suggest that RPCVs blunt or ignore their own criticisms of the United States (recall the example within the data about a police state). The gratitude they describe for living in the United States is seen as incompatible with deep criticisms of it. In general, RPCVs are certainly more thoughtful about their patriotic values than those who adhere to “blind patriotism” (Schatz, Staub, and Lavine 1999). But they perhaps also fall short of being classifiable entirely as constructive patriots, for whom structural critique plays a large role. This is an avenue that deserves further research. Alternatively, disaffected RPCVs are so dis-identified that they consider leaving the country (such as the person who dreamed of moving to Canada). Both types of cosmopolitanism can lead to apathy and disengagement, but for different reasons: disaffected cosmopolitans can disengage with the state and polity because of the criticisms they hold (they see the United States as

unworthy), while patriotic cosmopolitans perceive the state as functional enough to not warrant their efforts or critique. These patterns further emphasize the difficulty in being able to be both globally and nationally identified, and critically engaged at both levels, and suggest provocative research questions about when and where such a balance exists.

Furthermore, the question of patriotism is important because one of its major functions is a democratic one. Ideally, the mutual respect that patriotism engenders limits the kinds of claims people will make against each other, and trust allows citizens to accept democratic results (Kymlicka 2001: 226–27). This philosophical argument has a parallel in political sociology: based on the work of Habermas, some argue that a sense of “peopleness” and solidarity is necessary in a democracy that is not required in other forms of government. Democracy offers an unprecedented level of inclusion, but also creates new pressures on “the constitution of this people in sociocultural and political practice.[...] Citizens need to be motivated by solidarity, not merely included by law” (Calhoun 2002: 153). Both arguments have a similar theme—that a sense of identification and unity is critical to the functioning of the democratic state, and patriotism helps cultivate those feelings. One of the Peace Corps’ common effects among its patriotic volunteers, it seems, is to cultivate more commitment to democracy through identification with the state. This is a normatively positive outcome—as long as that commitment to democracy can remain coupled with a critical perspective when necessary.

This study suggests organizations are nominally important in the development of cosmopolitanism—people going abroad without the Peace Corps also become cosmopolitans, but the agency appears to play a role in the particular type of cosmopolitanism that develops among its volunteers. Comparative data would be required to make a stronger claim about the organizational role specifically, but this article suggests that the Peace Corps does some important framing and scene-setting for its volunteers (for instance, isolating PCVs from other Americans and coordinating site placements). The Peace Corps is also important because it provides a mechanism to be patriotic without being “bad” or “closed-minded”—a unique characteristic, and one that other voluntary or state organizations do not share, and is one of few institutional mechanisms that help people bridge the gap between national and global identities. However, it provides very little guidance to help volunteers make sense of their experiences, due to the nature of the program, restrictions on political statements, and the like. In this case, the very type of bureaucratic efficiency that permits the Peace Corps to run (such as the prohibitions on political discussions) render it “un-cosmopolitan.”

Finally, this research has profound implications for civil society. It suggests that we need more mechanisms that help people express and integrate their global or their local identities—most of us encounter political difference at some point on a spectrum between fully “cosmopolitan” and fully “nationalist.” U.S. political institutions developed around ideas of national sovereignty, and while such institutions certainly remain relevant, they are insufficient for helping people engage in the construction of an international identity. Various civil society efforts exist to this end—organizations like the World Social Forum, international social movements, or even high school exchange programs—but imagining how we might integrate global and national identities will provide a fruitful challenge for policymakers and citizens alike as the world becomes more global and ever more tightly linked.

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NOTES

1. The term “patriotic” cosmopolitanism is rooted in an old Republican distinction “between love of country (patriotism) and respect for state (nationalism)” (Turner 2002: 49). Love of one’s country as love for the republic does not, in this line of thought, rule out respect for other cultures and places (see also Viroli 1995).

2. This is not entirely without precedent: Osland and Osland (2005) have found that some expat cultural values become stronger in response to another culture.

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

4. This stands in contrast to national volunteer rates, which ranged from 17.8 percent to 44.6 percent between 2011 and 2013 (Corporation for National & Community Service 2014).

5. Eight percent of RPCVs report volunteering for religious organizations, versus 33.9 percent in the country generally (Corporation for National and Community Service 2014).

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