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ENCAPSULATION, PROFESSIONALIZATION AND MANAGERIALISM IN THE PEACE CORPS

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ABSTRACT: *Much recent work has explored the implications of the pervasive professionalization that has occurred in recent decades across occupations and throughout organizational life. Using the case of the US Peace Corps, the current article expands this conversation into the institutionally complex world of international development organizations. Drawing on interview, documentary, and observational data, its goal is to offer a contextual analysis of how professionalism is understood and practiced within international development. I show how the application of managerialist models have led to an “encapsulation” of ideas of professionalization, and demonstrate how managerial encapsulation unfolds in practice. This analysis allows me to consider how encapsulation challenges and strains professional norms among Peace Corps staff. The article concludes with theoretical and practical implications.*

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, people go to work every day in jobs they care about, becoming nurses, teachers, public servants, and development workers. Within many of these occupations (social service occupations particularly), the notion of “professionalism” is taken for granted—it is seen as a way to do well while doing good. Many organizations now embrace professional and managerial techniques borrowed from the private sector, a pattern that has unfolded alongside a rise of the “knowledge economy” (Brint 2001), and an increase of professionals in the labor force (Abbott 2005; Brint 1996). And yet, accounts of what it means to be “professional” differ, and characterizations of what could or should be understood as professionalization vary widely (see also Noordegraaf 2007). A brief foray into administration and organizations journals yields a dizzying array of applications, alternately using the word “professionalization” to denote a set of organizational practices, an ethic of solidarity, or as a proxy for bureaucratic penetration.

A robust research trajectory has outlined the conceptual and practical implications of this widespread “professionalization” of organizational life (Hall 1968:196; Noordegraaf 2007; Reay, Goodrick, and Hinings 2016; Schott, van Kleef, and Noordegraaf 2016; Waters 1989; Wilensky 1964). The current article builds on this literature and expands it into the realm of international public administration. Using the case of the US Peace Corps—including interview, documentary, and observational data—its goal is to offer a contextual analysis of how professionalization is understood and practiced within the institutionally complex world of international development. I show how managerialism has “encapsulated” (Davies, Manning, and Söderlund 2018) professionalization, an analysis that enables me to then consider how encapsulation muddles the professional practice of Peace Corps staff.

The remainder of this article is arranged in five parts. After providing background on my theoretical contribution and my case study, I describe my methods. Findings are presented in the “Results” section of the article, followed by a discussion and conclusion with implications.

LITERATURE AND THEORY

In early management writing, “professionalization” referred to the process by which a group of people came to be recognized as an occupation. The first professionalization scholars focused their work primarily on the “free” professions, such as lawyers who worked autonomously (in contrast to people employed by organizations—Hughes 1958; Marshall 1939). Because of its emphasis on theoretical knowledge and freedom from managerial structures, “professionalization” was understood to both foster and enable discretion and autonomy in problem solving. The definition of a “profession” has since evolved from a list of occupational traits (Foote 1953; Goode 1961) to more critical interrogations of professions’ structures, functioning, and social power. Within the varied analyses on professionalization that the past near-century of scholarship has produced, three distinct perspectives emerge. All offer different frameworks to understand professionalization and its significance. All see professionalization as a form of social organization and a “continuous occupational variable” (Bøgh Andersen and Holm Pedersen 2012), meaning that it is not absolute, and that some occupations are more professionalized than others.

This first strand of analysis—what Schott et al. (2016) call “occupational professionalism”—emphasizes meaning making, solidarity, some sort of occupational purity, and a service motivation as an important part of professionalization, alongside specialized knowledge and intra-occupational norms, values, and discretion (see also Bøgh Andersen and Holm Pedersen 2012). This line of thinking focuses on *trans-organizational* processes, such as knowledge acquisition, jurisdictional disputes (Abbott 1988, 2005:200), or the role of dominance and autonomy within and among professions (Larson 1977). Professionalization serves an important solidaristic purpose in addition to fostering knowledge: it is meant to give voice to

an ethic of service, to create a sense of collective identity within an occupation, and to foment a shared understanding of that occupation's intervention in the world (cf. Abbott 1988:198; Caplow 1954; Miller 1967; Wilensky 1964). Thus, by definition, a profession must be engaged in the political debates of the time, helping to create meaning for the professionals themselves about the work that they do. Political and public engagement, in other words, is a defining feature of a profession in this perspective (something that is particularly clear among professions in developing countries—see Chorev and Schrank 2017). Examples abound, including among Nepalese doctors fighting for democracy (Adams 1998) and teachers organizing around environmental struggles (Hickling-Hudson 1994). Occupational professionalization, at least in theory, produces relationships that are collegial, cooperative, and supportive (Adler, Kwon, and Heckscher 2008; Carr-Saunders 1933). For Durkheim (1957, 1997), it could serve as a “miniature source for the restoration of mechanical solidarity” (quoted in Waters 1989:946). In this perspective, professionalization is a distinctive way of organizing and controlling work that is specialized, politically and socially meaningful, and advantageous for both professionals and their clients (Elliot 1972).

A second branch of professionalization literature explores “organizational professionalism,” in which organizational and commercial logics create occupational change and enforce conformity on the part of professionals (Schott et al. 2016; see also Adler et al. 2008). This is also called *managerialism*, and is distinguished from occupational professionalism by the focus on organizational imperatives and hierarchical design (Choudry and Kapoor 2013; Dent 1993; Klikauer 2015; Locke and Spender 2011). Managerialism, as an organizational and occupational tactic, emphasizes routinization and rationalization, and “captures the bundles of knowledges and practices associated with formalized organizational management” (Roberts, Jones, and Fröhling 2005:1845). Managerialism is also a set of practices with an historical trajectory; because of expanding factory operations in the twentieth century, producers created legitimizing ideologies that transformed management into a project that remains deeply linked to capitalism (Klikauer 2015; Mueller and Carter 2007:181). It spread throughout organizations, including public organizations, as the state was refashioned by the intersection of ideologies of the new right and managerialism (Clarke and Newman 1997; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Spicer and Böhm 2007).

A third category focuses on some form of “hybridized” professionalism (Schott et al. 2016), exploring the complicated territory between bottom-up professional agency and top-down, organizationally imposed managerial principles (Alford and Speed 2006; Brivot 2011; Reay and Hinings 2009). In this strand, the differences between managerialism and professionalism are blurred (see also Faulconbridge and Muzio 2008); scholars seek to understand the various ways in which professional and managerial logics and practices combine, and in which workers agentially shape outcomes (Noordegraaf 2007; Noordegraaf, Van Der Steen, and Van Twist 2014).

Each perspective offers different interpretations of the shifts in organizational cultures that have occurred in the last 60 years, and sees different meaning in the

widespread integration of managerialism into organizational life that has led to the rationalization of many spheres (cf. Dori, Meyer, and Hwang 2006). Perspectives emphasizing occupational professionalism see managerialism as restricting expertise and autonomy (cf. Leicht and Fennell 1997) and stymieing workers (Chandler, Barry, and Clark 2002), and explores how people resist it (Spicer and Böhm 2007). Support for managerialism typically comes from internal managers who see such practices as essential to growth, as well as evangelists who promulgate business tools (Hwang and Powell 2009:270), while managerialism is cast as an opportunity to infuse despotic professions with entrepreneurialism (Osborne and Gaebler 1993). The “third way” is frequently touted in the literature as offering the most nuanced account—acknowledging the new pressures that managerialism implies, but arguing that workers can find ways to cope that preserve their professional autonomy (Noordegraaf 2007; Reay and Hinings 2009; Schott et al. 2016).

My focus here is slightly different. Throughout this article, I refer to occupational professionalism as “professionalism,” and refer to organizational professionalism as “managerialism.” The need for these distinctions, however, underscores how “professionalism” and “professionalization” are “contested concepts” (cf. Connolly 1993). While I ultimately find a conflict between professionalism and managerialism, that conflict is, I argue, a product of a specific set of institutional parameters, a specific relationship between the Peace Corps and the US state, and a specific history and context. This article follows others in arguing that a focus on knowledge and expertise within the professions “should not distract us from the organizational features of the professions, which [...] have independent effects on the constitution of a profession” (Chorev and Schrank 2017:201). If professionalization is affected by organizational and institutional context (Schott et al. 2016) and inseparable from the environments in which it occurs, it follows that analyses should be intentionally situated and sensitive to those contexts. Therefore, I locate my examination within international development, which is particular and provocative because of the range of stakeholders, logics, histories, and practices that it generally entails.

This article’s goal is to offer an analysis of how professionalism is understood and practiced within international development, locating that analysis within the field generally and the Peace Corps specifically. I use the term “encapsulation” to refer to the slippage between professionalism and managerialism; it refers to a narrow assimilation of shared concepts or ideas from other disciplines that support existing ideologies (Davies et al. 2018). I will show how workers come to use the term “professionalization” to refer to managerialism and managerial practices. Encapsulation is a subtle mechanism that can manifest in writing about organizations, and in organizations themselves. Superficially, the “sharing of empirical domains and related vocabulary gives the illusion of a mutual interest in the same topic, whereas their narrow framing by each discipline hinders the sharing of ideas” (Davies et al. 2018:971). Encapsulation “works like a ‘capsule’—protecting and shielding a dominant interpretation or use of a concept from potentially contradictory interpretations” (Davies et al. 2018:973). Empirically, encapsulation flourishes

in intermediate, contested, and ambiguous spaces. Professionalization, I will argue, becomes encapsulated in a managerialist framework, because managerialism has a great deal more legitimacy vis-à-vis the Peace Corps' stakeholders. The process of encapsulation is specific to the trajectory of the field; the challenges that the Peace Corps and development faced caused organizations to adopt a particular type of professionalism, for a particular reason. I then consider how encapsulation challenges professional practice and norms among Peace Corps staff, reducing the resonance and plausibility of "professionalization" generally.

BACKGROUND: THE PEACE CORPS, LEGITIMACY, AND DEVELOPMENT

The Peace Corps is the international voluntary service program of the US government, and sends volunteers to developing countries for two-year service tours. It is technically a state agency, although it places many volunteers in civil society organizations abroad, and is subject to many of the pressures and expectations that US non-profit organizations face at home. That is, the Peace Corps is at once *neither* a civil society nor a public sector organization, and *both* a civil society and a public sector organization. This unusual configuration is precisely what makes it appropriate for a study on encapsulation. In contrast to the public sector at large, wherein managerial encapsulation is well-documented (cf. Thomas and Davies 2005), the Peace Corps operates within an institutionally complex environment, and has good reason to avoid generic, scalable programming and reforms. The managerial encapsulation of professionalization that I document serves as proof of the true strength of the pervasiveness and power of managerial ideology.

Additionally, the Peace Corps is a useful case study because it is an expression of many of the institutional pressures that are present not just in public administration, but within development as a whole. Its history is part of a broader institutional history that has shaped the way that professional practices emerge within the field, and offers an expansive perspective on how professionals and professionalization are linked to the state. Established in 1961, the organization's work is typically related to social or economic development in pursuit of three goals: "(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 Americans" (Peace Corps 2012). Volunteers—all American citizens—are usually in their early twenties, paid a minimal stipend, and given a small readjustment allowance upon completion of service. In 2014, they worked in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Asia, the Caribbean, North Africa and the Middle East, and in the Pacific Islands. While the agency recruits and trains generalist volunteers, it is fully staffed by paid workers, based both in the US and abroad, who oversee all aspects of Peace Corps volunteers' experience, and who comprise the empirical focus of this article.

Peace Corps posts worldwide are divided into three regions and managed under the organization's Office of Global Operations. In 2014, it had active programs in 64 countries. An American country director leads each overseas post, supported by safety and security, medical, programming, financial, training, and administrative staff. Of those support staff, two to three are typically American, and the remainder are what I term "local staff"—host country nationals employed by the Peace Corps. American staff abroad are technically limited to five years within a position, while local staff have no cap. The headquarters in Washington, DC, is a standard modern bureaucracy: hierarchical and specialized, with specific staff attending to volunteer programs, safety, global and financial operations, innovations, and the like. The agency receives funding from Congress through the national budget (and staffs a full-time Office of Congressional Relations to maintain that relationship); in 2014, its budget was \$379 million.

The Peace Corps is a necessary compromise between participants' and workers' ideals and its own highly unusual institutional and historical realities. More importantly, it is a vivid example of many—and often conflicting—institutional dynamics operating simultaneously in the highly rationalized field of the state. Like other social organizations, the Peace Corps has been repositioned in a nexus of marketized or quasi-competitive relationships, as part of international shifts towards neoliberal social organization, in which managerialism reshapes ideologies and structures (Clarke and Newman 1997:30). Despite those influences, it is comprised of both paid staff and volunteers who typically participate because they are intrinsically motivated to do so (Kallman 2015). The organization faces pressures and incentives from various stakeholders, which is relatively common. However, in addition to being a public organization that must handle the legitimacy challenges that characterize the US weak state, it also ultimately answers to American voters by way of Congress and the president—a highly atypical arrangement among any sort of voluntary organization. The Peace Corps must also remain—explicitly—within the contours of the US foreign policy agenda. Combining public and third-sector pressures, it is a stylized version of other processes at play in public administration and organizational life.

The historical processes that reshaped both the state and the voluntary sector also influenced the Peace Corps. As neoliberal reforms unfolded (Bockman 2007; Harvey 2007) and the state was remade by ideologies of the new right and managerialism (Clarke and Newman 1997:34), the Peace Corps changed as well. This transformation occurred as part of the "New Policy Agenda": an agenda propelled by the parallel values of neoliberal economics and liberal democratic theory (Edwards and Hulme 2013). Beginning in the 1990s, non-state organizations and NGOs became increasingly recognized as professionals as they moved in to fill the space left by the welfare state in developed and developing countries alike (Gürçan 2015). This necessitated a more standardized and predictable approach to service delivery (Maier, Meyer, and Steinbereithner 2016; Suárez 2011), giving managerialism ample room to develop alongside discourses of expertise and rationality (Armstrong and Prashad 2005; Choudry and Kapoor 2013). These changes

clinched a transition for many organizations from “charitable” to “professional,” as nonprofit activities took on a new relationship to the labor market and a corresponding new legitimacy (see also Eikenberry and Kluver 2004). “What makes [an] activity ‘work’,” writes Freidson, “is its exchange value. What makes a person a ‘worker’ or a ‘professional’ is his relationship to the market” (Freidson 1994:109). This distinction is critical, as many charitable activities originated with volunteer efforts to serve a cause or the public, eventually evolving into occupations that support livelihoods (Hwang and Powell 2009) and are intricately entwined with pressures from the state.

The Peace Corps—although it is not an NGO—was susceptible to these pressures and embraced those new ideologies in lockstep with the international development field: it adopted outcome measurements, training programs, and a theory of organizational practice that mimicked larger development organizations (US Peace Corps 2013). The ceremonial function of this shift is especially clear here, as across the development apparatus organizations internalized managerial tools to articulate legitimating accounts to stakeholders (Appel 2016; Mitchell 2016). As it grew, the agency disseminated these norms through the career trajectories of its volunteers, many of whom work for well-known agencies like the State Department and USAID, becoming part of epistemic communities that are an essential diffusion mechanism among states (cf. Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007; Meyer et al. 1997).

This bureaucratic and institutional history is important because the particular pressures within the Peace Corps have driven the adoption of particular types of occupational practices and versions of professionalization, as I will show.

METHODS

This article is a “case of” managerial encapsulation of professionalism; it explores the tension between understandings of professionalization, specifically in terms of development. However, the central focus is on perceptions of professionalization in a context wherein the meaning associated with the term is shifting; this process has much broader implications than for the Peace Corps alone, or even for international development. It is a qualitative project built on within-case analysis (including analysis of each site within a case study, central to generating theoretical insights—see Gersick 1988). Qualitative approaches permit researchers to explore questions of meaning; theory-building qualitative research in particular differs from other methodological approaches in how data collection and analysis overlap, permitting for adjustment of data collection along the way (Eisenhardt 1989; Glaser and Strauss 1967). The iterative relationship between data collection and analysis was also accomplished through the use of field notes, which involve both observation and analysis (see also Van Maanen 2011).

Data Collection

I draw on data gathered from staff members within the Peace Corps,¹ as well as field observations and document analysis. Because I initially collected interview data for this project in service of research questions regarding Peace Corps volunteers rather than staff, questions were originally guided by a theoretical emphasis on understanding volunteers' encounters with the organizational apparatus; staff were originally seen as orthogonal to the project. As insights from preliminary interviews developed, however, I adjusted my interview questions to explore staffs' role (see Small 2009). Interviews included three sets of questions: questions on staffs' own history and professional trajectories (e.g., how they came to work for the organization and their prior work); their programmatic focus (their responsibilities, program design and execution, the nature of their contact with volunteers, and the like); and their interaction with the organization (their relationships with organizational structures, challenges and rewards of working in Peace Corps and with partners, and how they handled those challenges and rewards).

I sampled staff from three interview field sites (discussed later in this article), as well as from the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, DC. Interviews took place over the phone and in person over a period of nearly two years, from 2012 to 2014, in semi-structured, open-ended formats. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. In addition to staff interviews, I gathered a dataset of 89 interviews from current and returned Peace Corps volunteers, which I consulted to triangulate interview data and insights from staff.

Both US and host country staff in this study fit general demographic profiles. US staff typically come to work in the Peace Corps through other jobs in development, and many return to other development work when their five-year contracts are complete. They are well-educated (all have at least a Bachelor's, and many have Masters' degrees) and, in my sample, are nearly all White. Local staff tended to be elite; they had often encountered the Peace Corps through prestigious jobs in governmental ministries and public service. Many began work in the Peace Corps as language or cultural trainers, advancing to program management. Like US staff, they all had at least undergraduate degrees, and most spoke at least conversational English. Whereas US Peace Corps staff are limited to five years in a given overseas position, some local staff remain with the agency for as long as 18 years. Interview respondents are found in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Peace Corps Interview Respondents

Former Staff	5
Staff members: Caribbeanea	11
Staff members: Africanea	10
Staff members: Europea	8
Staff members: Washington, DC	5
Regional Managers	2

*All interview respondents reported having at least a bachelor's degree.

I also draw on qualitative field observations of 3–4 weeks each of the Peace Corps offices in three countries that I shall call Europea, Caribbenea, and Africanea. These countries—three subdivisions of a single organizational case—were selected not just for their geographic locations, but also to capture a range of levels of development.² In each site, I conducted between three and four weeks of qualitative field observations, adhering, to the extent possible given the short time-frame, to the norms of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I observed as many staff meetings as permitted, attentive to both the meetings and the environment as a way to understand how professionalism is practiced. I also conducted formal interviews with office staff (both US and local) in all three offices. Additionally, I observed a different Peace Corps program in each country. In Europea, I attended a mid-service training that took the most committed volunteers for a five-day period of language refreshers. In Caribbenea, I traveled outside the capital to observe a remedial language training that targeted volunteers struggling with language acquisition. In Africanea, I traveled to a summer camp in the southern part of the country.

Finally, I analyzed a host of print data, which is particularly useful to qualitative case studies such as the one undertaken here (Bowen 2009). Documents can suggest interview questions that need asking and situations that demand observation, as they did in my case; they can offer insights into events, organizations, and individuals to which we would not otherwise have access (Ventresca and Mohr 2017). In this case, organizational documents are an especially useful way to understand an organization's *story of itself*. In other words, the Peace Corps' understanding of professionalization is manifest, in part, in its formal organizational accounts of itself, and visible in how those accounts change over time. Thus, I prioritized organizational and founding documents, including annual reports (drawn from each decade of the Peace Corps' history), program reports (as available, as only some are archived), and correspondence (including letters) that are archived online and at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Articles and entries by current and former volunteers, published in the *Peace Corps Times* (the semi-annual magazine), are among the documents included in this study, although these documents—because of access issues—were collected less systematically.

All data collection was undertaken by myself, primarily but not exclusively in English. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. I have included only English translations of conversations in other languages. Field notes were recorded by hand and then transferred to electronic format.

Data Analysis

The research was guided by general theoretical insights, which helped identify broad themes for coding. While I began with an analytic focus on professionalism and variations of its expression and significance, encapsulation, as a code, emerged from the process of reading and rereading data, seeking a way to theorize the particular nature of this conflict in conversation with that data. The coding process—which I applied in the same fashion to interview, observation, and documentary

data—drew on practices and concepts from critical discourse analysis. Discourse analysis analyzes how meaning and understanding is produced through language, and implies a particular focus on words (Brown and Chung 2008; Starks and Brown Trinidad 2007). Coding sought to understand how people use language to create and enact the meaning and value of what they do, to understand how knowledge arises and is transmitted, and how that knowledge shapes society and subjects (Jager and Maier 2009). For instance, initial codes such as “professionalization” were designed to capture anything that any respondent might consider professionalization. Later codes (such as “managerialism” and “encapsulation”) helped parse the initial code, and assess the degree to which respondents’ interpretations of the term varied and in what experiences and referents their interpretations were based (see also Starks and Brown Trinidad 2007).

RESULTS

In this section, I analyze the institutional pressures that encapsulate professionalism within managerialism.

Institutional Pressures Towards Managerialism

Despite its folksy origins, the Peace Corps exists within the highly rationalized field of the state—a background and history that shapes how the organization understands and practices “professionalism.” Its policy is formally made by the central headquarters but executed by political appointees; it is funded through the US budget and overseen by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. It is regularly expected to account for itself in relation to the US foreign policy agenda, to justify its very existence given the prevalent anti-statism in the US, and to position itself plausibly vis-à-vis the broader field of the US government. Its legitimacy issues are related to the general climate of anti-statism in the US (Clemens 2006; Dobbin and Sutton 1998), and the prevalent skepticism about whether the Peace Corps (or indeed, any government agency) is suited to meet the country’s foreign policy, economic, or development needs.

The Peace Corps faces accountability concerns, both in general governance terms (is it doing a good job?), and with respect to finance (how was public money spent?). Though at its inception it billed itself as a warm-hearted outfit with neighborly intentions, it had strong foreign policy undertones that diminished considerably after the Cold War. The economy was growing, and globalization appeared to promise wealth and stability worldwide. To combat the mounting sense that it was irrelevant in this new age of prosperity, the Peace Corps intentionally constructed a new public identity as a “development organization” (Kallman 2015; Kallman forthcoming). That identity has grown stronger, despite the parallel understanding that predominantly young Peace Corps volunteers have limited technical skills; the common perception among both volunteers and field staff is that the Peace Corps’ most

beneficial outcome is *not* development, but rather intercultural exchange. One field staff member tells me this is in response to issues of congressional accountability:

It's hard to justify an inter-cultural exchange program, but it's easier to justify development. [...] I think it's very hard to justify something so metaphysical, and say, "well, you know, we'll send fifty youngsters to Zimbabwe."³ They will hold hands, sing Kumbaya, and we need three million dollars for that.

Because the Peace Corps does not feel able to justify intercultural exchange, it frames its organizational behavior as rational in the context of being a "development" organization, sensitive to the pressures of congressional oversight. In other words, managerial-professional norms are intentionally and instrumentally used to meet an organizational need for legitimacy and survival. The meaning ascribed to the Peace Corps' strategies thus becomes consistent with the logic of a managerialism; DC staff are particularly sensitive to the demands of this framing. One says,

[Congresspeople are] ultimately the elected officials responsible for stewardship of taxpayer funds, so when they're writing this government budget, they want to see that government agencies are using taxpayer funds as effectively as possible. (RPCV 2000s, Staff Member, Washington, DC)

This account provides an illustration of the types of managerial pressures that staff—particularly staff based at the headquarters rather than the field—encounter. They must make their program fit within the rationalist ideology of the state. The same person describes the challenge of "imparting the importance [of the Peace Corps to] Congress and the Congressional oversight appropriations." He continues, "sometimes folks want to be able to just go do their do-gooder development work and not have to answer or go up." While his tone is impatient, even dismissive, he clearly recognizes the ceremonial importance of "answering" and "going up." This person works in close proximity to other agencies and entities that exert managerial pressures on him.

However, as the field staff respondent suggests, to make a case for understanding the Peace Corps as a development organization rather than a federally funded intercultural exchange, the agency must justify two decisions that at first glance seem implausible: the use of generally young, non-specialist development workers (volunteers) rather than trained professionals, and low-budget project methods.⁴ The Peace Corps approaches both challenges using a people-to-people theory of development that emphasizes, in the words of a former agency official, a "bottom-up, village-level view" of development projects that is, correspondingly, a very "cost-effective development agency, [...] and you see some [other] development efforts that appear to you to be wasting a lot of money." By conjuring an image of

“waste” in large development operations, this official legitimizes the intervention of unskilled volunteers, situating it within a managerialist discourse of efficiency. Like his colleagues, both in DC and in the field, this official experiences and responds to managerial pressures that are borne of public accountability concerns.

In addition to shaping how the Peace Corps is described and positioned, these fiscal and governance pressures emerge in Peace Corps training. Despite publicly defending its position as a people-to-people organization, the Peace Corps works exceedingly hard to re-socialize its young volunteers and present them as skilled managerial-professionals. This is the driving logic behind Peace Corps trainings: teaching young volunteers to be “professional” development workers helps to mitigate some of the legitimacy problems surrounding state-based interventions by linking them explicitly to the practices of the field. Similarly, for the agency to credibly bill itself as a development organization (rather than a compromised agency whose dubious mandate is to “hold hands and sing Kumbaya”), it must adhere to the (managerially oriented) best practices of international development. This emerges, for instance, in a case of using standardized development indicators to assess countries’ eligibility for volunteers. One employee says:

We have developed a new portfolio review where we use certain criteria to make decisions about targeting resources, volunteers, what countries to go into, what countries to close, what countries to increase, what countries to decrease. And those are based on things like security, medical and health conditions, the HDI (the Human Development Index) [...it’s] an emphasis on that. (RPCV 1970s, Agency Official)

Similarly, the Office of Programming and Training Support at headquarters designs the volunteer training programs in conversation with development actors. A DC staffer says:

We helped with defining—together with the field, defining what the focus in areas would be and also creating resources to help train our volunteers with some standards of learning, training standards. (RPCV 1990s, Staff Member, Washington, DC)

Adhering to best practices in international development helps the Peace Corps justify itself as a development organization which, in turn, enables it to avoid legitimacy issues that it encounters as a state organization with a legacy of idealism and community focus. By describing the Peace Corps’ focus on learning and training standards, this woman explicitly links the agency to the broader field of development. The connection between the Peace Corps and development generally is codified here by the shared focus on training standards (rather than, for instance, expertise on poverty or a shared understanding of interventions)—a dialogue that could indeed be understood as more professional than managerial, depending on implementation.

The slippage between professionalization and managerialism also manifests in how volunteers are socialized and trained. Importantly, volunteers are primarily socialized into *the norms of international development* rather than into the norms of their specific occupation at their field site; for instance, an ESL teacher is not socialized into the profession of “teacher,” but rather that of “development professional.” Though there are nods to managerial-professionalization even in the application and placement process for volunteers (for instance, the “Aspiration Statement” asks applicants to identify three professional skills that they plan to use during service), the Peace Corps’ required three-month onsite training program represents the first major juncture at which volunteers are exposed to both occupational-professional and managerial pressures. It is also the first major juncture at which encapsulation is perceptible.

As soon as they begin service, volunteers are encouraged to understand themselves as “development professionals,” explicitly, in the language of one country director, as “knowledge workers.” However, in this resocialization they are trained to focus on the technical and managerial, rather than the structural, theoretical, or political components of their work. One training manual, for instance, emphasizes the “capacity building framework” for development that, along with individual community members, emphasizes the role of professionals and organizations. It offers standardized suggestions: “Strengthening organizational capacities, such as management skills within an NGO, working with teachers to develop organizational skills and materials for a school, and helping health workers develop a record-keeping system for a clinic all help root other activities in an ongoing, functioning, and supportive environment” (Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange 2002:7). “Taken as a whole,” the recommendations conclude grandly, “this framework provides the structure for planning and evaluating sustainable development work in any sector” (Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange 2002:8). The managerialist implication in such phrasing comes through strongly, and sits uncomfortably with a characterization of volunteers as emergent knowledge workers or young occupational-professionals with discretion or autonomy. For young volunteers, becoming a “professional” here consists of learning about trans-organizational frameworks for planning and evaluating.

Another linkage with the managerialist norms occurs during pre-service training which, like other Peace Corps programs, trades heavily on the word “professionalization” but resonates a great deal with managerialist design. Training centers on an agency-wide program called Focus In/Train Up (FITU), which began in 2011. FITU is a departure from previous systems of training that were more tailored to individual countries, and was designed to help volunteers “imple[ment] those projects that have proved to be most effective at achieving development results. Monitoring and evaluation is a [...] critical part of the Focus In/Train Up strategy” (US Peace Corps 2012:ii). Focus In/Train Up emphasizes partnerships with other US agencies, including the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Global Health Initiative, the President’s Malaria Initiative, and others. Through these partnerships, the Peace Corps hopes to

“maximize the impact of U.S. government development investments in [PCV] communities” (US Peace Corps 2012: iii). In the language of the program itself, with its emphasis on “impact maximization,” “investments,” and “results,” the influence of managerialist norms is perceptible.

However, instead of focusing on the “big picture” issues that might be considered key to occupational-professionalization in development (critical thinking, for instance, or questions of discretion and responsiveness within the practice of development), the language of the training program emphasizes structure, standardization, and monitoring and accountability, all hallmarks of managerial-professionalization. For instance, the *Peace Corps Times*, announcing 2012 changes, reads:

[Focus In/Train Up] will ensure that no matter where a Volunteer serves, each will receive a high level of training that includes sessions on monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Standard sector indicators that will be used across the world have been created to enhance qualitative stories and help the Peace Corps see and share its impact on a global level (Peace Corps Times 2012:3).

Training has evolved to the current version in Focus In/Train Up that is now heavily focused on creating young development workers who are well-versed in the managerialistic requirements of development work. This manifests in the formal skills that volunteers are given and the logic that informs them, and in the language used to describe those skills.

Organizational concerns with demonstrating impact and uniformity are apparent throughout the program and respondents’ accounts of it, suggesting that managerialism figures prominently into understandings of “professionalization.” FY 2012 agency reports, for instance, boast that the process of “demonstrating the impact of the work of Volunteers has gained significant momentum over the last few years. The agency is strengthening its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to improve Volunteer programs and better articulate the value of the Peace Corps to our overseas partners and the American public. Considerable progress in building an M&E culture was made in FY 2012” (US Peace Corps 2012:29). The 2013 report notes that “monitoring and evaluation efforts remain critical elements of the Focus In/Train Up strategy in order to continue to achieve best results” (US Peace Corps 2013:3). This emphasis on the public face of the training reflects both the organizational insecurities around demonstrating value (notably, in this case, to “overseas partners and the American public”) and in demonstrating routinization among nascent professionals (e.g., an “M&E culture”).

Importantly, however, there is very little data collected from host communities or governments about their reactions to Peace Corps programming. In some field sites volunteers’ counterparts are surveyed periodically, but the data with which the organization is concerned are almost exclusively generated by the volunteers and field site staff. Such a strikingly one-sided approach to collecting information

suggests that the “data”—or the ceremonial importance of having it—are valued over their utility or content.

Staff are explicit about providing career support to volunteers, and many of them understand themselves to be doing so in response to the wishes of volunteers themselves. Among staff, there is little distinction made between the managerial tasks required by headquarters and the occupational-professional interventions that they feel are necessary to become good development workers; the two ideas are collapsed into each other, fueling encapsulation. An RPCV from the 1990s, now field staff, recounts:

Part of the push toward professionalization is responding to our host country, that's true, but there's a supply side in that equation. [...]his generation of volunteers is very career-development focused. [...] All three of our American [staff] that are here were volunteers, so we talk about how it was compared to our service. [...] When I was a volunteer [...] I don't think many of us had a clear idea going into it about how Peace Corps was fitting into some kind of path for us. And a lot of our volunteers now do. They *really* do.

Neither volunteers nor staff clearly distinguish between managerialism and occupational-professionalism, as evidenced in this data excerpt. “Professionalization” for this person refers to the managerialistic skills that would permit volunteers to gain employment in development or a related sector upon completion of their service—one idea is encapsulated within another through the use of language. Another staff member even sees the professional aspect of Peace Corps service as a quiet “fourth” goal of the Peace Corps, without defining what professionalism means to him:

The first [agency] goal is about development and the other two goals are about cultural exchange, so, you know, it's both. But I also talk about what I call the “fourth goal,” which is [...] personal professional development, which I think is very important too. [...] I find, actually, [it] may be the most interesting, although it's not officially part of the goals of Peace Corps. (RPCV 1970s, Field Site Staff)

This feeling is present among field site staff in very different parts of the world. Another country director who runs a program on a different continent outlines his commitment to (ambiguous) professional development:

I mean, there's been debate in Peace Corps about a fourth goal, which is developing the skills of young Americans to be international development people, right? [...] It's informal. I don't think there's ever been an official assessment on it, but I would take it even further than that. I feel like I'm helping young people become professionals. (RPCV 2000s, Field Site Staff)

Like the previous respondent, this respondent did not outline what professionalism or professional skills meant to him. The field staff have clearly internalized the notion that “professionalization”—in some form—is a required component of their work with volunteers, but they understand it as synonymous with teaching standardized, routinized, and/or data-driven behavior (managerialism). Whereas at its inception the agency both built and protected its legitimacy in pre-service training by borrowing tactics from the military and its legitimacy as a state organization (Kallman forthcoming), the Peace Corps now depends heavily on the relatively more established international development community and its elaborate accountability apparatus (such as the “M&E culture”) for that legitimacy. In other words, encapsulation is a process that is rooted in the specific legitimacy issues that the Peace Corps faces. Further, and as these staff members indicated, PCVs are active participants in this process; the current crop of volunteers, primarily millennials, have been socialized to understand that “professional” development is an important component of any undertaking, though the meaning of “professionalism” is, here again, contested and imprecise. The unforgiving job market of the 2010s, coupled with the highly managerialistic nature of the contemporary social change apparatus and nonprofit sector, taught volunteers that, as one staff member put it, Peace Corps service must “fit into a path.” Peace Corps staff inscribe organizational behavior with this rationalized logic.

Encapsulation in the field

The managerial pressures that I have described earlier can create tension among Peace Corps staff, precisely because they conflict with staff’s occupational-professional impulse. Peace Corps staff in my sample, particularly field site staff, tend to be profoundly committed to a vision of development. American Peace Corps staff are almost universally former volunteers who worked in the field of international development before returning to the Peace Corps in administrative positions; there is something of a revolving door between USAID and World Bank projects and Peace Corps posts. When asked why he keeps coming back after a career working in many facets of international development, one country director responds: “It’s grassroots and it’s people-oriented. [...] I keep coming back because I still believe in those three goals, and I believe in the direct contact at the local level.” The gist of his remark is quite common. Another field staff member sees the social goals of the organization as aligned with her own: “I’m an idealist, and I dream of trying to—I still have an idealistic front, even given all the realities.”

Like US expatriates, local (host country) field site staff also typically frame their jobs as part of a service ethic. An American staffer observes that, for local staff, “this is not a job to them, it’s a calling [...]. And I think you find that in most countries. The staff feels very—I mean, obviously they like the work, but they feel like this is like developing their country. I think that that’s very personal.” One local staff member links work with the Peace Corps to patriotism:

Then the idea turns out to be, like, helping these volunteers more. Helping them because they are helping us, helping [people of my country] in schools and youth centers. [...] So, I found, like, by helping the volunteers I help [...] my country.

The backgrounds of both American and local employees meaningfully illustrate how most Peace Corps staff in field sites are motivated by a service ethic—one of the key features of occupational professionalism—and that such motivation conditions their responses to their work. Relatedly, Peace Corps staff—particularly field staff—have a complicated relationship with managerial pressures.

Field staff uphold several central narratives coming from headquarters, all of which emphasize managerialistic interventions that legitimize the agency and reinforce very specific ideas about what “professionalism” is. They do so, in many cases, over their own objections. First, they describe work as international development (rather than, say, cultural exchange). They accept the idea that the Peace Corps, at least for public purposes, is a “people-to-people” development program, a formalistic term that masks the potential frailties of relying on unskilled labor. They purvey managerialistic values as regards data, monitoring, and evaluation, which they do not explicitly problematize with their volunteers (although they complain about it among themselves). One US program director, who returned to a Peace Corps job after a 12-year hiatus, reflects on the increasing structure coming from DC:

[Before], every post was different. As long as you had your budget and your justification, we didn’t have a lot of oversight. [...] Now] we also have a lot more direction coming from Peace Corps Washington, making it more of an agency. We have more agency guidelines. Before, [...] we had access to support, but we weren’t told “this is the best practice, this is what you should be doing down there.” Now it’s like, “here’s the best practice, here’s the best practice, here’s the best practice.” You [used to] chose how you put your project together, and how you put your program together, and it was so much freedom [...] before when I was in this position, [wa]s a little different from what it is right now. (RPCV 1980s, Field Site Staff)

While the notion of “best practices” may suggest occupational-professional introspection on method, as this staff member describes, her autonomy and discretion (defining characteristics of occupational-professional) have been limited in recent iterations of program development. Although she named this shift, and clearly identifies what has changed, she made no distinction between the two in her use of the word “professional” throughout our conversation.

This increasing managerialism also articulates, through reliance on statistical data and an adherence to the same culture of monitoring and evaluation, an emphasis on grant training programs. As we have seen, the agency emphasizes the roles of data, funding, and of monitoring and evaluation within their programs,

both in field offices and in Washington. The reliance on data and documentation is, of course, characteristic of rationalization, particularly within state agencies. Interestingly, American staff abroad seem relieved when they can point to big data sets, as though the onus were off them for providing justification for their decisions, and because their own occupational-professional judgment is perceived to be insufficient. Interviews generally exposed a feeling that monitoring and data collection were things that field offices did to satisfy headquarters, not because they were an inherently valuable form of reflection (one staff member sarcastically referred to the 2012 all-volunteer survey as “very ‘data driven’ and very ‘happy’”). He sees the survey as an object whose primary function is a ceremonial one—to show headquarters that the agency is staying on task. The “data” relieve him of the burden of having to do so himself. A country director muses:

How do you be an altruistic organization when you’re part of this bureaucracy of the federal government? [...] The government has the money, but the nonprofits are the ones that are nimble [...] and so, with Peace Corps, we have a very modest budget for a government agency, but we have a lot of federal regulations. I like to say we’re running a lemonade stand with federal regulations.

The notion of a “lemonade stand with federal regulations” hearkens to an old trope about governmental red tape, but also points to a deeper problem: a perceived inconsistency between being an altruistic and politically informed organization, and simultaneously a legitimate government agency. It also, tellingly, equates the Peace Corps with a nonprofit. The comment suggests that there is little space for an occupational-professional design within a highly rationalized government entity; the service motivation and autonomous work that occupational-professionalism value are inconsistent with a legitimacy-seeking, managerialistic, and highly rationalized state.

Another US field staff member reflects on the general trend of managerialism within development, and sees it shaping her working relationships with volunteers:

I think it’s a whole donor community. [...] You’ve heard of this Focus In training that’s happened in the Peace Corps, and how much more professional Peace Corps is trying to be. So [...] like, USAID implementers have to answer to USAID, we have to answer to Congress, and we’re being asked to report what we do. So there’s a push to being more professional—it’s happening in the international community at large, and Peace Corps is a part of that in its own unique way. It used to be good enough to just have stories. It’s no longer good enough to have stories. We have to *show* them that we’ve had an impact.

This respondent uses the word “professional” to refer to a climate of monitoring and evaluation. However, she had spent much of our conversation describing the

ways that she tried to teach volunteers about the social aspect of development work, and how such work is dependent upon first developing trusting relationships within host communities. Managerial pressures have strained the occupational-professional advice she gives. She continues:

[Demonstrating impact] changes a volunteer's service, because now, not only do you have to just sort of hang out in your community, you have to "accomplish" something. [...] And so then staff is caught in the middle saying, "no, but you have to invest in relationships before you can 'accomplish'! You have to sit there and drink your tenth cup of tea, and just hang out without feeling like you're doing anything for all these months before you can 'accomplish' that!" [...] We're being asked for the result, the volunteers want the results, but we have to somehow translate the process to get to the result. (RPCV 2000s, Field Site Staff)

This person must mentor young development volunteers through a bind between autonomy, flexibility and investment in community relationships (occupational-professionalism within development), and the demands from Peace Corps headquarters and the field as a whole for documentation of impact and accomplishments—a more managerial approach.

The conflation between managerial requirements and occupational-professional mentorship can occur because few within the Peace Corps (including this respondent) would argue that transparency or accountability are normatively "bad" for an organization. Yet the demands of transparency and accountability, in this excerpt, encroach onto the occupational-professional mentoring that this staffer tries to offer, which is intended to foster skills like patience, discretion, and social awareness. The potential for disconnect here is quite high; transparency is valued, and yet its implementation becomes managerial while still being described as "professional." "Transparency" comes to mean "producing results"; the managerialist definition encapsulates the occupational definition, and gets transmitted to volunteers through frustrated staff who are "caught in the middle."

The lived experience of managerialism—the ways that it is experienced and how it comes to define their work—can also affect staff. Specifically, the encapsulation of "occupational professionalism" can jeopardize employee commitment to any kind of professional practices, and compromises the logic of "occupational professionalism" as a whole. This finding may be particularly consequential for public service occupations like development, which are only partially professionalized.

Despite their commitment to the Peace Corps, American staff members describe persistent problems with mediating between headquarters' positions and their own; they struggle to reconcile completion of tasks with their own critiques of those tasks. US staff abroad criticize Peace Corps Washington for what they perceive to be heavy-handed over-systematization with no room for flexibility, adaptation, or judgment. One field official tells me:

The hardest part of the job is the gap bridging. [...] We're bridging the reality of the field with some of the ludicrousness of some of the things that come out of our headquarters. We're bridging the aspirations of our highly enthusiastic volunteer population with the realities of local culture and local customs and local capacities. [...] I mean one of my biggest goals is to just filter out as much noise from what we get from above honestly [...] and let my staff do their jobs [...] everybody in a cubicle in our headquarters office thinks that they can make a post do something. (RPCV 1990s, Field Site Staff)

To call an order from the headquarters of a development agency "ludicrous" strongly signals distance between the managerialistic mandates of the organization and a more occupationally grounded understanding of development that field site staff retain. These different things (organizational support and occupational-professional autonomy) are described as though they are part of a single professional practice, but are experienced as being in opposition with each other. Another staff member says:

I try to protect. Part of my job is trying to protect, certainly, the volunteers and the staff from this underbelly, this sort of bureaucratic side. (RPCV 1970s, Field Site Staff)

Staff do not typically share these critiques, or the perceived unreasonableness of demands from Washington, with volunteers. In most cases, that has to do with their commitment to what they perceive as good leadership or good organizational citizenship. The same country director continues:

When I have a bad day, I try to just shut myself in the office because I know it just sprinkles all out through the—it radiates through the place. [...] It's true of any enterprise, but we're in the people business here in Peace Corps. This is a very people-oriented business, and people responding to different stimuli, whatever they are.

Because field site staff tend to understand their job as "filtering out noise" and tend to not share the complexities of their experience with those under their supervision, volunteers sometimes see them as tight-lipped and occasionally narrow-minded; because the rationale for their behavior and decisions is not public, it is therefore difficult to understand. In other words, the staff adhere to managerialistic practices because of their commitment to good work, abiding by standards or protecting their subordinates from "bureaucratic underbellies." They believe they are being good leaders. But, in doing so, they inadvertently reinforce the value of those "ludicrous" managerial practices and help teach volunteers that this is the definition of being "professional."

In contrast to many of the staff in DC, American overseas staff reported that they did not feel supported by headquarters, and that the constraints of the organization prevented them from being the best expressions of their occupational-professional selves. In other words, managerialism felt more oppressive when employees went further away from headquarters. Staff abroad—both American and local—seem on many occasions to be frustrated by the structures of the central bureaucracy. They also report feeling hamstrung by what one calls a “paradigm of safety and risk,” related to state legitimacy and rationalization, and to the general climate of litigiousness that characterizes public life in the United States. This official continues:

I can remember going to—they had this OST, Overseas Staff Training, and the first day I went and I was filling out forms about being an employee. And I felt like I was a kid in elementary school. It was just awful. I just felt treated like a child. I signed up to be a Country Director! I feel like I’m being treated like a child by this bureaucracy. And I remember walking around the hotel thinking maybe I made a mistake, I shouldn’t take this job. At this training they also bring in people from all around the different countries. They weren’t there the first two days. The first two days it was just the Americans filling out these forms.

So I walked around the hotel in this really kind of depressed mode and I went inside to where they were having a reception and all these people from all these different countries had arrived. It was like the United Nations’ staff. [...] And this is sort of the dichotomy of Peace Corps, on the one hand, we are a federal bureaucracy with lawyers, and bean counters, and rules, and all kinds of paper—so much paper to sign—and on the other hand we’re this just amazing, human development organism that’s just so powerful and incredible. (RPCV 1970s, Field Site Staff)

Because they are initially so committed to occupational-professionalism, field site staff can find work at the Peace Corps perplexing and dehumanizing, as this person recounts. As he says, he “signed up to be a country director” and felt treated as a child. The distance between expectations and experience provides ample space for these feelings of infantilization and restriction. This person clearly outlines the paradox he faces, of “bean counters” on the one hand, and of the vibrant international community of which the Peace Corps is part on the other. Another program director reflects on this challenge in the context of her volunteer mentees:

I think to be successful from an administrative perspective, [what makes a good volunteer] is be a rule follower. And I think the very thing that they need to succeed in communities—with the direction Peace Corps is changing and moving and becoming much more administrative and risk-averse, and all those things [...] we’re demanding a lot more of volunteers administratively, everything from

a whereabouts policy to, you know—a lot more rules, a lot more oversight. But the things that make a volunteer successful is [...] bucking the system, that willing to be all those characteristics that don't fit in these boxes.

This woman explicitly identifies the tension between managerial mandates and the occupational-professional account of what “makes a volunteer successful” as mutually exclusive. This makes the notion of “professionalism” inapplicable to her complex circumstances. The pressures of managerialism emerged for another person shortly after the job began. She recounts:

[Before this job] I was working in a local initiative, a local organization, so just the structure—the system is different. It's more professional in Peace Corps. [...] [I]t's very professional, policies are very clear. Even my job description is very clear. I don't do anything that I am not supposed to do. [...] My old work was dependent on creativity and innovation. [...] So this time because here it's more professional, it's work. There are no emotional things. It's work. It's a job. But maybe with time, it will be easier.

This woman's account of what is “professional” explicitly excludes that which is “creative” or “innovative”—that which is dependent on her occupational-professional judgment, as well as that which is normatively driven. Professionalism and managerialism become conflated; the meaning associated with “professional” practices and organizational behavior shifts. Any sort of occupational-professionalization is lost to her—encapsulated within managerialism—because she has come to see the managerial ideals to which she objects as “professionalism.” Thus, the plausibility or value of even professionalism is reduced.

In sum, I have shown that managerialism challenges professional norms among Peace Corps staff, particularly field site staff. Simultaneously, managerialism uses the language of “professionalism” to impose general, shared standards across professions and branches of the organization that are based on hierarchical techniques, rather than discretion, autonomy, knowledge, or some sort of political engagement, in a process of encapsulation. Workers themselves then seem to internalize this notion, coming to understand managerial practices as defining features of professionalism. Paradoxically, and through this encapsulation, staff undermine the claim that their professional norms are unique.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This article has offered distinct perspective on the ongoing managerialism-vs-professionalism debate within management and organization studies. It has articulated and analyzed the ways in which the term “professionalization” is contested, and how and why that contestation matters. It has found that the use of

managerialist models has led to an “encapsulation” of the notion of professionalism. This is a result of legitimacy and institutional challenges (external pressures), which, in turn, challenge Peace Corps staffs’ professional practice and the programs that they deliver and oversee. In this case, and for those within development who are occupational professionals, managerialism becomes damaging because the procedural element of work (doing something because it is the most acceptable/legitimate thing to do) is precisely the opposite of professional discretion, autonomy, or a service ideal (doing something because one feels motivated or called to do it, or because one is using one’s professional judgment). Paradoxically, workers then internalize managerialism as professionalization; they come to equate managerialism and managerialistic practices with professionalism, and build their occupational self-understanding based on that encapsulation. The implications of these findings, however, are broad, and offer a fruitful avenue for further research on the state. Additionally, they raise provocative questions about why many development organizations tend towards failure.

First, data produced limited definitive regional variation among staff responses. A distinction exists among American staff (DC employees are more susceptible to managerial pressures than host country staff); however, there is very little variation among responses from local staff in different host countries. While local staff in all (1) identify as “professionals” and (2) are able to articulate the managerial pressures that they face, there were few geographic patterns in their responses. The lack of meaningful variation suggests several avenues for future research. In this study, uniformity may perhaps be attributed to the powerful organizational culture and messages that the Peace Corps foment in its field offices, as well as the relatively small sample size. It is also possible that, grounded as it is in Western perspectives, this frame of professionalization is simply a poor fit among local staff in my three field sites.⁵ As I have argued, the managerial pressures that the Peace Corps faces, while not entirely unlike those that other state agencies in other countries face, are unique to the US’ weak central state and the history of state-led development. This article suggests that other context-specific inquiries into the natures and pressures of professionalism (such as studies of other branches of government, or whether professionalization is similarly contested in, say, universities) would be beneficial.

Second, findings suggest that more cross-national and cross-occupational comparisons on the relationship between professionalization, managerialism, and development would be useful. While some studies have shown that managerial ideology does not necessarily impede intrinsic motivation (and in some cases may actually strengthen it: cf. Frey 1994; Pinder 2014), the relationship between those outcomes and those presented here bears further—and preferably comparative—analysis. Many years ago, Wilensky (1964) found that bureaucracy may threaten service ideals more than impede professional autonomy, and there is suggestive new evidence from a variety of contexts showing that versions of this tension emerge globally (cf. Harkness and Levitt 2017).

Relatedly, many problems documented in critical development research could be linked to the fundamental tension that I identify here: that traits such as autonomy,

adaptability, and political sensitivity that are necessary to good work in aid partnerships fit imperfectly in the highly rationalistic field of the state. Most who study international development seriously argue that the process rarely works as it should (cf. Ferguson 1994; Heideman 2013; Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews 2013), particularly with regards to broad-based societal benefit in the periphery, or participation of the excluded masses (cf. Evans 1979). Some research, including this article, has argued that a rational state complicates the development of professionalism, yet what that means for development in general terms has not been analyzed comparatively.

The major implication here is that the encapsulation of professionalism within managerialism can jeopardize the plausibility of professionalization as a whole, a consequence that could, in theory, reverberate throughout the entire field of public administration. That is, managerialism can weaken a powerful normative commitment to occupational professionalism, which potentially spells trouble for the Peace Corps. Given that half of USAID staff are former Peace Corps volunteers, and that Peace Corps staff circulate widely within other development organizations, the implications of this could be widespread within international development alone. Practically speaking, this article suggests a single intervention that the Peace Corps (or indeed, any organization) could undertake if it so chose: to intentionally define “professionalization,” and maintain an active dialogue about what a “professional” is and what it should be. This would not change the institutional pressures with which an organization contends. It could, however, help create a shared understanding of what development workers are doing, and why, providing an orienting framework.

The particularistic findings of this work shed light on the dynamics within the Peace Corps, and the Peace Corps is clearly of interest in a policy-relevant domain. But the process is akin to something Habermas (2015) described at a macro-theoretical level, in which systemic imperatives displace normative expectations, “colonizing the life-world,” suggesting that these pressures exist throughout social systems and in many different environments. How managerialism is experienced, and what it means, is therefore deserving of sustained interest across a host of public and voluntary domains.

NOTES

1. Many Peace Corps staff are also returned Peace Corps Volunteers (or RPCVs).
2. As measured by the Human Development Reports, United Nations Development Programme, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>
3. Names of countries have been changed.
4. The distinction between “volunteers” and staff is instructive. Indeed, some of the pressures that I identify in this article extend to volunteers—though volunteers are considered volunteers, the agency works exceedingly hard to “professionalize” them.

5. Local staff also identify disparate meanings of professionalism, and suggest ways in which the concept may not travel well. One man explicitly described a tension he faces in training volunteers in cultural competence: "...people [from Europe] tend to be more relaxed," he says during a training, "more personally-based. Read: less 'professional' in [the] Western meaning of the word."

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