

Acculturation in International  
Development: The Peace Corps  
in Costa Rica

Volume 1

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*M.S., Purdue University, 1986*

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CORPS IN COSTA RICA  
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## Abstract

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In its thirty years of service, the Peace Corps has acquired a well-founded international reputation for successful grassroots development assistance through the unpretentious lifestyle of American individuals living and working in a single community. Clouding this success is the high rate of early terminations of trained volunteers, which not only causes financial loss to the organization, but also questions the ability of American volunteers to successfully transplant into another culture.

This study determines the loss of volunteers to be a symptom of unsuccessful bicultural acculturation. Detailed case histories show that all volunteers undergo a sequence of preparation, cross-cultural contact, conflict, adaptation, and separation, whereby the stages of contact-conflict-adaptation repeat with each contact. The choice of adaptation strategy of the successful volunteer varies with the area of conflict; conflict in the professional area induces adjustment, while conflict in the social area causes reaction or withdrawal. The unsuccessful volunteer is one who has been placed succeeding another, feels overwhelmed by the expectations of the community, and has low social language skills. This individual cannot adjust successfully in either area and sees withdrawal and separation as the only solution.

The results of this study suggest that more volunteers could be retained by raising their professional satisfaction, improving social language skills, and by placing volunteers into communities without a recent volunteer.

This study follows fifteen volunteers of the Peace Corps through their service experience in Costa Rica. They entered training in November 1990 and were scheduled to serve from February 1991 to January 1993. The group consisted of six women and nine men, ranging in age from 23 to 69 years. The volunteers were interviewed and tested before and during training, during the first six months of service, after one year, and shortly before they left Costa Rica.

In deepest appreciation for their time, patience, trust,  
and countless cups of coffee, this is dedicated to

Carla, Chris, Dan, Jackie, Jane, Kathleen, Lee, Michael,  
“Miguel”, Monty, Patricia, Raúl, Richard, and Wilbur

and to the memory of

R.V.R.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1990 the Peace Corps submitted a report to the US. House of Representatives listing several areas of deficiency in its operations. Among those listed were two concerned with volunteer welfare: “[V]olunteers who find themselves in-country without a ‘real job’ or in a position that either displaces an indigenous worker or has little to do with economic development;” and “Less than optimal language and area training that leaves many volunteers no more than marginally prepared to communicate with their host country associates” (US. House Committee on Government Operations 1990:3). These two areas were listed among the prime external causes for the high early termination rate among volunteers, which has remained relatively stable over the years at 11 percent for Trainees and 20 percent for Volunteers (US. House Committee on Government Operations 1990:54). The Peace Corps spends, on average, about \$20,000 on the selection, training, transportation, and subsistence of each volunteer (Rice 1986:4), and each individual who terminates early represents a considerable economic loss to the organization and, by extension, the American tax payer.

The high attrition rate during training and the fact that of those who terminate, most do so within their first service year (US. House Committee on Government Operations 1990:56), suggest that the above causes may be connected to the acculturation which the volunteers undergo to adapt to and work efficiently in their host society. Traditionally

treated as culture shock, the loss of "all ... familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (Oberg 1960:177) when moving into an unknown cultural environment, acculturation can be accompanied by cross-cultural transition stress (Adler 1975). Rapid language acquisition, job satisfaction and high contact with both co- and host-nationals have been linked with low stress (Myambo and O'Cuneen 1988), while relative isolation from host-nationals, slow language acquisition and an insufficient work load have been linked to a high degree of stress (Briody and Chrisman 1991). The statistical data provided by the Peace Corps point out the general problem area, but the numbers do not help us understand the underlying personal circumstances that lead to a volunteer's decision to terminate prematurely. It appears more helpful to examine the whole process of acculturation during the volunteers' sojourn by examining closely the personal problems encountered by individual volunteers and to identify their strategies to deal with the process of acculturation. Without that knowledge it is not likely that general strategies to enhance volunteers' feelings of well-being and self worth can be shaped and implemented successfully.

Lowering the current attrition rate will be of economic interest, since retaining trained individuals over their whole service time would free resources for additional personnel and could increase the Peace Corps' efficiency. Of more importance is the validity of the Peace Corps' philosophy that a grassroots approach to development, a technique which places the locus of control over change with the receiving community,

can only work through the continued personal commitment of all individuals. By terminating for reasons connected to the receiving community, the volunteer undermines not only the trust of this community, but puts the philosophy itself in question. On a more general level, the successful volunteer becomes an example for cross-cultural interaction skills which could be extended to the preparation for and counseling of sojourners<sup>1</sup>, immigrants and their receiving communities. The individual who leaves prematurely for reasons connected to the host environment will deter attempts at close cross-cultural interactions, by drawing a negative picture not only of the host-country but of international grassroots development. Peace Corps volunteers are an especially valuable yardstick to gauge the success of specific personal cross-cultural contact. They represent the only government-sponsored international development presence that emphasizes close, personal contact between donor and recipient of development assistance. Other agencies, such as the German Volunteer Service (DED - Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst) (Morris 1973:103-117) stress the formal provision of technical expertise as their main purpose.

The close contact to the host community required of the Peace Corps volunteers compels them to acculturate to their host culture sufficiently to fulfill the first two goals of the Peace Corps: "to help the peoples ... in meeting their needs for trained manpower, and to help promote a better

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<sup>1</sup>"Sojourner" refers to any person who leaves her home culture to reside in an "other" cultural environment for any amount of time, but without intent to stay permanently.

understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served.” (Public Law 87-293) However, while the volunteers may try, more or less successfully, to adapt to, if not integrate in, their communities, their presence is at all times and by all participants understood to be temporary, i.e., after the two years of service are over, most volunteers will return home. This transient residence makes the volunteer a sojourner, a person who visits another society for a limited time, with intent to return. While the literature on sojourners includes Peace Corps volunteers together with exchange students, missionaries, business people, members of the diplomatic corps and anthropologists, its central theme has been the “culture shock” experienced when the sojourner enters the host culture and then re-enters the home culture after a prolonged absence. What differentiates Peace Corps volunteers from all the other groups of sojourners is the need for daily close contact, often with underprivileged segments of the host country's population<sup>1</sup>. While other sojourners may adapt to perform their duties, the volunteer must adapt to be successful.

We cannot understand the situation and specific circumstances of the Peace Corps experience by interpreting volunteer behavior merely in terms of experiencing and resolving “culture shock.” We need a more extensive definition of what “culture shock” entails and how long it lasts. “Culture shock” is merely one component of acculturation which can

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<sup>1</sup> The volunteer differs from the anthropologist in that the former is in the host community by invitation to further its goals, while the latter does so often only when engaged in applied research.

cause cross-cultural transition stress. By framing the volunteers' experience in the much larger model of acculturation, we will do more justice to what is a complex process of changing behaviors, attitudes and emotions for both the volunteer and the involved community members.

The acculturation model consists roughly of three phases - contact, conflict, adaptation - and proves especially appropriate for the acculturation of the volunteers in a bicultural environment, i.e. the host culture as well as the home culture to which the volunteers remain connected through their co-volunteers and by the impending return home. The hypothesis to be tested in this study, framed in the words of Szapocznik and Kurtines (1980), is then such:

The individual acculturation of sojourners is a bi-cultural process in which the sojourners accommodate to the host culture while retaining their culture of origin.

The first dimension, accommodating to the host culture, is the traditional focus of many immigrant studies, while the second dimension, retaining the characteristics of the culture of origin, is the focus of research conducted with revivalist as well as new ethnic movements. While in the traditional sense, then, newcomers are expected to exchange one set of values and behaviors for another, the volunteers need to learn the new set while at the same time retaining fluency in the other. This enables the volunteers to deal with co-volunteers, the man-

agement and other co-nationals<sup>1</sup> who may be visiting, and it helps to reduce conflict when they return home. The volunteer is thus in a difficult situation: to perform as expected by the community she<sup>2</sup> needs to "go native," but to function within the framework of co-nationals she may appear aloof and separate to the host community. Furthermore, the specific group of sojourners studied here was prepared for the sojourn and it is necessary to attach a pre-contact phase to the model. The volunteers then have a scheduled date for departure and prepare for that as well; this leads to a separation phase attached after the adaptation phase of the original model.

While the acculturation model then provides the framework, it still does not tell us what exactly is being done by the volunteers to adapt and function efficiently in two worlds. Not only do we need to find out what acculturation means to the individual volunteer, we particularly need to learn how and why acculturation may fail and the volunteer returns home prematurely. To be able to gather such personal accounts I worked closely and intensively with fifteen volunteers. These volunteers participated in fourteen formal interviews held before they left the US, during training and the first six months in their site, at the end of the first year and shortly before the end of service. Each interview was accompanied by at least one of three tests, an Adjective Checklist, an Inter-Cultural

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<sup>1</sup>"Co-nationals" and "host-nationals" are terms used by the Peace Corps that have proven to be valuable to differentiate between individuals from the volunteers' own home nation and those populations targeted in service.

<sup>2</sup> In an attempt to facilitate reading, the cumbersome variations of "he/she", "s/he" or constant plurals have been replaced with the constant use of the generic "she" which is meant to include male volunteers as well.

Contact Scale and the Thematic Apperception Test. Additional information and observations were gathered at informal meetings and through conversations.

The study uses a longitudinal approach by interviewing the volunteers over the whole of their service time to document the fluid nature of the acculturation process of the successful volunteer, as well as to show the development of alienation of the volunteer who terminated early. The repetition of the interviews had several advantages:

- 1.) respondents were encouraged to report freely their impressions and emotions concerning daily contact with the other ethnic group;
- 2.) during repeated sessions the respondents developed sufficient confidence in the interviewer to provide truthful and extensive answers;
- 3.) the respondents felt encouraged to verbalize ethnic-contact problems, rather than perceiving problems as something to apologize for and hide from non-volunteers; and
- 4.) due to the longitudinal character of this study, I received a more complete set of data about the changes the volunteers underwent during their stay.

A constant presence of an observer would, of course, guarantee the best possible coverage of volunteer behavior and attitudes. Several limitations presented themselves early on and made it necessary to develop an interview schedule based on regular visits rather than a continuous field

residence. Three external limitations were put on me by: 1) the Training Center's director who refused permission to interview the volunteers on a regular basis during training (this resulted in the only interview answered in writing by the majority of the volunteers); 2) a lack of funding; and 3) US immigration laws<sup>1</sup>. An additional concern expressed by the Peace Corps staff in Costa Rica was that a continuous residence with one volunteer (or consecutively with several) could have impaired the seeming independence from supervision of the volunteers necessary for their acceptance as capable professionals. Finally, after six months of roughly bi-weekly interviews all volunteers expressed some fatigue at being interviewed, a problem which might have worsened with a longer stay.

It was during the first six months of the volunteers' service time (from February through August 1991) that I was in field residence in Costa Rica. This time was chosen for close interaction and frequent interviewing since this initial period is the one in which one can expect the sojourner to undergo the most changes in adapting to the new environment, and because many volunteers terminated in the first twelve months (Committee on Foreign Affairs 1988:56). During training, the volunteers are buffered from ethnic contact by the availability of co-national trainers and volunteers, as well as by a middle-class, urban environment. After the first six months in site, most volunteers have adapted to their new life and have structured coping mechanisms to

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<sup>1</sup> As a permanent resident, I am required to be in the US for at least four months during each calendar year.

deal with ethnic conflict. It is during the first six months that volunteers have to construct a meaningful place for themselves in their host culture, and it is this time that is the most crucial for the overcoming of acculturative problems.

Although I conducted some statistical analyses with the data suited to such treatment, this study centers on personal reports rather than statistics. The Peace Corps and others have published extensive statistics on volunteer behavior drawn from the whole volunteer population (for example, US. House Committee on Government Operations 1990; Cohn and Wood 1985; for others see chapter one, section three), and these statistics can be used for comparative purposes. The small sample is ideal to enable close, repeated contact with all subjects, and to allow sufficient time with each to conduct unhurried, in-depth interviews and conversations, stressing the humanity and personal interaction in data gathering so important to the exercise of ethnography (Plattner 1992).

Such a small sample size poses obvious limitations, especially since it allows only limited projections to the behavior of other Peace Corps volunteers. The potential for generalizations should be part of any research project, and I will use selected statistical tools, such as Fisher's Exact test, to support associations found in qualitative analysis and to compare my sample to the general descriptions provided by the Peace Corps. It is not my intention to manufacture another composite picture of the statistically average volunteer; the relevant literature (see chapter one, sec-

tion three) has accomplished much in providing the foundations for generalizations and projections. What seems to be missing is the individual volunteer, although there are exceptions, such as Textor (1966), and Schwimmer and Warren (1993). Decisions about early termination (except, of course, in emergency cases) are not made as easily as one might perceive from statistical tabulations of large volunteer populations. I hope to show that such decisions are arrived at only after long and careful deliberations and include many more causes than can be expressed in simple terms, such as "language problems," "home sick," or "feel inadequate." Such causes and the process by which they act upon the volunteers' decisions to terminate early are echoed in the Peace Corps statistics, and the personal accounts of my participants are necessary to target more closely the problem areas existing in the volunteer experience. Future volunteer training and placement can then be justifiably centered more on the specific needs of individual volunteers as well as on specific problem areas affecting volunteer well-being.

The purpose of this study is twofold. On an applied level, the experiences of the interviewed Peace Corps volunteers can be constructed into meaningful suggestions, based on the personal experiences of successful and unsuccessful volunteers. These can improve future volunteer training as well as help to better prepare any inexperienced sojourner. Especially in connection with the proposed training and educational demonstration program discussed for the Peace Corps (Committee on Foreign Affairs 1988), this study can help prevent or mitigate against acculturation-re-

lated problems in future volunteers. On a theoretical level, this is one of the few longitudinal sojourner studies to gather data with frequent interviews over the whole duration of the sojourn. The results will offer a detailed description of actual adaptive mechanisms used by sojourners, which can be generalized and used for comparative projects with other sojourner groups. The results can also be extended to tie ethnic theories into sojourner theories, especially those concerned with boundary maintenance, situational ethnicity, and ethnic consciousness. So far, such theories have been applied to established minorities and/or immigrant groups only. To apply them to this sample, one which may be best described as a temporary ethnic minority, may better clarify the speed and depth of a sojourner's boundary creation, loss of identity, and use of ethnicity.

The following text is arranged to emphasize the personal nature of the Peace Corps experience and centers around case histories of the fifteen participants. Before I introduce the reader to them, I present the different frameworks within which this study is situated. Chapter one contains three sections: the theoretical section discusses acculturation and relevant ethnic-relations theories; the organizational section focuses on the Peace Corps' history and philosophy; and the geographical section introduces Costa Rica and highlights those problem areas the Peace Corps volunteers have to deal with in their lives in country. The second chapter details the methods used in data acquisition and analysis. Chapter three contains the personal histories of the volunteers and their

communities. The fourth chapter summarizes the volunteers' stories in the framework of acculturation, identifies common problems and solutions and discusses the main themes recurring in these individuals' sojourn. The fifth chapter relates the individual stories to the theoretical framework presented in chapter one, discussing which acculturation model would be the most appropriate for the interpretation of the volunteers' experiences and extending the analysis to include some useful ethnic relations topics as well. The final chapters summarize the study, formulate some suggestions to improve acculturation stress and propose future research.

## **Chapter One**

### **Theoretical, Organizational and Ethnic Framework**

The experience of the volunteers can be interpreted in three different frameworks. The volunteer experience is discussed theoretically as that of acculturating sojourners with the additional input from selected ethnic relations theories. The volunteers are selected and trained by, and responsible to, the Peace Corps, which constitutes the organizational setting. The experience itself takes place in Costa Rica, where thirteen communities are the target for the volunteers' efforts, and they and the country at large represent the ethnic framework.

#### **1. Theories of Acculturation and Ethnicity**

##### **1. 1. Sojourners**

Peace Corps Volunteers, together with anthropologists, missionaries, diplomatic personnel, business people and tourists, are sojourners, persons who enter a different cultural environment intending to remain only temporarily (Adler 1975, Church 1982, Oberg 1960, Siu 1952). The study of such groups occupies a special place in ethnic-relations research and theory formulation, focusing on the temporary nature of their cross-cultural contact.

The sojourner comes into contact with members of another group within their own geographical and cultural area, but enters this environment with the intent to stay for only a limited time. To the definition it is of

little consequence if the sojourners remain for two weeks or two years - leaving is always an integral part of the sojourner's existence with the other ethnic group. While immigrating or conquered groups have to deal with either the intent or threat of assimilation, the sojourner is only a temporal visitor and can claim guest status. Because of this lack of external pressure, sojourner research centers mainly on two phases of the sojourn, entry into the host-country and re-entry into the home-country. The sojourning individual is treated as a person in transition, mainly because many sojourns presumably do not last long enough for the sojourner to become a part of the visited culture and because the sojourner always has the option to leave.

This emphasis has led to a concentration of the sojourner literature around only a few issues. Discussions of cross-cultural transition predominate, followed by intercultural communication and culture learning. Example populations are mainly exchange students, followed by diplomatic and business personnel, missionaries, and international aid personnel. This section introduces the main theories concerned with the various stages of the sojourner experience and their suitability to the sample used here. It also discusses why sojourner theories are not sufficient to explain the cross-cultural experience of Peace Corps volunteers.

One of the first attempts to evaluate the sojourning experience was published by Paul Siu (1952). Searching for an alternative to Park's

“marginal man” (Park 1961), he applied the term to any person who enters a different culture and remains unassimilated, short-term travelers as well as immigrants. He identified employment as a major purpose for the sojourn, and his analysis focused on the behavior of sojourners whose length of stay is increased considerably by circumstances beyond their control.

The credit for defining culture shock as an unfortunate but central component of the sojourn experience customarily goes to Oberg who, in 1960, offered a four-stage model of adaptation into a host-culture. He proposed that the transition period is characterized by culture shock, the “anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg 1960:177), and that this shock period could be separated into four different stages. The sojourning individual would at first enjoy a “honeymoon stage” of various length, where, buffered by hotels, hosts, and the mere fascination of the new, the sojourner can behave like a tourist, sampling the sights and avoiding closer contact with the reality of the host environment. When this stage ends and the sojourner must deal with local life without buffers, a second stage of hostility and aggression, the “rejection/regression” phase, begins. The sojourner recognizes differences between home- and host-environment, differences which, according to Oberg, the sojourner cannot readily deal with, leading the individual to reject the host-environment and to seek out co-nationals. Should the sojourner overcome this hostile phase, the third stage (unnamed by Oberg) will grow out of a first understanding of the

workings of the new environment and the feeling of at least some mastery in it. Instead of being frustrated by differences, the sojourner has now learned to accept them and can model behavior accordingly. If this incipient familiarity grows into an enjoyment of the host-environment, coupled with a complete understanding of social and communicative behaviors, the sojourner will have reached the fourth stage, "adjustment."

Oberg's model was successfully translated into popular use and "culture shock" has become a household word. In general, Oberg's insistence that every sojourn, regardless of length, target, and participants, could be plotted in four simple stages, with differences only in degree, is simplistic and misleading. His model disregards any differences affecting the sojourn experience which can originate in various issues. Length and purpose cause a different sojourning experience for a seasonal worker than for a diplomat. Due to their number and character, groups can have more security than individuals, and seasoned sojourners adapt differently than first-timers. The character of the receiving group may play a role, such as assimilationist cultures that may be less tolerant of any deviations than pluralistic societies. Due to the relative esteem home and host society have for each other in various dimensions such as economic or military power, a sojourner may receive a more enthusiastic welcome in a lower-status society than in a higher-status society.

It is his emphasis on the sojourner, almost disregarding the members of the host society, which weakens Oberg's model. Although he does realize their existence (as hotel employees, maids, and generally unsympathetic extras; (1960:178)), the host-nationals are hardly differentiated into social classes, employment groups, or even individuals, and the impact that their various styles of behavior could have on the sojourner are not discussed. His model of the sojourner is the American business man, a member of a very strictly defined subset of all possible sojourners, who cannot serve as a generic example for all sojourners in the generalized style Oberg seems to wish his model applied. For example, by merely exchanging "business man" for "business woman" the experience of this particular sojourner is altered drastically, and is much more dependent on the social structure of the host country, such as local gender roles.

Jacobson (1963) extended the stages of a sojourn to include nine phases. He adds several important issues, which Oberg had overlooked, namely preparation for the sojourn, transit to the host country, and previous sojourning experience. His stages are pre-departure preparation, the act of leaving, en route experiences, act of entry, post-arrival orientation, exploration, tentative commitment, ultimate commitments and decision about further travel. Again, as in Oberg (1960), the host-society plays almost no role in the adaptation process of the sojourner, a shortcoming which makes his model of limited use for the current study.

In 1975, Peter S. Adler introduced a five-stage model which also disregards the host-nationals as actors, but enlarges the negative concept of “culture shock” to the more neutral process of a “transitional experience,” stressing the sojourner’s learning about and psychological adaptation to the host culture as central to a successful adaptation. And while Siu, Oberg, and Jacobson all consider the adaptation as a linear, non-reversible process and consider problems as reasons to terminate the sojourn, Adler introduces the possibility that the sojourner can and will return to previous stages when forced to cope with unpleasant experiences. Adler’s model is illustrated in detail in Table 1.

Adler’s model introduces not only a far greater range of emotions felt by the sojourner, it also recognizes different perceptions and behaviors. Even if an individual reaches autonomy or even independence for most of the sojourn experience, the model tolerates the treatment of additional experiences with responses similar to earlier stages; the sojourner just has to attain the higher stage again, but is not impaired in those areas where adjustment has already taken place. Equally, the model allows for examples of sojourners “stuck” in one stage. Adler does not include host-culture members as active participants in the sojourner’s experience. The model does, however, have advantages in classifying the progress of the participants in this study in their adaptation to their host-environment.

**Table 1**  
**Adler's Five-Stage Theory of Cross-Cultural Transition**

Stage	Perception	Emotional Range	Behavior	Interpretation
<b>Contact</b>	differences are intriguing, perceptions are screened and selected	excitement stimulation euphoria playfulness discovery	curiosity interest assured impressionistic	The individual is isolated by his or her own culture. Differences as well as similarities provide rationalization for continuing confirmation of status, role, and identity.
<b>Disintegration</b>	differences are impactful, contrasted cultural reality cannot be screened out	confusion disorientation loss apathy isolation loneliness inadequacy	depression withdrawal	Cultural differences begin to intrude. Growing awareness of being different leads to loss of self-esteem. Individual experiences loss of cultural support ties and misreads new cultural cues.
<b>Reintegration</b>	differences are rejected	anger rage nervousness anxiety frustration	rebellion suspicion rejection hostility exclusive opinionated	Rejection of second culture causes preoccupation with likes and dislikes; differences are projected. Negative behavior ... is a form of self-assertion and growing self-esteem.
<b>Autonomy</b>	differences and similarities are legitimized	self-assured relaxed warm empathic	assured controlled independent "old hand" confident	The individual is socially and linguistically capable of negotiating most new and different situations; he or she is assured of ability to survive new experiences.
<b>Independence</b>	differences and similarities are valued and significant	trust humor love full range of previous emotions	expressive creative actualizing	Social, psychological, and cultural differences are accepted and enjoyed. The individual is capable of exercising choice and responsibility and able to create meaning for situations.

from Adler 1975:19.

Smalley (1963) appends an interesting perspective to the stage models by suggesting that the transitional experience not only leads to familiarity with a second culture, but also to self-discovery. Unfortunately, he emphasizes the negative aspect of realizing one's limits in slow language acquisition, but generalizing from his discussion we understand that, once the initial differences between the known and the new are overcome, the contact with another culture can lead the sojourner toward a more tolerant stance.

Plotting the stages of cross-cultural transition, several authors have arrived at the U- and W-Curve hypothesis, which “depicts the initial optimism and elation in the host culture, the subsequent dip or ‘trough’ in the level of adjustment, followed by a gradual recovery to higher adjustment levels” (Church 1982:542). Originally proposed as a U-Curve by Lysgaard (1955), it was expanded by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) to a W-curve, showing also the readjustment problems faced by the returning sojourner. Many authors report support for the U- and the W-curve in their studies (Brein and David 1971:216; Church 1982:542), but other authors find the support for the hypothesis weak, inconclusive, and over-generalized (Church 1982:542). A recent study by Nash (1991) did not support the U-curve hypothesis, probably, as the author points out, because it tends to be invalidated for sojourners traveling or congregating in co-national groups.

There are several areas in which a sojourner's adjustment can be observed. Many authors have stressed personality adjustment as the most important issue in cross-cultural adaptation, and have supported their assertion mainly with social distance data (Basu and Ames 1970; Bochner et al. 1977 and 1986; Bulhan 1978; McGuigan 1958; Myambo and O'Cuneen 1988; Worchel and Mitchell 1972). Although useful in general, the social-distance scale (Bogardus 1924; Crull and Bruton 1979; Siegel and Greer 1956) is not used in this project since it is likely that Peace Corps Volunteers are predisposed under a desirability effect which makes them "prone to indicate more positive beliefs and attitudes ... because ... they are supposed to be liberal minded and not hold prejudices" (Hanson 1989:7).

All authors already cited insist on language acquisition as instrumental to a successful sojourn. Others (for example, Bochner et al. 1979; Briody and Chrisman 1991; Searle and Ward 1990; Smith 1955 and 1957; Ward and Searle 1991) stress previous cross-cultural experience and personal interaction with both host-nationals (professional and private) and co-nationals as important factors in coping with the cross-cultural transition. Padilla finds several dimensions "which are important in determining acculturative change": language, degree of inter-ethnic interaction and distance, perception of discrimination, cultural awareness of the host culture, and ethnic loyalty (Padilla 1980b:48-50).

Returning once more to Oberg (1960) and his assessment that culture shock was mainly due to a feeling of incertitude when dealing with new cultural signals, we can assume that while cross-cultural transition may not be (conceptually) more than the mere re-learning of familiar, and learning of new behavioral scripts<sup>1</sup> (Stillings et al. 1987), such learning is done primarily through communications. This may sound simple, but interpersonal communication is comprised of much more than merely a spoken language. Hall's well-known treatise on proxemics (Hall and Whyte 1963; Hall 1966), Argyle's (1982) discussion on intercultural communication, the handbook by Sue and Sue (1990) on cross-cultural counseling, and Brislin's model for cross-cultural training (Brislin 1981; Brislin and Pedersen 1976) all demonstrate the importance of non-verbal communication and its understanding, if not mastery, for successful cross-cultural communication. It is the ease of understanding and use of such methods which mark the adapted sojourner (or the independent sojourner, to use Adler's term).

These theories and models are insufficient to understand the current sample's adaptation progress, since the host-culture's members are often no more than mere extras on a stage dominated by the sojourner. Although Berry et al. (1987:494) point toward the importance of the receiving culture as well as to that of the newcomers (discussing mainly the difference between voluntary and involuntary, sedentary and migratory newcomers), and Zajonc (1952) realizes the importance of confor-

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<sup>1</sup> Cognitive anthropologists are more familiar with the term "cognitive maps" (e.g. Bock 1988:178-180), a two-dimensional and less inclusive modification of scripts.

mity pressures, the emphasis is mostly on either foreign students or immigrants coming to the US, or on Americans visiting other cultures, but remaining within their accustomed class (such as business people or diplomats). A second inadequacy lies in the disregard of the bicultural nature of any sojourn. While many authors stress the need of the sojourner to interact with co-nationals, they take it for granted that sojourners retain their original cultural behavior and attitudes for this purpose and to return home successfully. Even many of the studies done on Peace Corps volunteers, a "model" sojourner group expected to engage in close contact with the host population, are either concerned with predictions about their future success (Dicken 1969; Ezekiel 1968; Gordon 1967; Grande 1966; Guthrie and Zektick 1967; Mischel 1965; Shybut and Uhes 1971; Suedfeld 1967; Uhes and Shybut 1971), or their work performance and overall character (Hare 1966; Harris 1973; Smith 1965 and 1966; Smith et al. 1963), and do not explore the need of the volunteers to retain/acquire fluency in two, often opposed, cultures. Noteworthy exceptions are Alverson's (1977) assessment of transition difficulties of volunteers in Botswana, Cohn and Wood's (1985) study of actual interactions between volunteers and their target population, DiMarco's (1974) study of stress responses, Jones and Popper's (1972) examination of the influence of cultural distance, and Sigel's (1968) realistic assessment of the probability that the Peace Corps may actually achieve its goals. All these studies have stressed interaction with host-nationals as the framework for the study of this particular sojourner group. A more in-

depth discussion of the research done on and with Peace Corps Volunteers is presented in section 2.3.

The sojourner theories outlined above are not sufficient to explain the volunteer experience because they are based on the fundamental premise that the life of the volunteer is at all times characterized by the temporary nature of the sojourn and explanations and interpretations could be limited to this. But while the volunteers who participated in the current study were aware of their temporary status in Costa Rica, as were their neighbors, this knowledge did not constantly influence their daily interaction with the host-population. Community members did at times remind their volunteers of their future departure, and short vacations were interpreted as indicative of the volunteers' wish to leave. However, the volunteers themselves could not have functioned effectively within the day-to-day routine of their community if they had focused predominantly on their transient residence. Many behaviors and attitudes of the volunteers cannot be explained by focusing on the temporal limitations of their residence, especially when individual volunteers preferred to spend leisure time with host-nationals instead of with co-nationals.

In contrast, while the volunteers had to learn to function in the host culture, they could not neglect the expression of their original cultural background, since they continuously interacted with co-nationals (other volunteers, Peace Corps management, American tourists) and were in-

tent on returning home. In addition, it is the expressed purpose of the Peace Corps to facilitate development and to teach about American culture (Public Law 87-293), which implies that not only should the volunteers retain full knowledge of their culture of origin, they should also teach about it. Instead of limiting the volunteers' experience to that explored in sojourner theories, we have to find a model which can accommodate both the learning of a new culture and the retention of the old, while still accounting for the adjustment inherent in the learning process. Szapocznik and Kurtines (1980) have offered such a model in their study of Cuban Americans in which they expand on previous acculturation models with the concept of bi-cultural acculturation and the following discussion merges their and the traditional acculturation model.

## **1. 2. Acculturation**

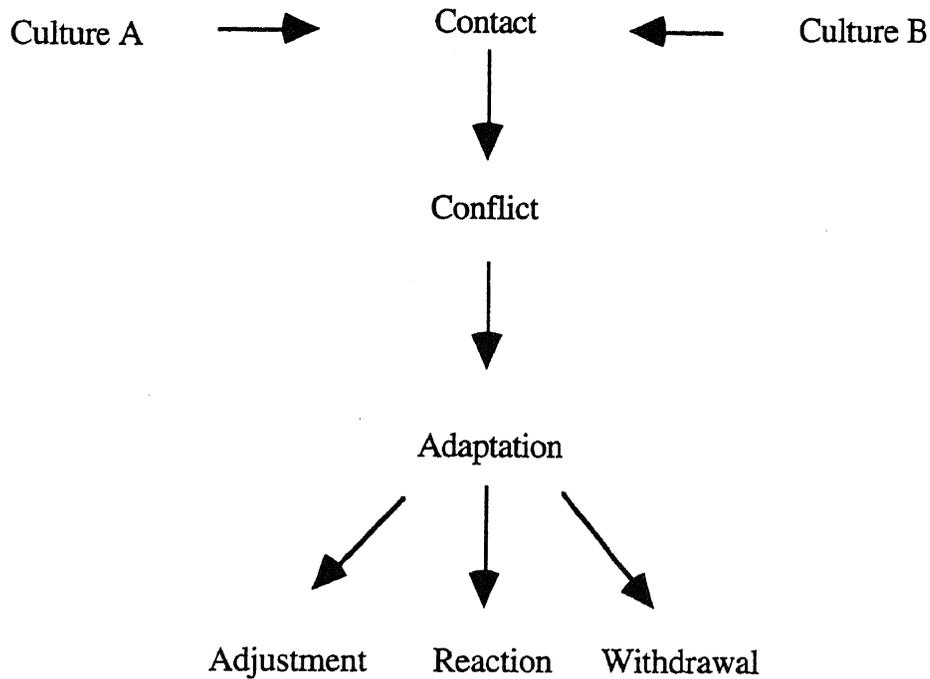
Acculturation has been studied by researchers from several sciences, most notably by Herskovits (1938) and the members of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC 1954) for anthropology, and by Berry (1980a and 1988) and Padilla (1980a) for social psychology. Acculturation is "defined as culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems [whereby the] unit of analysis [is] any given culture as it is carried by its particular society" (SSRC 1954:974-975). Since Herskovits (1938:11-12) assures us that "where contact between cultures is mentioned, a certain human contact must be taken for granted as the only means by which culture can spread from people to people," the individual can also serve as a unit of analysis. Social psy-

chology recognizes that “the individual is crucial in whatever change ... occurs through contact between different cultural orientations” and that “[t]he individual’s experiences to role conflicts, interpersonal relationships, and adaptation strategies are essential in our understanding of acculturative change” (Padilla 1980a:2).

Teske and Nelson summarize and enforce this dual unit of analysis by calling it “axiomatic that acculturation may be treated as either an individual phenomenon, a group phenomenon, or both” (Teske and Nelson 1974:352). The current study will focus primarily on the individual level, since it is here that the Peace Corps volunteer interacts with the assigned host community. Because of the traditional treatment of Peace Corps volunteers as sojourners, the following discussion of acculturation relates this process to the sojourner experience only.

Acculturation consists of three stages: contact, conflict, and adaptation (see Figure 1). Contact, a necessary component (Berry 1980a:10; Teske and Nelson 1974:352-353), involves individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds who come into close physical proximity and need to interact for an extended period of time in the geographical area of one group. In migrant acculturation, contact is also affected by the context of exit, which consists of pull- and push-factors. Both are often caused by the receiving country due to its international labor demands and mass media production (Yetman 1991a:12), an issue which does not immediately concern the sojourners of this study.

**Figure 1**  
**Acculturation Model**



Leaving one's home country is followed with a period of entry, which may be as brief as being waved through customs or as long as being held in a refugee camp. The context of reception sets the tone for the rest of the sojourn, and depends on the reasons for the sojourn and the esteem in which the host culture holds the home culture of the newcomer and vice versa. It may also "influenc[e] both the mental health and the perceptual outlook" (Portes and Rumbaut 1990:175) of the newcomer. The same authors describe as the most receptive contexts "those in which government takes an active role in facilitating the adaptation of new arrivals and their own community is sufficiently developed to further their economic prospects" (1990:175-176).

Development personnel have therefore a slight advantage over other travelers, since their arrival is supposedly by invitation of the host country to serve that country's need for technical training and they are supported financially by their own country and the host government. A positive welcome can be equated with Oberg's "honeymoon" phase, in which the newcomer is buffered from the reality of the new environment by hosts who treat the sojourner as a welcomed guest (Oberg 1960:178). Adler describes the contact phase positively as well and expects the sojourner to find differences intriguing rather than frightening. The individual feels stimulated and in a mood of discovery, and behaves with interest and assuredness. Adler interprets this to mean that the "individual is insulated by his or her own culture" (Adler 1975:19). This optimistic view of sojourner behavior and feeling assumes that the individual as well as the group wishes to be in the new environment and that this environment reacts positively to the newcomer's presence.

Contact is also the period in which the sojourner encounters the "other" and starts to react. If inconsistencies appear immediately during contact, Oberg's culture shock can be detected first here by assuming that the initial feeling of the newcomer is one of "frustration and anxiety" caused by a loss of "familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse," which causes the sojourner to "reject the environment which causes the discomfort" (Oberg 1960:177).

Contact can cause conflict when “cultural differences begin to intrude” (Adler 1975:19) and contradictions appear, i.e. the sojourner who is not prepared for differences between home- and host-culture will experience confusion. The degree to which such differences are dealt with satisfactorily reflects success in adaptation, but while conflict is not necessary, it is probable. The conflict period can also be characterized as one of “frustration and anxiety” (Oberg 1960:177). For the sojourner the conflict is in the contradiction between expectations and reality, i.e. between prejudgements and the realizations that these are inadequate or even wrong. Peace Corps volunteers are exposed to potential conflict in their work as well as in their leisure time, unless they opt to spend the latter with other volunteers.

The individual may feel some form of what Adler calls “cross-cultural transition stress,” and be confused, disoriented and isolated from an environment in which everybody else seems to feel comfortable and secure. These feelings occur on a continuum of varying degrees of incompatibility in which “increasing stress is not inevitable as contact and conflict increase; stress levels are associated with both cultural and psychological characteristics of the groups and individuals in contact, and may decline after a crisis point” (Berry 1980a:21). The crisis point is also a point of decision about how to respond to the conflict, in fact, how to adapt. Adaptation can therefore be described as “a variety of ways in which to reduce or stabilize conflict” (Berry 1980a:11). Such conflict is not a single occurrence after which the sojourner will have adapted or left; the so-

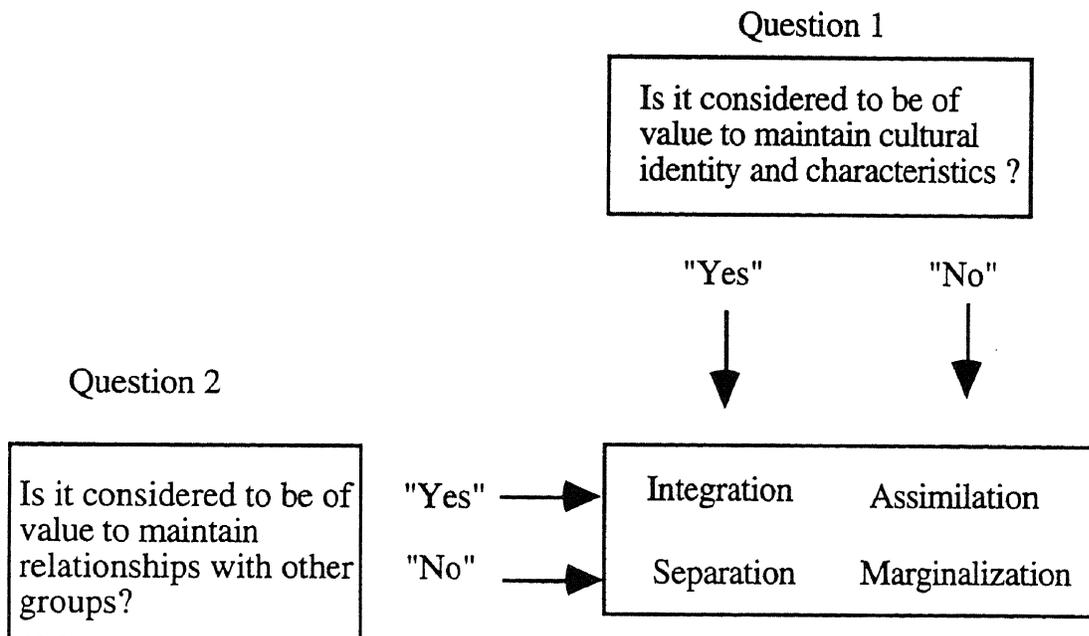
journey is marked by many concurrent and succeeding conflicts which will require their own response and need to be resolved as they appear.

As each conflict appears, the adapting individual has three options. The first is to adjust by “making cultural or behavioral features more similar,” the second is to react by “retaliating against the source of the conflict,” and the third is to withdraw by “remov[ing] one element from the contact arena” (Berry 1980a: 12). Which option will be chosen depends on many factors. Padilla (1980b:50) mentions “the degree of interaction and inter-ethnic distance and perceived discrimination,” Chance (1965:377) insists on the importance of high inter-ethnic contact, while Parker (1964:338) points toward the importance of set barriers and unfulfilled goals, and Kim (1977) emphasizes the importance of communication. In short, the attitude and the motivation with which the individual approaches the conflict will determine which response option is chosen.

Berry suggests that at each conflict during the acculturation the individual will ask two fundamental questions: “Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?” and “Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?” (Berry, et al. 1986) (see Figure 2). Depending on which value is of more importance, the individual then frames the appropriate response: to adjust (integration or assimilation), to react (separation from the host group) or to withdraw (marginalization from both groups). For the bicultural sojourner, this means that the individual has to deal with two

sets of behavior if adjustment is chosen; the learned set used in adjusting to the host culture, and the original set used with members of the original culture. Such code-switching has been documented for many bicultural groups and individuals (e.g., Trueba 1990). Should the individual choose to react, this implies that original behavior is pursued although it perpetuates the conflict, either because the cost associated with the ongoing conflict is negligible or because the individual's ethnic loyalty (Padilla 1980b) outweighs the cost.

**Figure 2**  
**Varieties of Acculturation**



from Berry et al. 1986:306

In the case of withdrawal, individuals may respond by physically removing themselves from the contact area (possibly by terminating the sojourn), or by becoming deculturated by losing the ability to navigate in

either culture, and marginalized by losing contact with both cultures (Berry 1980a:13+15).

If cultural differences are rejected, i.e. if the sojourner reacts or withdraws, the accompanying emotions may range from anxiety and nervousness to anger and rage, and the individual may rebel, become suspicious, hostile or opinionated. While differences are thus over-emphasized and single negative instances can be generalized on the whole host population, Adler sees a positive element in that “[n]egative behavior ... is a form of self-assertion and growing self-esteem” (Adler 1975:19). If cultural differences are accepted and the individual responds with adjustment, this acceptance will cause the sojourner to feel self-assured and relaxed and behave in a confident and assured manner. Oberg considers the individual to be able to accept “the customs of the country as just another way of living” (Oberg 1960:179), and Adler (1975:19) describes this individual to be “assured of [the] ability to survive new experiences.” Successful adjustment will lead to a recognition of differences as valuable and significant and more aspects of the newly acquired culture can be accepted and enjoyed.

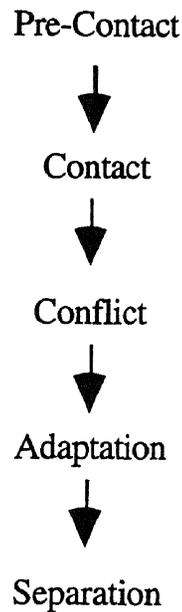
The traditional acculturation model ends here with the individual either leaving, experiencing constant conflict, or adjusting satisfactorily, and while differing degrees of these three responses are possible, one will be predominant. Sojourners, however, will leave again; furthermore, it seems rare that sojourners come into contact without any previous

knowledge of the impending contact (with the exception, of course, of first contact situations). Peace Corps volunteers are well aware of their sojourn once they have been offered a placement. The traditional model therefore needs to be enlarged to include two additional phases, that of pre-contact and that of separation, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Jacobson (1963:123-124) briefly describes the necessary phase before contact for the sojourner as pre-departure, act of leaving and en route, but this is not given much attention in the rest of the literature. An exception are, of course, studies concerned with contexts of exit (e.g., Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Yetman 1991), which focus on immigrants, whereas this study is concerned with sojourners. While therefore the push-pull forces acting upon immigrants do not concern the current participants to the same degree, the fact that the respondents act upon invitation by the host government and expect a reception based on their professional utility could be interpreted as a dimension of the context of exit. To underscore the difference between an immigrant's context of exit and that of a sojourner, Figure 3 includes this phase as pre-contact.

Likewise, while repatriation has received much attention (Brabant et al. 1990; Martin 1984; Rohrlich and Martin 1991; Uehara 1986), the period just before leaving the host country is rarely described. In Figure 3 it is added as the separation phase, characterized by preparations for leaving and planning for the future.

**Figure 3**  
**Sojourner Acculturation**



Acculturation for sojourners then consists of five phases (pre-contact, contact, conflict, adaptation, separation) in a bicultural environment, whereby phases two through four can be repeated continuously until separation occurs. The individual undergoes a bicultural process, including a “linear process of accommodating to the host culture [and] a complex process of relinquishing or retaining the characteristics of the culture of origin” (Szapocznik and Kurtines 1980:144). The authors identify the length of time in the host culture as the most important variable in accommodating, while retention depends on the availability of co-cultural supports. Age and gender can also be of consequence. A successful bicultural adjustment is achieved when the individual can switch codes effortlessly to interact fully with both cultural environments. Bicultural acculturation may therefore not lead to assimilation, separation or marginalization, but could lead to integration, at least in Berry’s sense

(see Figure 2), which is comparable to Moghaddam's (1988:71) adaptation option of majority supported multiculturalism. The model does not, however, discuss possible power differentials between the newcomers and residents. In addition, it does not take into account discrimination and segregation enacted by the host-culture versus the newcomers, in short, the centrifugal and centripetal trends discussed by Schermerhorn (1978:83) need to be identified for both cultures involved.

This does not imply that the acculturative process should be regarded as linear, despite the simplistic form of the printed model in Figure 3. Portes, Parker and Cobas (1980) demonstrate that permanent immigrants are not undergoing a linear process of assimilation, but are more understanding and critical of their status in the host society as their cultural preparedness and socioeconomic standing increases (1980:203-204). And while Szapocznik and Kurtines (1980) argue for a linear process of accommodation to the host culture, they also determine that newcomers are simultaneously undergoing a non-linear, "complex process of relinquishing or retaining the characteristics of the culture of origin" (1980: 144). Castile (1981:xix) shows this to be of vital significance to ethnic enclaves, where too much opposition to the majority group could stimulate hostility, and too little opposition could lead to assimilation. Moone (1981) finally allows us to understand acculturation as a dynamic interaction between dimensions of maintenance and change, ranging on a continuum from maintenance of the original dimensions of forms, functions, meanings, and, ultimately, identity, to their re-

placement with those of the new environment, with the intermediate categories of fusion, compartmentalization, or addition.

Integrating Moone's interactive model with Szapocznik and Kurtines' model of bicultural acculturation, this study will test if the experience of such controlled sojourners as Peace Corps volunteers can be constructed as a continuing process of acculturative decision making, and how deeply the acquisition of forms and functions from the host culture's repertoire may have affected the sojourner's original cultural traits. In order to evaluate the acculturative process and its depth, the superficial large scale sample prevalent in sojourner studies needs to be replaced with the traditional anthropological ethnographer - informant method which is uniquely qualified to observe changes in the respondents. The resulting case histories are the documentation of change or maintenance in the sojourner's acculturation and are invaluable yardsticks of the validity of the theoretical framework.

While the above is the most appropriate framework to explore and interpret the various stages of the sojourn experience, it is not sufficient. Several areas of intercultural contact, such as how the individual identifies differing cultural traits and how a blending of both cultures is achieved or avoided, appear to be better explained with concepts borrowed from ethnic-relations research. The themes of importance to the current study are ethnic awareness and consciousness, stereotyping, boundary maintenance, and ethnic markers.

### 1.3. Selected Theories of Ethnic Relations

It is appropriate to relate the acculturation of American sojourners to theories of ethnicity, rather than nationality. As Connor (1978:381) points out, “[Americans] are not a nation in the pristine sense of the word,” but the nation consists of many diverse and not always assimilated ethnic groups. Costa Rica is likewise not a homogeneous nation state, but consists of at least three identifiable ethnic groups, Latino, Black and Native Costa Rican.

The interaction between sojourners and hosts is one of ethnic contact, since all participants are part of an ethnic group, in the current case Anglo American<sup>1</sup> and Latino Costa Rican, and have the opportunity to participate in the other. While members of both groups may not at all times consider themselves to be members of ethnic groups, they can claim membership if the situation requires it, as shown in Table 2.

Ethnicity is fundamentally situational and not all interactions between people are defined by their ethnicity, since: “[i]t may be that in some situations ethnicity is a relevant factor which influences the interaction of parties, while in other situations the relationship proceeds according to other attributes of the parties such as class, religion, occupation, sex, personality, etc.” (Okamura 1981:454).

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<sup>1</sup> The one Hispanic-American participant is here counted with Anglo-Americans for ease of argument, since he was born in the US to an Anglo mother, is a native English speaker and enjoyed an affluent lifestyle.

**Table 2**  
**Ethnic Awareness and Consciousness of Individuals and Groups**

	<b>Awareness/Category</b>	<b>Consciousness/Group</b>
<b>Individual</b>	An individual knows she possesses an ethnic trait(s) which is no more meaningful than her other cultural, physical, social or territorial characteristics.	An individual possesses an ethnic trait(s) which assumes considerable importance <i>vis-a-vis</i> other personal characteristics to the extent that ethnic identification can be <i>the</i> mode of identification.
<b>Group</b>	A certain number of people can be classified into a specific category because they possess an ethnic trait(s). However, there is no sense of belonging among these people, as this common attribute is not perceived as the basis for any sort of meaningful social interaction. Such aggregates may be called ethnic categories <i>in</i> themselves.	A certain number of people meaningfully interact on the basis of a similar ethnic trait(s) which they share. There is a consciousness of kind and a sense of belonging present. Such social entities may be called ethnic groups <i>for</i> themselves.

from McKay and Lewins 1978:418.

We categorize other people and label them with a set of expectations that help us understand their behavior, as long as their behavior is consistent with our expectations (Holland 1985). As long as we are able to interact with others by explaining their behavior and attitude in terms of such categories as gender, class, occupation and the like, we will follow our learned scripts (Stillings et al. 1987:31-32) to regulate our responses. Should the "other" not adhere to the script we expect for the interactive situation, we may fall back on a difference in ethnicity, if appropriate. Explaining behavior as characteristic of the relevant ethnic group means that we are in effect stereotyping (Chock 1987; Guichard and Connolly 1977; Kurokawa 1971; Lampe 1982; Morton 1991; Okamura

1981). Such stereotypes reduce the human variation present in each group to a few traits which may in some form be observable in some members of a group. Stereotyping is not only done to outgroups, but group members also hold autostereotypes which describe, realistically or not, their own group (Triandis and Vassiliou 1967).

Stereotyping in itself can be neutral, since prejudgements about individuals' behaviors and attitudes stem from generalizations and may be useful to ease initial communication before one learns about the individual's personality. For example, generalizing from what one knows about Islam, one would not offer wine to a Muslim. Although not all members of the category may exhibit the same behavior or react with the same attitude, such known generalizations help navigate through the first communications with a stranger and will, ideally, be revised as one gets to know the other person. But stereotypes are "one of the most subtle yet powerful means of maintaining existing prejudices" (Kurokawa 1971). Although stereotypes are "inextricably tied to a cultural, not a psychological, Self" (Chock 1987), being the target of prejudice can affect an individual's psychological well-being, lower self-esteem, and result in successful psychosocial dominance over the affected individual and group by a prejudicial superordinate group (Baker 1983:37).

The participants in this study were tested on the stereotypes they hold about Costa Ricans and North Americans (the Adjective Checklist used is described in detail in the next chapter), and they were asked if they

perceived any stereotypical judgements against themselves. The continuing application of this list shows if and how such stereotypes change and to which part of the society they are applied. It remains to be seen if the stereotypes they detect against themselves will be recognized as such or if they will be taken as judgements on their own personality.

The situational use of ethnicity is also apparent in various group contact situations. Contact between ethnic groups can occur within one society (after immigration or conquest), through aggressive economic actions against another society (colonialism/ neo-colonialism), or the temporary migration of individuals (sojourning) as in the Peace Corps volunteers studied here. The nature of the interaction is determined through the relative position of the groups in terms of political and economical power, the motive for and the manner of the initial contact and its frequency. Cohen labels the proximity of ethnic groups and the resulting power balance as shown in Table 3:

**Table 3**  
**Types of Interethnic Relations**

Interactive Situation	Power Relations	
	Equal	Unequal
Groups in contact in face-to-face interactions	Balanced	Stratified
Groups remain relatively or totally isolated from each other	Fragmented	Indirect

from Cohen 1978:390.

The relative status of the two groups involved in the contact is of special concern here, since the volunteers have come to Costa Rica as development workers to assist in the country's economic and technical progress. Since this is done by invitation, the relative status of the volunteers could be expected to be high. Referring briefly back to the bi-cultural nature of acculturation, the question arises how much the host communities will expect the volunteers to adjust, and how much adjustment will be shown by the communities. This is especially interesting since development can be characterized as "acculturation by design", in which the nature of the [desired] eventual cultural adaptation is specified in advance" (Berry 1980b:218). Should the volunteers be indeed regarded as higher status models, we should expect to see emulation of their behavior by community members; if the relationship is more balanced or the volunteers are regarded as occupying a lower status, adjustment should be their responsibility if they want to achieve their professional goals.

The previous discussion has continuously mentioned traits and behaviors which can be modified in the acculturation process. These traits and behaviors can best be described as markers, a term which delineates and describes ethnic group content. To describe and recognize ethnicity, people often look for "diacritical features" (Barth 1969:14). Several authors have compiled lists, featuring several tangible objects such as dress, language, physical features, styles in architecture, calendars, taboos, medical and economical practices (Barth 1969; De Vos 1972;

Horowitz 1985; Isajiw 1979; Nash 1989; Schermerhorn 1964 and 1978). All markers listed (and the list is certainly not inclusive) are readily observable by outsiders, can be used to describe the specific ethnic group, and can be reduced to stereotypes. The markers are symbols of ethnic identification and are useful not only for the socialization of children, but also in communicating with members of other ethnic groups ("ethnic" foods are one of the safe areas of contact between, for example, Anglo Americans and ethnic minorities, as are artistic performances or television). Such markers are left as the last symbols of membership in the low stages of ethnic solidarity as described by Petrissans (1991) for Basque Americans. And in the case of sojourners, the adoption of such markers can signal a willingness of the visitor to adjust to the new environment.

Claiming ownership of certain ethnic markers, as well as the privileged knowledge connected to the use of rituals, is as important to the claim on membership in ethnic groups as is the ascription of such membership by out-group members. The above listed markers and criteria are used by groups to regulate who may claim membership and who is to be excluded. Especially where membership entails access to such scarce resources as political power, economic monopolies or sacred knowledge, the boundaries symbolized by marker ownership can be drawn rather strictly. The necessity to uphold such boundaries has been discussed by Barth (1969). Ethnic boundaries are not only necessary to regulate interactions between members of different ethnic groups, but as markers

they provide signals for the identification of membership in the in-group. The behavior of recognized members is predictable, and, as stereotypes, so is the behavior of out-group members, and any interaction between the two can be prescribed and limited to agreed upon or imposed domains (Moghaddam 1988).

To explore the extent of the volunteers' boundary maintenance in their bicultural environment, the participants were encouraged to identify which of their habits and behaviors were markedly different from those of the majority (more "American"), and which new behaviors they could identify in themselves (more "Costa Rican"). Questions of why they thought themselves different from their neighbors and local friends elicited lists of markers, as did the question of how their community perceived them. Comparing the individual answers to each other resulted in largely overlapping lists of routines which, in some cases, did not change much over the course of the service time. The question needs to be answered if such apparent differences between the members of the two ethnic groups are indeed different ethnic markers, or merely economical and educational individual differences. Interestingly enough, behavioral patterns were used by the volunteers not only to distinguish themselves from nationals, but from other North Americans (especially tourists and retirees) as well. It needs to be tested if this can be explained better within the framework of the general boundary maintenance theory discussed above or with the need to retain original cultural traits for an eventual return home. In addition, any reaction by the volunteers

against co-nationals could imply that the boundary protects not the American identity, but the professional and philosophical identity of being a Peace Corps volunteer.

The general theoretical framework in which the experience of the participants in this study is explored and interpreted is an expanded model of bicultural sojourner acculturation, supplemented with selected ethnic-relations concepts. Chapter four discusses the appropriateness of this model for interpreting the experience of the Peace Corps volunteers. This theoretical model is only one of three frameworks, while the remaining ones, namely the organizational framework of the Peace Corps and the ethnic framework of Costa Rica, are presented below.

## **2. The Peace Corps**

### **2. 1. History and Mission**

Created by Presidential Executive Order on March 1, 1961, the Peace Corps was established by Congress on September 22, 1961 (Morris 1973:290) under Public Law 87-293. As specified in Section 2 of the Peace Corps Act, the purpose of the service is “to help the peoples of such countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower, and to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people.” While the Peace Corps is a part of the State Department, its operation and administration are independent. This autonomy, although questioned at times (James 1993:ix), and its unpretentiousness, has made the Peace Corps one of the most successful international development agencies. The idea of sending individuals to work and, more importantly, to live in foreign communities for two years has not only won enthusiastic applause from all involved because of the lack of bureaucratic hurdles in foreign assistance, but mainly because of the personal commitment of the volunteers to come as partners, not as superiors. In the three decades of the Peace Corp’s existence, over 130,000 individuals have served in a growing number of countries worldwide (US. Committee on Government Operations 1990:1). In some cases, the Peace Corps’ presence was short-lived, e.g. Mauritius from 1971 to 1975 and Cyprus from 1962 to 1964; in other countries the Peace Corps has become a constant presence, e.g., it has been in Ghana since 1961 and in Costa Rica since 1963 (Rice 1986:40-41).

In Costa Rica, the Peace Corps has followed local priorities to place its volunteers in areas where they can participate in agriculture, education, reforestation, small enterprise development, and water sanitation. For example, in 1987 and 1988, volunteers introduced macadamia nuts, cacao, black pepper and spices to approximately 120 farmers to reduce their dependency on coffee and bananas, taught over 900 teachers (Committee on Foreign Affairs 1988), and pioneered vocational education in Central America, starting with Costa Rica (Rice 1986:14). The volunteers can be found in all parts of the country, from Native Costa Rican reservations to urban slums and hospitals. Demand for volunteers has always been high and the Peace Corps left many demands unfilled when it reduced the volunteer corps from about 250 to 175 individuals shortly before my study began (Dr. R. Drickey, country director Costa Rica, personal communication, June 1990).

## **2. 2. Volunteer Profile and Schedule**

Today's Peace Corps volunteer is in many ways different from the first participants of the early 1960s. While those could be described as "between 21 and 25 years of age, single and a college graduate, most often with a liberal arts degree" (Colman 1966:13), only 40 percent of the volunteers today are generalists (Committee on Government Operations 1990:5), recruited from Liberal Arts campuses. The rest consists of adults at various stages of their lives; some disappointed with a current job, others continuing from some other form of social service, and again

others who serve after their retirement. Educators represent a quarter of all volunteers, 28 percent are professionals, 17 percent are skilled in agriculture, and three percent in trades (Committee on Government Operations 1990:5). While the male:female ratio was 3:2 in the 1960s (Rice 1986:2), today, 52 percent are women (Committee on Government Operations 1990:5). Although the number is increasing, still only 7.3 percent of all volunteers are members of US ethnic minorities (Committee on Government Operations 1990:5).

All applicants have to pass medical exams, interviews and background checks before they are invited to serve in a country of the Peace Corp's choice. The assignments are not arbitrary and the invitees are in fact asked to list those countries in which they do not want to serve. However, the key considerations for assignments are the host countries' needs and the invitees' professional and technical expertise. Command of the local language is not necessarily a requirement, since it will be taught in training, although the Peace Corps encourages applicants to have prior knowledge of French or Spanish.

After the invitees accept the offered country, a training group will be collected at a "staging site," which in the case of my study's participants was Miami, Florida. For two to three days the last exams and interviews are held and the invitees receive their first instructions about what the next two years, and especially the next three months, will hold for them. The participants of my study thought that the staging seemed designed

to “weed out” the weak, and, accordingly, some returned home from Miami. The rest were flown to Costa Rica, housed with local families, and began three months of intensive training on areas from language and cross-cultural contact to technical know-how and Peace Corps ethics. During training the volunteers are observed and evaluated by the staff, and, according to their expertise, matched with a community that has requested a volunteer. Once matched, the volunteers visit their future site three times for stays of three, six, and nine days. These visits are intended for the volunteers to meet their local counterpart<sup>1</sup>, find lodging, and get to know their community and the projects in which they may get involved. After graduation and swearing-in, the volunteers move into their communities.

The volunteers are expected to work independently and the specific program directors decide how much to involve themselves with their volunteers. The volunteers visit the office in the capital regularly, sometimes every second week, to pick up mail, use the library and other resources, see the nurse, and to keep in touch with other volunteers. After five months in site, all volunteers return to the training center for a week of continued language training, and a second workshop is again scheduled about four months later. The supervision of the volunteers is supposedly rather unobtrusive, since they are, after all, the “stars’ of the Agency with Overseas Staff and PC/W[ashington] staff playing ‘supporting cast’ roles” (Ojile 1989:182-183). The volunteers have oppor-

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<sup>1</sup> The counterpart is a contact person designated by the community’s development association.

tunities to attend workshops offered with the support of the Peace Corps or by other agencies, they have vacation times and are allowed to leave the country for a short period under special circumstances (one the volunteers returned to the US to defend her master's thesis; two others visited their families after their wedding). There are opportunities to become involved with host country agencies, again on a volunteer basis, or with Peace Corps matters such as the newsletter or program guidelines.

### **2. 3. Peace Corps Research**

One of the major tasks of the staff during training is to assess if the trainees will be successful in the assigned program and site. Admitting individuals to training who will then not be selected for service can lead to "considerable hardship, psychologically and economically, for most" (Gordon 1967:112). Consequently, much research has been done on Peace Corps volunteers and the possible predictors of their success. While my study is not concerned with predicting success, explanations for early termination may be found among the predictors for failure. This section also illustrates a shifting interest researchers show in the Peace Corps. While the following studies are from the 1960s and early 1970s, such largely socio-psychological interest in the Peace Corps was later replaced by using the Peace Corps as a sojourner group of interest to sociologists and anthropologists. The Peace Corps has retained the interest of the social sciences, albeit different ones at different times.

Several criteria and methods have been studied to ascertain how useful and valid they would be in predicting the future performance of a trainee, preferably before too much was invested in that person's training. Mischel (1965) concludes that some predictions could be made from self-report measures, while Guthrie and Zektick (1967) emphasize the accuracy of the final selection board, especially when working with smaller groups. Hare (1966:153) finds that success can be predicted in training, using "an index composed of a measure of intelligence, the rating made at the end of US training, course grades in training, and a sociometric leadership rating." Suedfeld (1967:425) finds a strong correlation between absent fathers and unsuccessful volunteer service, but points out that he did not consider other factors, e.g. job assignment or specific events leading to an early termination. Gordon (1967) compares four different methods of pre-training assessment (clinical assessment, work-sample measurement, psychometric measurement, and brief assessment) and finds no difference in their usefulness to outselect applicants who may be unsuccessful. Ezekiel (1968) uses fictional autobiographies, written by trainees at the end of training, to predict future performance when related to supervisor rating, peer nomination, and field interviews. Dicken (1969) finds that the most valid predictions came from peer ratings, life history, training grades and the selection board, and Uhes and Shybut (1971) administered a personal orientation inventory which correlated with the final decision of the selection board, while later (Shybut and Uhes 1971) they select task orientation as the most critical component. Grande (1966) shows that while self-rating is not useful,

peer rating, even if done after only two weeks in training, is a useful predictor. Harris (1973) suggests that twenty-four personal qualities, ranging from self-reliance over acceptance of authority to courtesy, could lead to correct predictions.

In a peculiar foreshadowing of later sojourner studies, all of the above studies are concerned with the volunteer only, a fallacy which was caused by conducting most of the research in training centers located on American campuses. Peace Corps training was initially done completely in the US, but by 1973, approximately 75 percent occurred in-country (Harris 1973:235). Today all training is done in or close to the target country, for example, volunteers for Panama are trained in Costa Rica. Subsequently, Jones and Popper suggested that volunteers "are more likely to terminate early ... in countries characterized by high linguistic standardization and high levels of social and economic development" (1972:242-243), which would apply to Costa Rica. Alverson, who visited volunteers in Botswana, stressed the ability to tolerate an ambiguous environment and concluded that "neither physical deprivations nor exotic forms of behavior per se were seen by volunteers as irritations. Rather it was familiar behavior which had problematic meaning that most upset or puzzled the majority of PCVs" (1977:281), a conclusion that points directly to a conflict/adjustment process as modeled in acculturation.

While social scientists point to personality characteristics and inter-cultural communication and acculturation, the Peace Corps itself has described several more technical problem areas in its operations. After reviewing seven country programs the General Accounting Office listed the following deficiencies:

1. Substantial under-representation of minorities in the volunteer force, and an insufficient commitment to the recruitment of minorities;
2. A major annual shortfall, despite rising host country demand, in the recruitment and delivery of scarce-skill talent;
3. Early termination of service by volunteers who find themselves in-country without a "real job" or in a position that either displaces an indigenous worker or has little to do with economic development.
4. Numerous mismatches of job requirements and volunteer qualifications;
5. Less than optimal language and area training that leaves many volunteers no more than marginally prepared to communicate with their host-country associates;
6. Span-of-control and related problems that reduce the effectiveness of a consistent agency-wide evaluation system to monitor and evaluate programs, procedures and personnel; and
7. Failure to focus adequate attention on achieving, in a systematic way the third statutory goal - improved understanding of foreign cultures and international issues on the part of Americans (Committee on Government Operations 1990:3).

While this study is concerned primarily with the third problem area, that of early termination, other areas, such as language acquisition and job-matching, also posed challenges for the participants and may even have affected an eventual decision to terminate prematurely. Since the problems described by social scientists and the Peace Corps can conceivably be dependent on the specific host country in which volunteers serve, a third, ethnic framework needs to complement those of theory and organization.

### **3. Costa Rica**

Costa Rica is located in southern Central America and features tropical coastal regions and a temperate highland plateau within the Cordillera range. Although most of the country is accessible by roads (0.7 Street kilometers/km<sup>2</sup> and 40% paved streets for a total of 35,000 km; Borner and Diedrich 1990:63), some areas, especially the southern Talamanca region, are not easily accessible (Guerrero 1990). This section focuses on the primary problem areas of Costa Rica that influenced the lives and occupations of the respondents. These areas are overpopulation, including repercussions in unemployment and deforestation, economic development, gender roles, and ethnic relations. Other volunteers of the Peace Corps in Costa Rica are employed in the areas of education (public and special) and health care, areas that will not be addressed here. The Costa Rican government has identified several development areas in which it invites the Peace Corps effort. In agriculture, the country wants to diversify its crops to become more independent from coffee and bananas. Addressing its population growth, the country needs more housing, school buildings and qualified teachers, and needs to increase its potable water and sanitary waste disposal services.

#### **3. 1. Population and Related Problems**

Costa Rica is the third most densely populated country in the Americas, and expects to double its population in 27 years (Asociación Demográfica Costarricense pamphlet 1988). Indicative of its overpopulation are country's age structure (ca. 36 percent are under age 14), lack of adequate

health care (although the percentage of population covered is given at 90 percent, there are only 1.22 physicians per 1,000 inhabitants, most of whom are located in the central and urban areas), and low educational levels (although the literacy rate is at 93 percent, 61 percent of the students are enrolled at the primary level; only 21 percent are enrolled at the secondary level, and only 11 percent go to higher degree granting institutions). Many Costa Ricans do not attend school beyond the sixth grade (Market Data 1990:7,11-13).

The former Costa Rican president, Daniel Oduber Quiros, has called for more international support for national family planning (Fornos 1987:22), and the nation's family size is too high (3.5 children, Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1990:190+152). The public, however, does not consider the country threatened by overpopulation, and an article on global overpopulation calls the indicators of the quality of life in Costa Rica acceptable (La Nación, May 19, 1991). Still, the Asociación Demográfica Costarricense, a private institute, is very active in addressing several major components of overpopulation: lack of family planning, deforestation, and a lack of enforcement of women's rights.

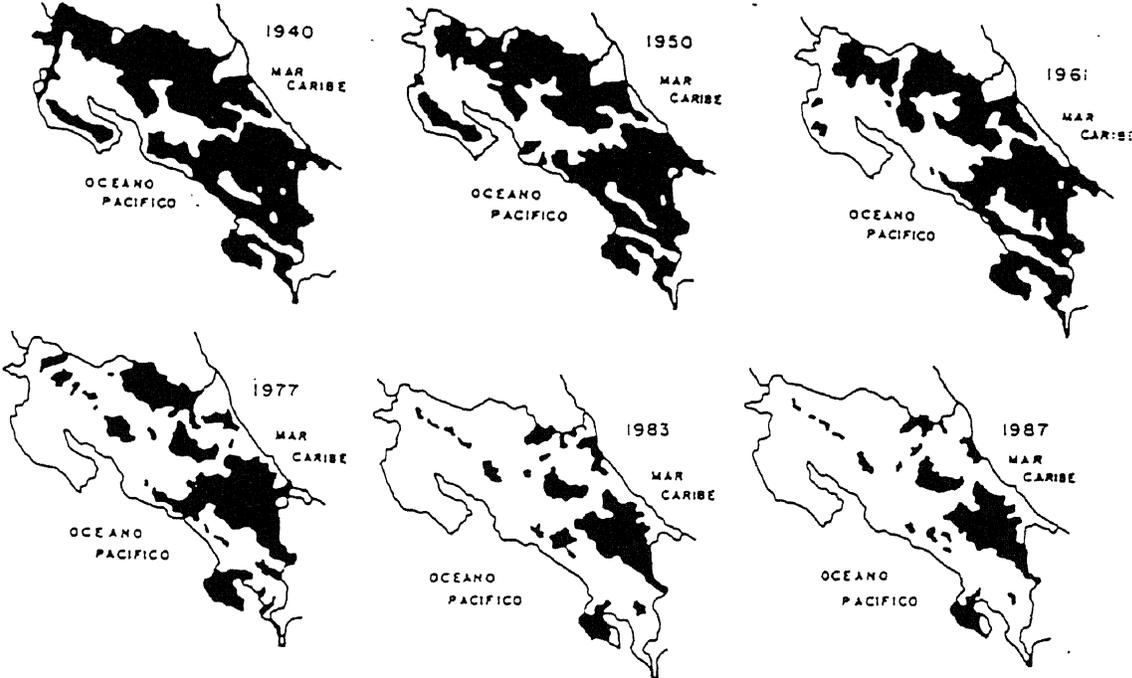
Overpopulation also contributes to rising unemployment. Women, of whom 64 percent of those salaried earn less than minimum wage, and youths between the ages of 12 and 24, who have an unemployment rate of ten percent, are the most vulnerable groups in the country (La Nación, April 1, 1991). The same source counted 1,017,151 employed persons,

49,511 unemployed (61% in the central provinces), and 1,738,107 inactive individuals in 1991. Of the employed group, another 195,889 persons are under employed. The government has suggested a National Plan for Permanent Employment (Plan Nacional de Empleo Permanente) which is directed specifically towards women, street children, small business and agricultural enterprises, again areas in which Peace Corps volunteers are employed.

According to José Carvajal A., the Assistant Director of the Asociación Demográfica Costarricense (personal communication, 1991), over-population is the largest problem Costa Rica faces today. While the population will double within 27 years, neither the number of hospitals and health posts, schools, or jobs will increase adequately, nor will rampant deforestation be turned around in time to provide for sufficient natural resources (e.g. firewood and arable land). Although many women want fewer children, and 69 percent of all married women report using birth control devices, this is done against the strongly expressed wishes of the Catholic Church, an institution strong enough in Costa Rican public and private life to forbid public sex education. AIDS has not yet been threatening enough to encourage free discussion and increased use of condoms. These may only be recommended to protect the lives of unborn children, not even to protect the health of a pregnant woman. Talking freely of contraceptives and family planning has become an important issue to many Peace Corps volunteers.

Deforestation is directly related to the growing population. Although one-fifth of the national territory is protected, the speed of destruction of forested areas is breathtaking. Figure 4 shows the rate of destruction from 1940 to 1987. Although this alone is impressive enough, the problems caused by deforestation, such as erosion, mud slides, water flow, and lack of sufficient firewood as affordable fuel, have seriously endangered Costa Rica's natural resources and quality of life.

**Figure 4**  
**Deforestation in Costa Rica, 1940 to 1987**



from Ellenberg 1990:21.

Many national and international agencies are active in the country to teach preservation techniques, implement harvestable wood types, and support the country's large protected natural areas. Consequently, Costa Rica has the most successful re-forestation worldwide. Many Peace Corps volunteers are assigned to the forestry program of the Peace Corps, and volunteers working in agriculture also are concerned with forest preservation, especially because of the loss of arable land caused by erosion.

### **3. 2. Women**

Although the Peace Corps in Costa Rica has merged its Women in Development program with Community Development (now called Integrated Community Development, or ICD), many volunteers either work specifically with women's groups or with youth groups including young women. Many women's groups have been founded by Peace Corps volunteers as a part of small business development, but Cohn, Wood, and Haag (1981:810-811) find "a pattern of general under-representation of women as recipients of Peace Corps aid programs," and that "Peace Corps programming results in female PCVs working disproportionately with female recipients." They conclude that "aid programs may weaken the position of Third World women in relation to men by providing disproportionate economic resources to men" (1981:811).

The status of women in Costa Rica, while better than in other Latin American countries (see, e.g. García and Gomáriz 1989 a+b; Leitinger 1985) is not nearly equal to that of men, and the volunteers, both male and female, have had to deal with machismo during their acculturation. Machismo refers to the presumed natural superiority of males in politics, economy, and intelligence (Biesanz et al. 1987:90; Leitinger 1985:23). While men thus enjoy extensive authority over women outside and inside the family, men also bear the sole responsibility for their families' economic and social status (at times supported by the wife's family status, if her family holds a higher social rank). Machismo demands strict adherence to an idealized male behavior that stereotypes men as authoritative aggressors.

None of the volunteers was familiar with the term marianismo, the complementary submissive attitude of women in a macho society. Marianismo values the sacrifice and silent suffering of women to further the interests of their husbands and families by implying that women are by nature morally and spiritually superior to men (Biesanz et al. 1987:90; Leitinger 1985:23). Women are elevated on a pedestal if they submissively fulfill their traditional role as wife and mother; their behavior is largely responsible for the family's honor. Although the wife is supposedly mistress of her household, this pertains largely to her responsibilities, but does not imbue her with equal rights. Unmarried women usually live with their parents, and their reputation would be damaged irreparably should they live on their own, since the protection

of their honor seems to be guaranteed only if they live under the supervision of their family; a single woman living by herself is by definition “available.” Men also tend not to live alone because they are considered incapable of caring for themselves, since household chores such as cooking, cleaning or doing the laundry are considered to lie within the expertise of women only. Thus a divorced or widowed man will move back to his mother or have a female relative come live with him, rather than live alone.

While many, especially younger, Costa Rican women are in the work force (28 percent of all women; García & Gomáriz 1989:46), a career is still seen as a supplement to the role of women as wives and mothers; i.e. while a woman may choose to have a career while she is single, the needs of her family when she marries will have priority in her life. Marriage and family will be in a young woman’s future, while a career may be there. For the men, as in the US, both family and career are matter-of-fact life plans.

**Table 4**  
**Percentage of Women in Workforce by Education**

	No education	Primary	Secondary	University
% of Women in Workforce	30%	38%	63%	88%

adapted from García and Gomáriz 1989:47

Women earn, on the average, only 82.1 percent of men’s salaries (García and Gomáriz 1989:83). The distribution of the women’s occupations and also their salaries still ran along traditional gender lines as late as 1985:

**Table 5**  
**Percentage of Women by Occupation and**  
**Percentage of Men's Salary by Urban and Rural Zone**

	Agriculture	Industry	Service
% of Women in Occupations	4%	22%	74%
% of Men's Salary by Urban & Rural	urban 84% rural 92%	urban 70% rural 78%	urban 76% rural 60%

adapted from García and Gomáriz 1989:47+83

Even in higher education, definite gender lines are expressed in the enrollment of students in the universities of Costa Rica. While the “softer” disciplines, such as education, humanities, and social sciences show a female representation of 75 percent, the “harder” disciplines, such as law, economics, physics, medicine, architecture, engineering and agriculture, average a mere 34 percent female students (adapted from García and Gomáriz 1989:88). Differences in rural vs. urban salaries among women are also visible in education; of the urban women, only 12.3 percent were illiterate, while this number rose to 37.5 percent for the rural women (García and Gomáriz 1989:85). Other urban/rural differences are in the specific occupations women chose:

**Table 6**  
**Women's Occupations in Urban and Rural Zones**

	Service Personnel	Crafts Artists	Employees Sales	Professionals Technical	Administration Management
Urban	28%	14%	31%	24%	3%
Rural	38%	28%	19%	14%	1%

adapted from García and Gomáriz 1989:78

Once in the work force, especially in higher professions, Costa Rican behavior towards such women will be polite and patronizing (Ferro and Quirós 1988:162), and it is assumed that outside the workplace the same women will also prove that they are not neglecting their family or putting undue burdens on their husbands by expecting them to share in the housework. Women with young children are not supposed to work outside the home (unless they are the only supporter of the family), and although some daycare for younger children apart from female relatives is slowly becoming available, it is not widespread and is disapproved of as damaging to the children. In addition, the percentages of women in crafts and artistry are especially noteworthy considering the focus of Peace Corps' women's groups on arts and crafts, which has been criticized by that organization itself as causing women to "supply a resource, their traditional skills. Enterprises that use women's skills in this way tend to be time-consuming, low-paying and labor-intensive, and offer few opportunities to develop new skills or build on old ones" (Handy 1986:6).

### **3. 3. Ethnicity**

My respondents lived and worked in various regions throughout Costa Rica, and their specific sites and the ethnic and economic composition of their hosts is located in chapter three together with each volunteer's case history. But there are larger issues existent in Costa Rica in regard to ethnicity that may not affect every volunteer to the same degree. The population of Costa Rica (3,014,598 in June 1990, Market Data 1990:5) is

distributed roughly equally between urban and rural areas (54 percent and 46 percent, Market Data 1990:8), and consists of several ethnic groups, a fact consciously disregarded by members of the majority. Priding themselves on their Spanish and other European background, Latino Costa Ricans draw strict social (and some legal lines) between themselves and the other groups in the country. While only four percent of the Costa Rican population are black, 92 percent of all Black Costa Ricans live in Limón province (Powell and Duncan 1988:62). There are several indigenous groups, totaling approximately 30,000 individuals (Tico Times, April 26, 1991), the first 7,000 of whom received citizenship on April 19, 1991, and large groups of immigrants from China, Nicaragua and Panama (109,000 documented, 39,539 refugees, 110 incarcerated, and 75,000 undocumented, La Nación, February 18, 1991). There are also many resident Americans, Canadians, Dutch, Germans and other Europeans, as well as a constant stream of tourists.

Latino Costa Ricans pride themselves on their European background, and firmly repudiate any question as to possible members of other ethnic groups within their family. Since "raza" implies primarily assumed cultural, not phenological traits, no blood-quota system exists. As in the US, indigenous ancestry may become more acceptable; some rural Latinos contemplated the possibility of "Indian blood," though strangely enough, they had never (knowingly) met a Native Costa Rican.

The status of Black Costa Ricans is closely connected with the rise and fall of Costa Rica's banana export industry. Jamaican Blacks were hired into middle-management positions by the international companies because of their knowledge of English, while Latino Costa Ricans were forced to contend with lower-paying jobs which did not require English. Their resentment found several outlets. Racist immigrant and internal-migration laws prohibited Blacks from following the banana industry to the west coast. Tax money could not be used to fund schools teaching in English, and although most Blacks on the Atlantic coast today are bilingual, they learned English from their parents, not in school. Roman-Catholicism as the official state religion effectively segregated the primarily Protestant Blacks. Additional resentment stems from the fact that Blacks enjoy a higher economic and educational status than Latinos in Limón province.

That such resentment is widespread was demonstrated during the aftermath of the 1991 earthquake, which destroyed bridges, roads and water-systems all through Limón. The banana companies and international aid took great pride in reacting quickly to repair the destroyed bridges, mainly to keep the bananas reaching Puerto Limón. But the city itself was without water for more than three months after the earthquake hit, and while Limón publicly complained about the lack of national aid and interest, little action was supported by the government in San José. Most citizens of the area interpreted this lack of internal help

as following a pattern of neglect long established toward Limón because of its many Black Costa Ricans.

Native Costa Ricans face problems similar to many marginalized native groups. They were not recognized as citizens until recently and the government did not extend necessary services such as health care or education, or protection against trespassing and encroachment on native lands or misuse of leased property. The government was rather hostile in disregarding special needs and rights of Native Costa Ricans and in not enforcing laws that had been enacted in their favor (Biesanz et al. 1987:65-66). Public opinion of Native Costa Ricans is misinformed and low, and problems such as poverty, alcoholism and high mortality are rarely regarded as the result of structural discrimination, but are blamed on the victims; a pattern also visible in the treatment of the problems which affect many reservation populations in the US. Costa Rican Latinos who are unfamiliar with the Peace Corp's work in their country, would expect volunteers to work primarily on reservations as the "underdeveloped" parts of the country.

The history and current status of Chinese Costa Ricans also resembles closely the experiences of Chinese Americans. Having been hired as workers during the last century, an immigration ban was finally lifted and many own businesses today. Although respondents to my questions were not in general aware of the Chinese Costa Rican community,

Biesanz et al. (1987:68) document high degrees of discrimination and segregation.

Other resident foreign groups are primarily visible in the capital and tourist areas, but remain in voluntary segregation. This is primarily the case for the diplomatic and business community, and, to a lesser degree, the retiree community. Such residents are rather removed from the life of the less-than upper class Costa Rican, a lifestyle exemplified by the only publication available on living in Costa Rica (as opposed to tourist information), which devotes a whole chapter to "Domestic Employees," but less than a page to the bus system and makes no mention of the public school system (United States Mission Association 1989). It is mainly this group, amplified with movie and TV images, that gives rise to the impression of the "typical American" as rich, well-educated, and unable to perform manual labor, a stereotype which many Peace Corps Volunteers had to overcome.

Intra-country migration of Latino Costa Ricans is frequent and not restricted to a rural-urban pattern. Rural-rural migrants who were pointed out to me were mainly from Guanacaste or the area around San Ramón and could range from single individuals to whole communities. Reactions toward such migrants are rarely hostile and are often restricted to good-natured teasing when regional soccer matches pitch the various teams against each other. Open disagreements will, however, occur between members of different religious groups, since while Costa

Rica is mainly Roman-Catholic, several Protestant churches are missionizing quite aggressively. While this often does not impair the regular functioning of communities, in one volunteer's case the community was split along religious lines, affecting social and often even personal relationships.

Rural-urban migration has spurred the growth of large illegal squatter slums around the major cities. The population there consists mainly of Latino Costa Ricans, but includes large numbers of Panamanians and Nicaraguans as well. The squatter areas have a well-organized internal structure which centers around a few long-time resident families, but are ignored by the municipal governments of the adjacent cities. It is a rare, politically motivated occurrence when the slums receive electricity or water; the two areas I frequented had received those services during an election campaign, but further services (such as pavement or a sewage system) were denied with the explanation that the communities were located within the overflow area of a water basin below Irazú volcano and could be flooded at any time. Lately, plans have been made to move both communities to the rim of the central valley, which would prevent the members of these communities from pursuing their employment in Cartago or San José. For the officials of these cities it is more a question of removing what they perceive to be a highly criminal and unstable population from their immediate vicinity. There is no doubt that, as in any population which exists below the poverty line, crimes are committed (mostly petty theft, burglary, and drug dealings),

but there are many stable families with a steady employment who cannot afford other housing and will lose their jobs if removed from the center of the valley.

Latino Costa Ricans proudly point toward their European heritage and still pattern cultural changes after the US. While many negative effects of this emulation could be pointed out, it is of interest here that Costa Ricans perceive the US as mainly “white” and they emphasize their own “whiteness,” in contrast to the “dark” Nicaraguans and Panamanians, in finding similarities between themselves and US-Americans. Costa Ricans wish to stand out within the Central American nations and will discriminate against their neighbors. Crimes committed by Nicaraguans or Panamanians are highly publicized with such an emphasis on the nationality of the perpetrator that many people have started to equate these two nationalities with highly criminal behavior.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Research Design**

This chapter briefly introduces the participants and their communities with a general description. An in-depth portrayal follows in the next chapter. The techniques used to acquire and evaluate the data are explained and justified in the remainder of this chapter.

#### **1. The Participants**

##### **1. 1. The Volunteers**

In the summer of 1990, 28 individuals were invited by the Peace Corps to begin their training in Costa Rica in November of the same year. Of this group, 18 volunteered to participate in my study. During their training period, four trainees left the Peace Corps for reasons both personal and related to the Peace Corps and their assigned communities. In January 1991, one additional person who had been invited with the others, but was scheduled to undergo training with the next group, volunteered for this study, bringing the sample population to fifteen volunteers.

The sample consisted of nine men and six women, ranging in age from 23 to 69 years (mode = 24, mean = 35.8). Two couples were married before their Peace Corps service, and two volunteers married after five months in-site. Two members of this group did not graduate from Peace Corps Training. One elected to stay on with his wife and support her in her work, and both left Costa Rica in July 1991 for medical reasons. The

other elected to stay in Costa Rica and to become a resident. He died in June 1991. One subject changed sites in August 1991, another in November 1991, both remaining in Costa Rica. In January 1992, one volunteer terminated her service. Chapter Three will provide a detailed description of the backgrounds, personalities, and experiences of the participants. Table Seven shows the participants' aliases, genders, ages, ethnic self-descriptions, previous travel experiences outside the US (I.T. for international travel), assigned communities, service time and Peace Corps work program.

**Table 7**  
**Volunteer Gender, Age, Self-Reported Ethnicity, International Travel (I.T.), Community, Service Duration, and Peace Corps Program**

Name	m/f	Age	Ethnicity	IT.	Community	Service Duration	Program
Marc	m	24	Euro-Am.	no	Los Criques Gamalopillo	Feb. - Sep. 1991 Oct. '91 - Jan.'93	Farming
Matthew	m	24	Euro-Am.	yes	Los Diques	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	Urban Youth
Carey	f	42	American	yes	Pueblo Nuevo de Rivas	Feb.'91 - Jan.'92	ICD
Lucas	m	23	Euro-Am.	yes	Cuatro Millas	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	ICD
Lisa	f	24	American	yes	Taras	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	Urban Youth
Monica	f	59	Euro-Am.	yes	Orotina	Apr.'91 - Jun'91	Farming
Manfred	m	65	Euro-Am.	yes	Orotina	Apr.'91 - Jun'91	Farming
Jody	f	51	Euro-Am.	yes	Paquera	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	Farming
Verne	m	68	Anglo-Am.	yes	El Coyol	Feb.'91 - Jun.'91	indep.
Roger	m	31	Anglo-Am.	yes	La Angostura	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	ICD
Roberto	m	27	Hisp.-Am.	yes	Pilas	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	ICD
Charles	m	26	Euro-Am.	yes	Dos Cercas	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	ICD
Charlotte	f	26	Anglo-Am.	yes	Dos Cercas	Feb.'91 - Jan.'93	ICD
Paula	f	23	Euro-Am.	no	Los Angeles Los Diques	Feb.'91 - Aug.'91 Sep. '91 - Jan.'93	ICD
David	m	24	American	no	San Miguel	Jun '91 - May'93	Forestry

This group is not typical of the general Peace Corps volunteer population. The general average age is 29 years and this group's mean is 35.8. While the general population includes only ten percent of over-50 year old persons, this group had 27 percent (four individuals). The general population consists to 93 percent of college graduates, while only 80 percent of this group (12) had a college degree. Only 40 percent of this group were women, versus 52 percent of the whole population. While 11 percent of the population are married, 40 percent of this group were married (six). This group reflects the current Peace Corps population in that both contain seven percent of US ethnic minorities (one Hispanic-American).

There are also professional differences. The general Peace Corps population consists to 40 percent of generalists, 25 percent educators, 28 percent specialized professionals, 17 percent in agriculture, and three percent skilled in trades (there is some overlap in these categories), while this group had 67 percent generalists (ten), 27 percent in agriculture (four) and one (seven percent) specialized professional. The participants in this group were not chosen to reflect the general Peace Corps population, but self-selected from one group of invitees.

## **1. 2. The Communities**

All communities will be described in detail in the following chapter together with their volunteers' personal histories. Therefore, only a brief

demographic overview of site type, size, subsistence, and indication of any foreign development organization present is compiled in Table 8.

**Table 8**  
**Communities' Type, Size, Subsistence, and Previous or Other International Organization**

Site	Type	Size	Subsistence	Prev/Other Int. Organ.
Los Criques	rural	220	Agriculture	Peace Corps
Gamalotillo	rural	375	Agriculture	none
Los Diques	urban	3,000	Industry/Service	none
Pueblo Nuevo de Rivas	rural	1,000	Agriculture	none
Cuatro Millas	rural	350	Plantation	Peace Corps
Taras	urban	2,250	Industry/Service	none
Orotina	urban	5,000	Industry Agriculture Tourism, Service	World Teach
Paquera	urban	5,000	Agriculture Service	World Teach at same time
El Coyol	urban	2,000	Service/Industry	Training Center
La Angostura	rural	400	Agriculture	none
Pilas	rural	193	Agricult./Cattle	none
Dos Cercas	urban	5,500	Industry/Service	none
Los Angeles	rural	250	Agriculture	Peace Corps
San Miguel	rural	150	Agriculture	none

Six of the communities have not had a Peace Corps volunteer before the present individual, or their last volunteer had left more than two years before. Seven communities have either had Peace Corps volunteers before, had members of other development organizations present, or had a high influx of foreign tourists. While most communities consisted mainly of Latino Costa Ricans, three also included Black and Native Costa Ricans, El Salvadorans, Panamanians, and Colombians.

Communities apply for a Peace Corps volunteer through their local development organization, but they have no choice but to accept the individual sent to them. Likewise, the volunteers are assigned to Costa Rica according to their professional expertise and the needs of the communities. The volunteers have little choice in the country and only limited choice in assigned sites. The communities provide a counterpart to the volunteer in one of their members who is supposed to help the newcomer find living quarters and indicate the problems and goals of the community.

## **2. Procedure**

### **2. 1. Data Acquisition**

The procedure described below was discussed with the Peace Corps management in Costa Rica in June 1990 and approved by the program directors and the Peace Corps in Washington, DC. While the management agreed to allow free access to all participating volunteers, it also limited access to the training center and the communities. The director of the training center was concerned that if the volunteers could discuss adaptation problems with an outsider they would be less inclined to talk to the training staff. Access to the communities was limited in that no formal interviews could be scheduled with community members since that might indicate a supervision of the volunteers and undermine their authority.

Instead of following the traditional participant observation method, a variety of techniques had to be found which would still produce similar data to those generated by continuous observation. A mixture of quantifiable and qualitative methods was adapted to ensure generality and still preserve the individuality and personal experiences of the participants. As described in chapter one, the goal of this project was to study the impact of living with another ethnic group and the effects this new environment had on the behavior and attitudes of the volunteers. I did not intend to reproduce volunteer statistics, which are easily available from the Peace Corps. This study is concerned with the effect of ethnic contact on individuals. To this end, only one training class of the Peace Corps was selected. The resulting small number of participants allowed me to visit every subject during the fieldwork period every two weeks and spend sufficient time with all volunteers. A larger number of participants would have reduced the amount and length of all sessions. Being associated with this one training group only (with one exception) also led to a closer identification of researcher and respondents (“*our anthropologist*”).

To measure and evaluate the individual experiences of the participants two tools were borrowed from personality studies, the Thematic Apperception Technique and the Adjective Checklist (both are described below). Both tests are ideal to reveal personality traits and possible changes over time, especially since both either insist on or can be expanded to include open ended responses. To measure more objectively

the content and extent of acculturation, an Inter-Cultural Contact scale (also described below) was applied; the information gathered through its application was also quantifiable. This scale has the advantage of eliciting both in-depth and temporal data about ethnic content and behavior.

The bulk of the data comes from extensive conversations with the participants; these conversations were guided by questionnaires to ensure similarity of topics, but were not limited to those preconceived questions. The questions were formulated to extract detailed information on the participants' contact with their host communities as well as the impressions they had of their lives and environment. Between sessions the questions were constantly reevaluated to guarantee the broadest coverage of the volunteer experience.

## **2.2. Scheduling**

Most volunteers participated in fourteen interviews (see Table Nine). The first was held over the phone in the US in September and October 1990. The second interview was done in writing during training in December 1990. Since it is the experience of the Peace Corps in Costa Rica (R. Drickey, personal communication, June 1990) that most volunteers have adapted to their new life within the first six months of their service, the closest and most frequent contact was scheduled from February to August 1991. Ten interviews were conducted at roughly two-week intervals at the volunteers' sites during the first six months of their service, from February through August 1991. Another interview

was held at the end of the first year in service in January 1992, again at the volunteers' sites. The last interview in December 1992 was held approximately one month before most of the volunteers came to the end of their service time.

One volunteer, who had been assigned to a different training group, was on a different schedule, lagging four months behind the others. Whenever possible, his interviews were scheduled to be done in person, but four on-site interviews had to be done in writing. Of the fifteen volunteers, only eleven continued through to the last interview. One subject died after the eleventh interview, and two volunteers (a married couple) left the service after the seventh interview for medical reasons. One volunteer left the service immediately after the thirteenth interview.

**Table 9**  
**Interview Schedule**

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Tests</b>
Invitee	Sept./Oct. 1990	telephone	ACL
Training	December 1990	in writing	ACL
Volunteer One	These interviews were scheduled in roughly two week intervals at times of the volunteers' convenience	in person	ACL, TAT
Volunteer Two		in person	ACL, ICC
Volunteer Three		in person	ACL
Volunteer Four		in person	ACL, ICC
Volunteer Five		in person	ACL
Volunteer Six		in person	ACL, ICC
Volunteer Seven		in person	ACL
Volunteer Eight		in person	ACL, ICC
Volunteer Nine		in person	ACL
Volunteer Ten		Feb. - Aug. 1991	in person
One Year	January 1992	in person	ACL, ICC, TAT
End of Service	December 1992	in person	ACL, ICC, TAT

ACL (Adjective Checklist), TAT (Thematic Apperception Technique), ICC (Inter-Cultural Contact Scale)

I was in residence in Costa Rica from February through August 1991 for the ten in-site interviews, and visited for two weeks each for the one-year and the termination interviews. Residence in the Central Valley in 1991 and the use of a private car ensured that the least possible time was spent in transit between volunteer sites and all sites could be visited for extended periods of time. The interviews were held at a place of the volunteers' choosing and included private houses, beaches, restaurants and cars. All interviews lasted an average of one hour, but since sufficient time was allowed for longer sessions many volunteers took advantage of this to trade gossip or chat, increasing the trust I feel has developed between many respondents and me. During the interviews notes were taken as verbatim as possible. Initially, all interviews in site were audio taped. When the equipment failed, the response depth and length of some volunteers increased considerably, and dropped when the recorder was used again. Consequently, only written notes were taken with volunteers who had so obviously indicated their dislike of talking with a tape recorder in use.

### **3. Materials**

#### **3.1. Questionnaires**

Structured questionnaires (attached in the appendix) were employed during each interview. The first questionnaire requested mainly personal, demographic, previous contact, and expectation information. The second questionnaire focused on the training experience. All subsequent questionnaires asked for information about the amount and quality of

contact with the host-community, perceived differences of the respondents' own ethnic group to the host group, the perceived attitude of the host-community, and possible lifestyle adaptations. The questionnaires not only assured that the same kind of data was elicited from every participant, they also provided some material appropriate for a quantitative analysis (e.g., average of time per two weeks spent working and/or socializing with host-community members, frequency of visits to religious services). Since the volunteers began to be familiar with the questionnaires after some applications, they would consider their answers between sessions and provide longer and more in depth responses. Some volunteers felt bored by this repetitiveness. Although this was a minor drawback, it needed to be addressed by reformulating as many questions as possible on the spot while still eliciting the same data.

### **3. 2. Inter-Cultural Contact Scale (ICC)**

This scale (attached in the appendix), modeled on Chance's acculturation scale (1965:389-390), was used a total of six times; four times at every second interview during the first six months, once at the One-Year interview, and once before End of Service. Information requested concerned improvement of Spanish fluency, frequency of contact with other than host-community individuals, media choices, medical problems, and preferences in foods, activities, and individuals. The scale was divided in Adjustment and Withdrawal indices, and rated from 1 (for low or never) to 4 or 5 (for very high or always). The Adjustment index measured the active contact with Costa Rican society and possible preference

over US society; the Withdrawal index measured active contact with other North Americans or non-locals, indicating avoidance of Costa Ricans.

The ranking of the participants was done mainly by subject response, sometimes after joint discussions about choices in specific situations. The data are quantifiable, not only in regard to the development of the individual volunteers, but also in considering the progress of the group in general. Especially the section asking for preferences often elicited very detailed answers which could also be evaluated qualitatively. The data could be plotted on graphs to compare the volunteers' individual and group progress. These graphs are located in the general acculturation section of each participant's case history. Strong increases in either adjustment or withdrawal could be matched with specific events in an individual's life and offered insights into the timing of group and individual responses to environmental stimuli. There were no drawbacks apparent in the application or evaluation of the scale.

### **3. 3. Thematic Apperception Technique (TAT)**

The TAT studies the social and psychological aspects of personality and has been employed for many years as a projective technique in psychoanalysis and personality studies (see Henry 1956 for a complete description). Four applications were scheduled: when the volunteers first arrived in their sites, after six months and one year in-site, and before termination. The illustrations (photocopies of each are located in the ap-

pendix) were handed to the volunteers, who were encouraged to describe the picture, to tell about the actors and to relate the story behind the picture. The volunteers were allowed to decline telling a story, but were encouraged to at least describe the picture. Relying on the TAT's projective power, the responses were anticipated to indicate ethnic attitudes, such as xenophobia, racism, prejudice, and transitional problems, through the stories told; a verbalization of anxieties due to isolation from the volunteers' home environment was also expected.

During the application of the TAT it became obvious that results were only indicative of problem themes when the test was applied at the exact time the individual experienced mental anguish or was preoccupied with a topic. Then it served very well to elicit responses which showed anguish much stronger than an interview question could have done. It also served to draw out memories of specific occurrences which otherwise would not have been mentioned. Finally, the responses, when connected to acute problems, served as a verbalization exercise to reduce the volunteer's anxieties.

This technique had two drawbacks. Since the TAT is primarily a tool of clinical psychiatry, it assumes overwhelming concerns with selected topics in the questioned individual, and does not provide independent results if the subject is mentally and emotionally balanced. The illustrations, furthermore, are culture specific, especially where human actors are shown. In this project it would have been more realistic to show il-

illustrations with actors with both Middle- and South-European phenotypes, but such pictures could not be obtained.

### 3. 4. Adjective Checklist (ACL)

This list, which was applied 14 times during the project at every interview, was modeled roughly on the original ACL (described in Gough and Heilbrun 1983). In keeping with the use of these tests as supporting tools only, I restricted my list to 26 adjectives (Table 10), drawn partially from the Buchanan-Cantril model used by Radio Free Europe (1970 and 1973), and partially from the self-descriptive adjectives used by Stein (1985:7).

**Table 10**  
**Adjective Checklist Items**

industrious	lazy	independent	dependent
spiritual	materialistic	honest	deceitful
idealistic	realistic	ambitious	apathetic
intelligent	unreasonable	impulsive	cautious
humane	cruel	progressive	conservative
generous	egotistical	aggressive	peace loving
domineering	subservient		

The adjectives could be ascribed to “Americans,” “Costa Ricans,” “both,” and “neither;” it was rare that no choice was made. Although its design is rather simple, the list elicited often strong opposition from the participants, who were forced to evaluate their opinions about both Americans and Costa Ricans and to verbalize negative impressions, invoking the desirability effect by finding it hard to admit to negative prejudices as supposedly liberal minded Peace Corps Volunteers (Hanson 1989). The

volunteers were allowed to skip an adjective at times, but were required to go through the list at every application.

The continued use of the list led to a change in its function. At first the adjectives of a single subject were used to measure ascription of positive and negative characteristics to their own ethnic group and Costa Ricans, and all responses were evaluated to measure the group's adaptation. Continued application changed the effect on the volunteers. While at first they ascribed the adjectives generally to "Americans" and "Costa Ricans," later responses differentiated between males and females, urban and rural populations, one's own community and people met in other areas, and often led to an ascription to one group with exceptions detailed for individuals. Comparing the answers of each test to those of previous tests, the volunteers were also asked to explain differences in ascription, and they often recalled a specific occurrence which caused them to judge a whole population group. In some cases this led to the realization that one, often negative, encounter should not influence opinions of a group in general. It was interesting to note that while only one aspect of a population group may have been disturbing at a certain time, this also caused the ascription of other, negative, characteristics. Additionally, even when ascribing traits to their own ethnic group, the volunteers rarely included themselves and their personality traits in this judgment.

The original Adjective Checklist has severe problems in the categorization of some adjectives. For example, it assumes that there are such things as pronounced "feminine" or "masculine" personality traits (Gough and Heilbrun 1983:19-21), an assumption which makes cross-cultural or even cross-temporal application of the scale very difficult. The length of this list makes it also cumbersome to apply the list repeatedly with the same volunteers, since everybody expressed some fatigue at going through even an abbreviated form.

### **3. 5. Informal Interviews**

Every available opportunity was taken to converse with the volunteers outside the formal interview sessions. This included offering free transportation and "messenger-service" for the volunteers and their neighbors, as well as vacation time spent with volunteers either at their or other volunteers' sites. That I was not affiliated with the Peace Corps management had advantages in that the volunteers felt free to discuss problems without "going on record." Such free-form conversations often resulted in the trading of gossip and were very informative for both the volunteers and me.

Since the volunteers' communities were not formally interviewed as per the wish of the Peace Corps Management in Costa Rica, information on host-community attitudes and opinions were gathered through volunteer descriptions, informal conversations with community members, and with other Costa Rican nationals. The main method of eliciting

peoples' opinions about the Peace Corps was to offer rides to families and individuals along routes without public transportation; since almost everybody was curious as to my presence away from the usual tourist areas, the conversation could easily be directed toward the Peace Corps. Other sources were the volunteers' descriptions of their community members and conversations with such individuals, with and without the volunteer present, but always with the volunteer's knowledge. Although these data are neither quantifiable, nor do they form an adequate pool of Costa Rican opinions, they are nevertheless useful in providing opinions about the Peace Corps and its volunteers by those who are directly affected by them.

### **3. 6. Analysis**

The data from the interview questionnaires, the Adjective Checklist, and the ICC were subjected to frequency analyses and cross-tabulations using SPSS 4.1 on a VAX mainframe computer. Some data associated directly with early termination and site change were plotted independently on 2x2 contingency tables and association probabilities were calculated with Fisher's Exact Test. This test is appropriate here, since it is designed for small sample analyses where the sample is smaller than 20 and cell contents can be smaller than five (Thomas 1986:298). While these statistical techniques point out areas of significance on a group-wide and/or temporal level, the individual stories give meaning to the numbers and take advantage of the human factor in ethnic contact.

I realize that such an approach reduces the potential for a generalization of the results, but the focus here is not on the attitude of a statistically average volunteer, but on the experiences, good and bad, of individuals who have relocated their lives for two years. The qualitative analysis will attempt to do justice to these individuals and their efforts and the bulk of the analysis consists of qualitative descriptions and analyses of personal stories. The adaptation of the volunteers, their possible personality changes, and their personal impressions of life within another ethnic group are explored through my observations, the volunteers' self-descriptions and the TAT results, as well as additional responses to the ACL and the ICC.

The five dimensions which determine acculturative change were explored through a combination of the various methods. I inquired about the speed of language acquisition at every application of the ICC and by asking if the respondent had started to read fiction in Spanish. The degree of inter-ethnic interaction and distance was gathered from the answers to the first interview questions (items 1-3 on questionnaire 3, appendix) and question 2 - 6 on the ICC, perception of discrimination came from interview questions 49 and following, cultural awareness of the host culture was a combination of acquisition of Costa Rican behavior and adjectives, and ethnic loyalty (ICC media, preference and adjectives). The TAT results, if useful, are used to round out the information.

The patience and cooperation of all participants throughout the data gathering phases was exceptional and highly appreciated, as was the friendly welcome and hospitality of their communities. The next chapter is dedicated to their stories.

## Chapter Three

### Case Histories

The five-stage model of acculturation in which the volunteer's service experience would be interpreted also constitutes the framework for the presentation of the case histories in this chapter. Each individual is introduced as to background, training experience and assigned community, and the first interview in-site is described in detail. For the first six months, each person's experience is summarized by month, and then discussed in the five dimensions identified by Padilla (1980:48-50) as "important in determining acculturative change": language, degree of inter-ethnic interaction and distance, perception of discrimination, cultural awareness of host culture, and ethnic loyalty. The interviews held after one year and before end of service are then described in detail. Unless expressively noted, these summaries reflect only the opinions of the volunteers as they expressed them during interviews, tests, and informal conversations.

A general evaluation closes each case history, discussing when and how the individual volunteers experienced change in any of the above listed dimensions, including how they expressed such changes to me, i.e. if they were aware of them and related them openly during the interviews, or if they were expressed covertly and revealed during the tests. This evaluation includes graphs to illustrate the respondents adjustment and withdrawal as compared to the group's average, and a table showing the

predominant adjective ascription with the explanation given for each ascription by the respondents. All graphs showing an individual's inter-ethnic contact are based on the first three answers to questionnaires 3 through 12 (see appendix), showing self-rating categorized into none, low, medium, high, and very high. The line graphs of adjustment and withdrawal are calculated from the answers to the appropriate section of the ICC (see appendix).

The sections present each individual separately, except for the couples whose experiences may be documented jointly if applicable, and vary considerably in length, reflecting the ease or restraint with which the volunteers responded during the interviews. The volunteers were assured confidentiality and all individuals are referred to by aliases to facilitate reading. Many volunteers chose those aliases for themselves and I edited the names as little as possible.

The pre-contact phase started for all participants when they learned that they had been accepted for training to the Peace Corps in Costa Rica and ended when they arrived in the training center in November 1990. The contact phase started when they met their training families and continued through the first visits to their community until they moved into their sites in or after February 1991. Conflict could start at any point during contact and required an immediate adaptive response. This phase is difficult to limit in time, since conflict could arise over different issues at different points of the sojourn. Since the participants chose

different responses to conflict, and conflict could occur repeatedly during the sojourn, the acculturation of individuals could not be plotted neatly on a timeline to estimate the relative speed of the adaptation.

The participants shared some common experiences, such as the Spanish workshop held in June 1991 at the training center, the July 4, 1991 wedding, the Peace Corps Thanksgiving parties, several poker parties at Charlotte and Charles' house, and various visits to beaches. Separation started with the volunteer's decision to terminate prematurely (various dates) or with the approaching of the end of service date in January 1993.

## **1. Marc**

### **Pre-Training**

Marc (24) was a Baptist with a BS in Agricultural Economics and some work experience in horticulture and agriculture. He had never left the US before coming to Costa Rica and just started to learn Spanish. He described himself as a European-American by descent, with little ethnic contact limited to professional interactions with Hispanic-Americans. He came from a small, mid-western farming community, and often described himself as a "Redneck," but did not mean that to include the presumed racist attitude of this group. He was of medium height, slim, with dark hair. He did not know much about Costa Rica, but did not expect any problems in adapting to it and felt confident that he would not be bothered by any negative initial reaction to him. Because of his

professional background he was assigned to the Farm Management program of the Peace Corps in Costa Rica.

### **Training**

As is customary for trainees, Marc moved in with a local family during training. He attempted to follow PC guidelines and spend his free time predominantly with that family, but quickly felt “smothered” and suspected that the family had isolated him from other locals by claiming that their guest was only to associate with them. Marc felt also trapped by the romantic interests of the adolescent daughter of the house and looked forward to graduation from the training program. He suffered from a lack of privacy and personal space caused by his family and also restricted closer contact to only a few other trainees. At this time, Marc expressed a negative opinion of Costa Rica through his adjective ascriptions (see appendix). This appears to be more a reflection of his experience with his host family. The eagerness to start work in his community, which he expressed during the training interview, was due more to a wish to end training and to leave the family than to move into his site. Thus he resolved his first major conflict in Costa Rica by withdrawal.

He disliked his assigned community and their expectations during his first site visit and communicated this to his program director. Apparently, Marc’s dissatisfaction was overlooked and he was assigned to a small agricultural community in the northern foothills of Costa

Rica's central mountain range, two hours from San José. It consisted of about 220 people plus several surrounding farms, with electricity and water, but without local public transportation or telephone. There was one elementary school and one, Roman Catholic church, but the priest came only once a month. Tourists never came here, nor did any other development organizations. The community has already had one Peace Corps volunteer.

### **The First Six Months**

Marc moved into his community just three days after the previous volunteer left. After one unsuccessful attempt, I met him for his first interview after he had been in his site for one month. He had rented a one-room house with a sleeping loft and would try to plant a garden outside. His house lay at the village road, overlooking the soccer field, close to the center. Marc started to work with a few dairy farmers as a volunteer farm hand and gained the impression that the community was not interested in what he had to offer, but insisted on him continuing exactly what the previous volunteer had started; she had concentrated on bookkeeping, while he felt more qualified for practical farm work. Socially he was doing quite well; despite his negative experience during training, he moved in with a family in his site before renting the house across the street and established contact in his community with men of his own age, socializing at the local store and dances, as well as watching pool and soccer. He was not criticized for not attending local church services, but was pitied for living alone. He was convinced that

he could assist his community much more if they would just let him, and his feeling of professional disappointment impaired his feeling of well-being.

During this first interview, Marc differentiated Costa Ricans and Americans in two aspects. It disturbed him how Costa Rican men treat women and he expressed that in the TAT story to picture four (see Appendix A) where he described the woman as being treated badly by her Costa Rican husband of 25 years. Marc thought of himself as much more independent than Costa Ricans. He was aware of following American behavioral patterns in this. He thought that his community had expected a more stereotypical “gringo” and appreciated that he tried to fit in. Among his more “American” behaviors Marc pointed out that he listened to a short-wave radio, read Newsweek, and regularly (every two weeks) traveled to San José, while he also tried to read La Nación and La República, the two leading Costa Rican newspapers.

During this interview Marc offered several comments about Costa Ricans and Americans. He explained that Costa Ricans went to church frequently and talked about being religious, while Americans do not talk about it but believe more deeply. He said Costa Ricans were sometimes unrealistic, because they were too traditional, and that Americans were more cautious with money, while Costa Rican men were very egotistical.

Marc felt that the community had appreciated the previous volunteer very much, and expected Marc to continue her work. This assumption of the community was not unfounded, since both volunteers worked in the same Peace Corps program; however, they should have been advised of the many different directions that can be taken within one program and the possibility that the newcomer is a specialist in another field than the previous volunteer. The result was that both community and volunteer quickly became frustrated and disappointed in each other. Marc began to count the days until his end of service on a wall calendar, but was determined not to fail. The problems caused to a follow-up volunteer by community expectations are discussed in detail in chapter four.

Two weeks later, during the second in-site interview in March, Marc estimated that he was working with 24 farmers (18 dairy), still as free labor. His involvement with them was entirely due to his own efforts. Socially, he rated himself as highly involved, but still did not attend the local church. He had found a Baptist church in a larger city about one hour away by bus, but had not attended it yet. He was more forthcoming with information during this interview and pointed to more perceived differences in Costa Rican and American behaviors. He was surprised that the local farmers worked in shorts and without shoes and joined many other volunteers in complaining about Costa Rican "tardiness." He was frustrated by the slow work pace and claimed that "nothing gets done." As an example he told how he helped some farmers to count 5,000 oranges by hand.

In keeping with his attempts to preserve personal space during training, he was still annoyed by having to shake hands with everybody he met daily. He pointed out that he did many things differently than his community's members, especially enjoying time by himself and eating considerably less rice and beans than customary. The community had realized by then that he was different from tourists, and he was openly pitied about living alone. He quoted individuals who had criticized that he spent much time by himself and did not talk much. Marc pointed out that, in contrast to his community, he read for pleasure, went on bicycle rides and jogged. He did, however, eat his dinners with a neighboring family and did his own laundry. At this interview he expressed his concern that he did not want to take Costa Rican habits back home, especially shaking hands. He assessed Costa Ricans as cruel for not giving "the necessary respect to people" and being insulting and forward. He remembered how his training family lied to him and their neighbors to keep other young women away.

During April Marc worked with the dairy farmers approximately four days a week and started a school garden. It annoyed him that he was asked to fund community projects, and he tried to explain that the community had to apply for funding. He went on a one-week vacation with some Costa Rican friends, was sick for two days and tried to spend more of his free time with local families, watching soccer, attending a wedding and a dance, and playing cards and pool. He went to a revival

meeting, but did not go to church at Easter. His opinion of Costa Ricans was higher this month; he described them as good workers who just spend a little less time and effort at work than Americans would. He praised Costa Ricans as selfless and giving, and acknowledged that they got by with less than the more materialistic Americans. Marc liked to get things done and did not want to be interrupted, but at this moment this was just an inconvenience. Lack of privacy still bothered him, especially that people wanted to talk to him too much. Americans would spend more time alone. While observing two Easter processions, Marc was under the impression that the participants "worship the procession instead of god."

Marc considered his behavior to be different than that of Costa Ricans in that he was more success oriented. He participated in local entertainment such as soccer, pool and card games, but did not enjoy them. He was complimented by neighbors because he liked to work, and felt that when people discussed his behavior, they saw him as a gringo. Since he spoke Spanish, community members would discuss tourist behavior with him and then he felt treated more as a fellow "Tico." He pointed out that he used some "American" behaviors, such as displaying the American flag in his house, planning ahead with a calendar, writing letters, using the telephone, and reading for pleasure, but he took on some "Costa Rican" behaviors, such as canceling plans and staying with families when out of town.

During the April interviews, Marc did not change any of the adjectives, and praised Costa Ricans for being selfless, giving, not selfish, and getting by with less. He explained, however, that he had been asked for project funding, and he had to explain repeatedly that he could only help the community to apply for funding. He was very upset when his electricity was cut off due to illegal wiring by the landlord, and confirmed that he thought Costa Ricans were more deceitful.

During the three interviews in May, Marc reported that he had contacted more farmers, made progress in the children's garden, tutored some people in English, started to assist the local veterinarian and had become involved in giving workshops about bookkeeping with Jody and other volunteers from the Farm Management program. Asked about work habits, Marc, at the first interview of the month, merely pointed out that Costa Ricans willingly stop work to socialize, while Americans had more structured work/play limits; in the middle of the month he criticized that local work habits were more sloppy than in the US, but made allowances that some people work hard everywhere, while others do not; and at the end of the month Marc described Costa Ricans as "lazy bums" and complained that the children did not work well in the school garden. The main problem seemed to be the ease with which Costa Ricans socialize and work at the same time, while Americans were more centered and organized and wanted to get the job done.

Describing his own behavior, Marc pointed out that he refused to do things the "Tico" way, e.g., in meetings where he did not want to waste time with socializing. At the end of the month he said he would definitely stay in his community, but he would be himself and not adapt at any cost. He listed the usual "American" behaviors throughout the month: pleasure reading, spending time alone, being impatient, traveling more, cleaning up the table after dinner, using a calendar, washing his own clothes, and being faithful to one girlfriend. He "adapted" by getting better at passing time, arriving late to meetings, eating rice and beans, sweeping his house every day, letting people touch him, burning his garden, and asking people for donations for the school garden.

Marc thought that Costa Ricans were too impulsive; after the government had promised his community money, they had started work on a building before they got the money. Marc criticized that they want to get things done fast, but make no plans for the future. On the other hand, while Costa Ricans are impatient, one cannot hurry them. He described Costa Ricans as "sometimes honest" and disorganized. He also considers them to be irresponsible, since people missed appointments with him twice in one week and the children did not show up to work in the school garden. Marc also talked about American tourists, whom he considers "obnoxiously aggressive," and described Americans as being, in general, more egotistical than Costa Ricans, who can be very humble, although machismo is an ego-problem.

During the two interviews in June, Marc again expressed less hostility towards his community. He had continued with all the projects already mentioned during May and started to play basketball with some children. He praised one farmer who managed to organize eight other people to work on his farm, and admitted that in the US, too, people socialize while they work. He still had problems with punctuality and organization in meetings, and listed that Americans worked in a more centered way, were goal oriented, kept deadlines and were punctual. It disturbed him how Costa Rican men always talked about women, that conversations seemed aimless, and that people always talked about money and the value of things. In contrast, he called Costa Ricans are very humble people, despite machismo, and judged Costa Ricans to be more conservative because they were modest and humble.

He had attended the Spanish workshop with other volunteers and had enjoyed the week with his colleagues. He observed that he behaved more carefully in his site than in the capital, because he tried not to offend his community and to be more culturally sensitive than tourists. In his community, he felt he had more privacy now than in the beginning, but there were still many questions about private issues and he sometimes answered with lies. He did, however, describe Americans as more honest than Costa Ricans since the latter told little frequent lies. But while he felt that he could be himself without offending anybody, he felt guilty about jogging while others were working.

The last interview in this series was held in August. During July, Marc had been on vacation with his visiting sister and at bookkeeping workshops which he enjoyed because they were held in an American manner. He started to work with an artificial insemination program, helped farmers to keep records, and would start to work with a credit committee to apply for grants for seeds and fertilizers. The school garden was going better and he still tutored English. He still went to one family for dinner and socialized with the other men his age.

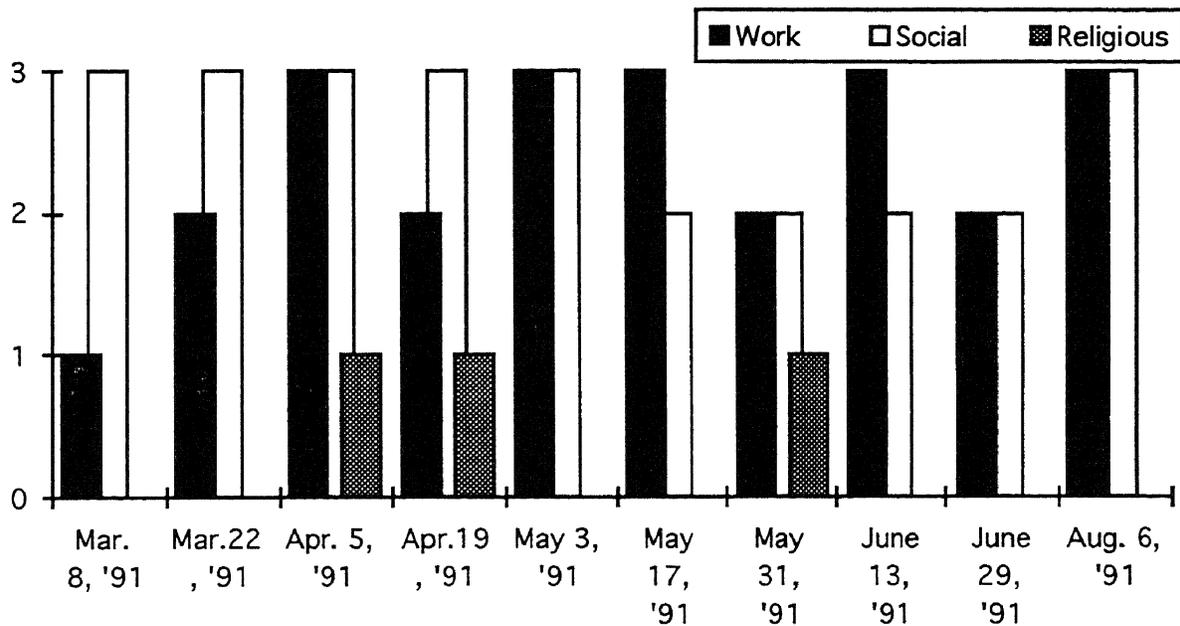
He had problems with one person who "knows everything" and did not listen to Marc. He was also criticized for not visiting people frequently enough and the questions about his private life continued. He felt considered a little lazy, since he traveled frequently. His sister told me that he had changed and become calmer. He had also started to drink coffee. He was somehow upset about Costa Ricans at that moment, since his sister's suitcases had been stolen at the bus station and he considered Americans to be naïve.

### **Initial Acculturation**

Marc's acculturative experience during the first six months in his community can be discussed within several dimensions. Exploring his degree of interethnic interaction, Figure 5 illustrates his varying amount of involvement in the work, social and religious sphere of his community.

Marc was never satisfied with his acquisition of Spanish. He started learning it in training, continued to study while in-site, and attended the Spanish workshop for his group in June of 1991. He judged his ability to speak and understand as medium (understand about half of what is being said) in March and April 1991, increased to better than medium by May, and to high (about 75%) by June. Marc only occasionally read the national newspaper and received most of his news from Newsweek, which the Peace Corps provided, and from BBC on short-wave.

**Figure 5**  
**Marc's Inter-Ethnic Contact**



He never felt discriminated against by his community, but also never became a member. He felt accepted as a gringo, whose behavior was different (reading, solitude, traveling) but could not be changed. He was considered different from tourists since he lived in a small community and spoke Spanish, but he also had to answer questions about the US which made him feel different. While he asserted in May that he would

not change for his community's sake ("it doesn't bother me to stand out, I have friends now"), in June he realized that he did behave more carefully in-site than when visiting San José. He was criticized in July by his community for traveling too much after he had gone on a week-long vacation with his visiting sister.

### **One Year and Exit Interviews**

Although Marc became more open in his answers and opinions over the course of the first six months, he also enjoyed keeping me guessing; when I returned for the One-Year interview, it was during a chat with other volunteers that I learned that Marc had moved into another community. I checked with his program director, received the usual Costa Rican cautions ("it's very difficult to get there - are you sure you really want to go?"), and the equally usual Peace Corps directions ("once you're in the area, start asking for the gringo," something that usually works), I discovered that his new community was actually a chain of five settlements with the same name and finally found Marc in the last settlement, sitting under a tree and watching a soccer game.

His dissatisfaction with his first assignment had grown so much that he had transferred to another site in October of 1991. Although he continued to have difficulties in defining his professional responsibilities, he was much more content with the social contact he experienced with the second community, an aggregate of five communities with approximately 25 Latino Costa Rican families per community.

In this second community, Marc felt comfortable to visit with neighbors, many came to see him, and he started going to church. He described Costa Ricans as "good people" who were insecure and lacked self-esteem. By the end of the second year he had secured a grant for the community to build a hog house, which he considered his only permanent and worthwhile accomplishment. Marc was disappointed with his service and would not do it again; in fact, he felt that the Peace Corps should pull out of Costa Rica.

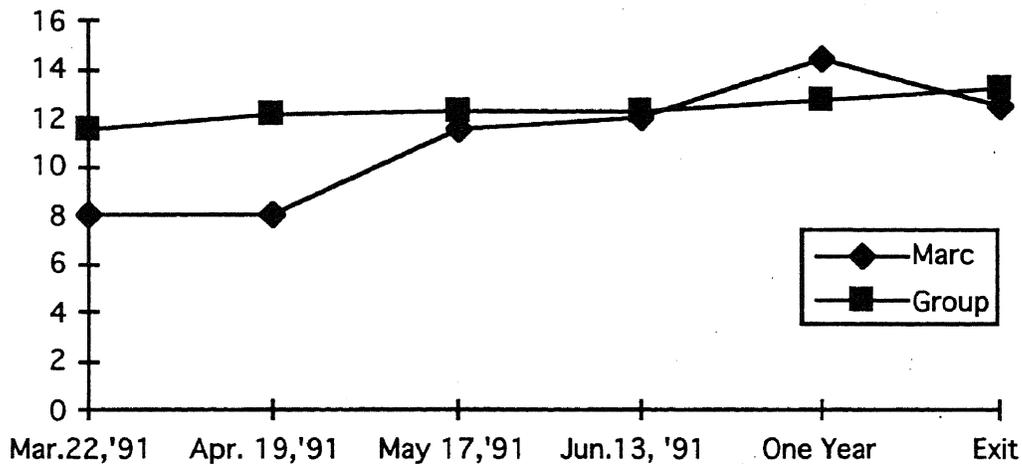
### **General Acculturation**

Marc acquired some traits during the first six months, such as enjoying rice and beans, doing his laundry by hand, sweeping daily, staying with families when traveling in the region of his site, burning the garden, socializing, being late for meetings, allowing people closer and touching him, becoming more relaxed (according to his sister), and finally starting to drink coffee. As "American" traits he continuously listed reading for pleasure, riding his bike, jogging, traveling to San José every second week, hanging the American flag in his house, planning ahead with a calendar, using the phone, writing letters, spending time alone, being impatient, helping to clean the table after dinner, eating cookies and ice-cream in the pulpería, having only one girlfriend at a time, and eating with a fork.

His adjustment, compared to the group's average over the first six months, showed improvement, and surpassed the group's average at

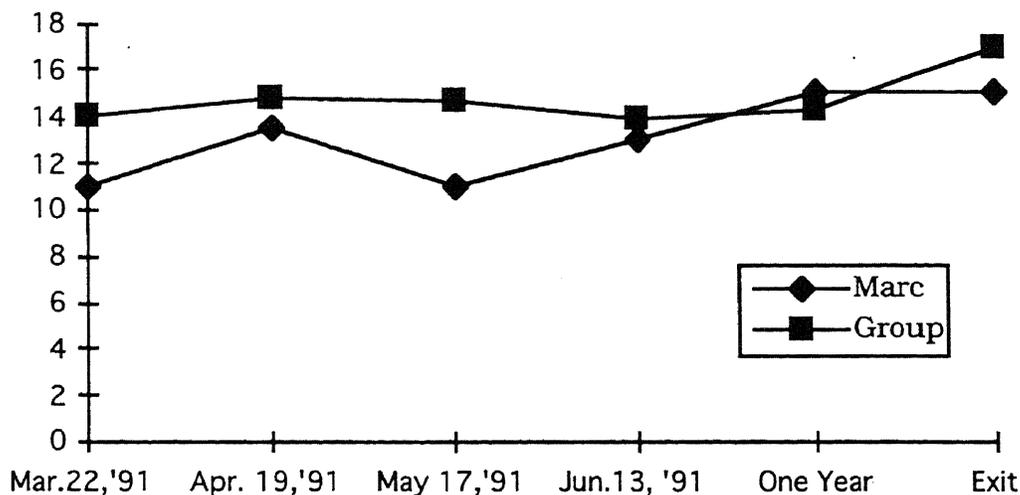
the one year interview in his new site. At the time of the exit interview he was ready to leave.

**Figure 6**  
**Marc's Adjustment**



Marc's scores in withdrawal were also below the group's average. This seeming disparity can be explained by Marc's preference for solitude. While the ICC scale on withdrawal asks for the preference of non-Costa Ricans, initially Marc also did not seek out contact with co-nationals.

**Figure 7**  
**Marc's Withdrawal**



During the repeated applications of the adjective checklist Marc used some adjectives continuously to describe Americans and Costa Ricans, but was less stable in the ascription of the other adjectives. His complete answers to the adjective checklist, together with his expanded explanations, are listed in the appendix.

Marc also explained that Americans were open minded and capable to understand, but also more egotistical. Costa Ricans, however, were not capable of understanding what Peace Corps volunteers go through and without cross-cultural experience they did not perceive the problems on the other side. He continued to say that Costa Ricans were more family centered and, with the exception of machismo, more humble than Americans.

Evaluating Marc's experience in the framework of the proposed acculturation stage model, it becomes apparent that Marc continuously responded to conflict with reaction and, finally in his first community, physical withdrawal. Withdrawal here applies not only to his change in work site, but also to his concern about privacy and reluctance to seek out even co-volunteers. The areas in which he experienced most conflict were language acquisition and inter-ethnic interaction. He retained all initial American traits, and added a few Costa Rican traits as well. In my opinion, Marc came to Costa Rica to do a job, not to explore a different culture. In his first site, he was disappointed in his efforts

which negated his possible adjustment to Costa Rican life in general. While his second community was more receptive to his efforts, the frustration he had experienced in the first nine months had solidified his opinions and he was not prepared to change anymore. A great deal of responsibility for Marc's negative experience lies with the Peace Corps. He had, before moving into his first community, expressed his dislike of it, but was located there nevertheless; his program director should have been more sensitive to Marc's problem. The community cannot be faulted for expecting a subsequent volunteer in the same program to continue the work of his predecessor; this is discussed in more detail in chapter four. Finally, Marc overwhelmingly responded to conflicts with reaction and withdrawal, and only rarely tried to adjust. This may have been mainly due to the image he had of Peace Corps work as professionals rendering advice and support; when he was challenged in that, he could not adjust.

Matthew and Paula met in training and married on July 4, 1991. The following September Paula joined her husband in his site and continued her work there. Their experience is documented separately for Matthew and Paula until their wedding and after, since they were always interviewed separately.

## **2. Matthew**

### **Pre-Training**

Matthew (24) was Roman Catholic, with a BA in Sociology. He had considerable working experience, traveled extensively before coming to Costa Rica, and already knew some Spanish due to a visit to Mexico. He described himself as a White American, with Italian and Irish ancestry, and very high ethnic contact with Mexican Americans in his pre-Peace Corps professional life. Matthew came from an urban, west coast community, was tall and slim with thinning blond hair. He had some knowledge about Costa Rican economics, and expected some difficulties during initial contact due to a "loss of culture symbols," and was assigned to the Urban Youth program.

### **Training**

Matthew enjoyed his training family and felt very comfortable. Although he was eager to start in his site, he explained that he would miss his "family" and the friends he made at the training center. He joined other volunteers at times, but did not seek them out. Since his Spanish was good enough to test out of the language training, he started working in a

home for teenage girls while he was still in training. In his work he made an effort to agree with his Costa Rican superiors and colleagues, and then did things his own way. He decided on this course of action after discussing it with the cross-cultural counselor at the Peace Corps, who told him that "they never blame themselves down here; that's something you have to understand." He was assigned to work in a children's day-home as well as in a squatter slum near Cartago in the central valley. His girlfriend, Paula (introduced in section 3), was assigned to a community at the border to Panama.

### **The First Six Months**

Matthew's community consisted of about 600 Latino Costa Rican, Nicaraguan and Panamanian families who found work in industry and service in the Cartago and San José. There was one protestant church and a minister, but no school. Neither tourists nor other development organizations made their way there. The squatter settlement received electricity and running water (but no sewage) during a political campaign, but had no finished roads, phone, waste collection or bus service. The city refused to pave the roads or put in a sewage system since the community was located below a water reservoir at the side of an active volcano and could be swept away. The volunteers in the area speculated that the bureaucrats of nearby Cartago hoped that without sufficient services the slum inhabitants would finally give up and move away. I met Matthew for the first time in the home of what would

become his closest Costa Rican friends (his “adopted” family), but subsequent interviews were held in many different places.

Matthew planned to move into a house in the slum, but had to wait until an extra room had been added for which he paid with a Peace Corps allowance. In the meantime he lived with his “adopted” family in the city. His future landlord introduced him to many people in the community, and Matthew’s first projects involved street planning and trash pick-up, as well as working with street children from his community with Lisa, the volunteer in a neighboring slum (introduced in section 7). He started work in the children’s home as the Director of Recreation and Cultural Activities. The home was supported by local companies which sent textiles to the home for the children to sew. He had a very active social life due to the family he lived with, and was “cajoled” into going to mass on New Year’s Eve, a three-hour service for which he was not prepared, and which he subsequently used as an explanation for avoiding other church visits.

Matthew felt comfortable in his community and enjoyed that everybody wanted to meet him. He judged that he behaved differently with Americans than with Costa Ricans with whom he was more relaxed. He played basketball with some children and felt accepted, although he thought that people who didn’t know him could stereotype him as either a rich gringo or as a proselytizing Mormon. He pointed out that he could not dance to Latin music yet, but he tried to play soccer. He adapted to a

more lax interpretation of punctuality and shared everybody's problem with switching back from summer time. He tried to imitate Costa Rican behavior in gestures, jokes and closer physical proximity when talking, but felt that he had no privacy when he would like to write.

Matthew had moved into the house in his community at the second interview in February. We had walked to the house during my first visit and we had agreed to meet there. After I arrived, I told him that I had just walked on the train tracks into the slum and was promptly admonished by him never to do that again. A section of the tracks, which is rather obscured, is a drug dealing spot and everybody but customers and dealers avoid it. Matthew has attended planning meetings and met new neighbors. He missed privacy and realized that he needed to be patient with a different definition of personal space under which he felt his personal space invaded. He had been out dancing and felt like being in the spotlight since he followed Peace Corps dress code and consequently overdressed. It was problematic for him to terminate a conversation and he felt he needed to find an excuse to leave. He considered his behavior to be adaptive to the situation; with Costa Ricans he was more social, unless when attending meetings and trying to adhere to an American-style agenda. He saw most differences in his behavior towards women, since he refused to participate in cat-calls and was in general more respectful.

Only his neighbors knew that he lived in the community, others still thought of him as a rich outsider, maybe a Mormon. He thought that living in the community made a difference in being accepted. He still enjoyed "American" things such as basketball, sunbathing, American music and pizza, but developed a taste for coffee, visiting with neighbors for no reason, and neither cooked nor did his own laundry, something he considered to be male Costa Rican behavior. He quoted his Nicaraguan landlord as saying that Costa Ricans were prejudiced and not open. Panamanians, however, were said to be very humble.

In March, Matthew continued his work in the children's home, with street children and on a committee to plan for education on drugs and family planning. Although he was invited to attend church, he did not go. He had problems with Costa Rican punctuality, but started to be late himself. He felt that his American communication style, being more frank and direct, appeared impolite to Costa Ricans, and he continued to imitate the Costa Rican communication style. He was satisfied that his Spanish was improving and that he could discuss more complicated topics. He also noticed that he drank much more coffee.

During April, Matthew had to move out of the house in Los Diques when the drinking water (apparently) caused him to suffer severe physical problems. He moved back with his "adopted" family, but continued to work with the children and neighborhood organizations in his site, feeling that he did not spend enough time with his community. He

organized soccer games and hiking tours for the working children, planned theater classes, and a trash-pick-up competition. His social contacts were mainly for work reasons, but he also went dancing. He and Paula got engaged at the beginning of the month, and in an acknowledgment of my responsibility to keep volunteers updated on gossip, I was allowed to spread the news. The announcement caused Matthew to be serenaded by Costa Rican friends, which he enjoyed very much. Initially they had planned a "colorful, animated Costa Rican" church wedding, but finally the wedding took place in a restaurant, conducted by a lawyer, on July 4th.

Matthew enjoyed working with the social workers whom he considered well educated and organized in a more American manner. Others seemed to circumvent issues, but when he got sick he was pleased that everybody was concerned with his health while he thought Americans would have merely considered the lost work time. He criticized Costa Ricans for "overreacting" to the earthquake on April 22, and felt that Americans would not have panicked. The quake had reached 7.2 on the Richter Scale, and had been rather harmless in the Central Valley, but in Limón the damages were not repaired for months to come.

Matthew got accustomed to constant questions, but it still disturbed him when he was asked if he had money, a stereotype<sup>1</sup> caused by American and Hispanic soap operas shown in Costa Rica. Those who knew him

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<sup>1</sup> The volunteers reported that the most frequently encountered stereotypes of Americans were that they were rich, highly educated, and could not work manually.

accepted him more as a poor gringo, whereby gringo was not meant in a negative way but just as a description. He has given up smoking, television, bars, and hoping for privacy, but considered it an American trait to try to get to issues in a straightforward manner, to read for pleasure and to play volleyball and poker. He adapted to letting more things wait until tomorrow, eating rice and beans with a spoon, socializing as a priority in professional meetings, drinking coffee and in the way he greeted people.

He finally rented a house just a street away from the slum boundary and acquired a puppy. During May, he did less physical education classes at the children's home but got involved more in social work, especially some third grade problem children. He was still planning an educational week and had meetings on disaster preparedness. He described his social life as having a snowball effect: people "handed" him down from one family to the next. He finally went to church again for a funeral, and was at that moment planning a church wedding with about a hundred guests and a cow. An added side effect of being engaged was the lessening of romantic interests from the young women he worked with.

Matthew praised the forgiving Costa Rican attitude towards schedule changes which he had to test during his sickness. He enjoyed having been serenaded when he announced his engagement and was enthusiastic about Costa Rican hospitality which included offering enough to

eat and drink to anybody who may visit without forewarning the hosts, something that would be impossible in the US. He was still actively trying to learn to speak slang, but noticed that his behavior was different with Costa Ricans than with Americans. He had few problems switching from one behavioral set to the other, adjusting to the behavior of his environment. He felt accepted by his community, but also felt observed, especially when other Americans came to visit. He pointed out that he could not readily answer my question about American and Costa Rican behaviors anymore, since it had become harder for him to differentiate. While he felt that he was switching, he may in fact have been adjusting traits from both cultures to create a symbiosis for his well-being. He also felt that his life was run by everybody else, and that while he was not really accepted as belonging to Costa Rican society, he shared many of their values. But Matthew still pointed to writing and reading in English and feeding dogfood to his puppy as being very "American" things to do.

In June, his work involvement decreased when he tried to redefine his position and work responsibilities in the children's home. The staff there was willing to let him do social work, but nobody was sure what exactly he was supposed to do. He conducted art classes with Lisa for eight to twelve year old street children, and was still planning the educational week. His community was excited about a rumor that they would be relocated to government housing in approximately two months, but at that time nobody knew anything specific. Matthew was still grateful for the ease with which he was allowed to reschedule ac-

tivities, which would not be tolerated by Americans, but then criticized Costa Ricans for drawing up schedules which they then do not adhere to.

At the beginning of the month he described himself as feeling negative and sarcastic, especially since he had the impression that everybody was constantly asking him about his plans and activities. He felt that he stood out as an American. Although he did not like feeling negative, he felt he had been here long enough to have earned the right to feel like that once in a while. At that interview, his "American" list was more detailed than in June; he mentioned eating granola for breakfast, dancing, reading novels, writing plans, being task-oriented and sticking to schedules. His "Costa Rica" list included his social life, swearing, gestures, topics of conversations, teasing, and anything to do with food.

He felt better by the end of the month, after he had spent one week at the Spanish workshop with his training group and another week rafting with friends and his fiancée. He felt accepted as a gringo working and living in Costa Rica, not as a tourist, and felt much stronger how he switched behaviors when with Costa Ricans and Americans. He again claimed to be confused as to what behaviors were Costa Rican or American, but listed a need for privacy, short conversations and trying to be on time on the American side, while he now tied up the dog outside and used bad language, which he considered Costa Rican. Matthew pointed out that while many Americans in Costa Rica, and certainly all

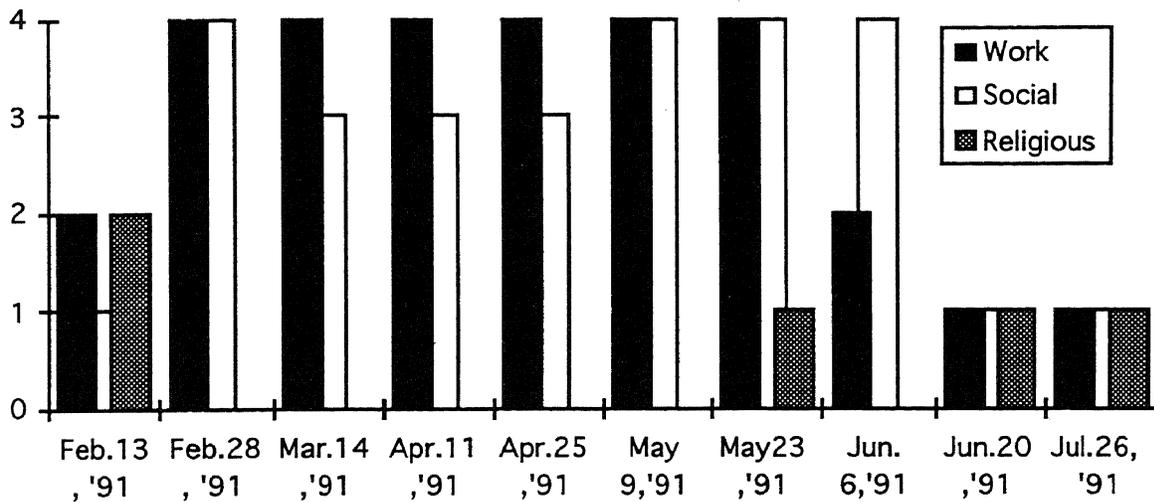
the volunteers I worked with, complained more or less forcefully and consistently about Costa Rican tardiness, the training group was admonished during the workshop by American and Costa Rican teachers alike for being too late for all classes.

On July 4, Matthew and Paula got married and left for their honeymoon in the US for two weeks. I talked to them just after they came back. Matthew was planning a volleyball team, youth classes on values and vocational training, tutoring English and building a Youth Center in Los Diques. He had no adaptation problems going home, but thought it amusing that he was inclined to start conversations in Spanish. He also had no problem coming back.

### **Initial Acculturation**

Matthew's professional, social and religious contact is plotted on the graph in Figure 8. It is especially noteworthy that while his professional and social contact was rather high during his first six months in site, both dropped considerably at the last interview. Paula's graph shows the same drop (see Figure 11) and may reflect their honeymoon vacation to the US.

**Figure 8**  
**Matthew's Inter-Ethnic Contact**



Matthew's main response to Costa Rican life was one of good-natured adjustment during the first six months. He enjoyed "letting things happen" and gained a reputation among other volunteers for taking things easy. While sharing a house in his community, he felt that his privacy was being invaded, often physically by his landlord and his family, who came into his room uninvited. After he had rented his own house, he symbolically surrendered his privacy by leaving the door open. He was very aware of his "fish-bowl" existence, and considered himself an upper-class minority, since his neighbors felt that as an American he must be very well educated.

He had problems adjusting to meeting and communication styles and considered the American communication style to be more frank and direct, which appears impolite in Costa Rica. He tried to be late and thought he had to learn to say no. Due to his use of colloquial phrases

and gestures he felt his behavior to be more Costa Rican than American when with Costa Ricans, while his neighbors felt that he made an effort to adapt. His Spanish had always been good and improved steadily to where he could discuss more complicated topics. At times he consciously tried to behave more Costa Rican by emphasizing the use of slang expressions and participating in local activities. He felt observed by his community, and some still thought that he had money. His co-volunteers visited him as a gringo. He felt most American when he found himself insisting on his privacy. He thought that he was regarded as a gringo, but was accepted as someone who worked in Costa Rica, not as a tourist. He continued to be confused about what in his behavior could be labeled “American” and “Costa Rican”, but characterized his need for privacy, his preference for short conversations and his insistence to get work done on time to be American traits. He admitted, though, that especially the last trait seemed to have been missing from the Spanish workshop due to the lax attitude of the volunteers.

He did not feel discriminated against, but even as an effective and hardworking member of the community, he was still a foreign element, expressed often by questions about the US and English. He tried to campaign against the American stereotypes delivered by television, but was often asked if he had money and only those who knew him accepted him as a poor gringo. However, while some people in his community saw him as the gringo, he felt accepted and integrated by most and has been asked if he is really an American. He considered “gringo” to be a

mere description, without negative meaning. He never intended to become too Costa Rican since he didn't come here to change.

Closer to the end of the six months, he found it harder to differentiate between "American" and "Costa Rican" behaviors, but always considered it "American" that he read English novels, how he dealt with stress and needed to be in control. He felt at times that everybody else was running his life and he felt "marginal", as not really belonging to Costa Rican society, but sharing some of the values which may not be accepted in the US. He became included in some drinking relationships, for "men talk", and quoted the "three Costa Rican lies" which include drinking, borrowing and sexual behavior.

### **One Year and Exit Interviews**

At the One-Year interview I learned that Matthew has moved since the last interview in July. Although he still served in the same community, he now lived in a more middle-class location with his wife, Paula, and another volunteer, Lisa. The Peace Corps approved this arrangement since it was meant to improve everybody's safety from burglaries, but, in fact, their new house was robbed one day. In his work, Matthew was now focusing on schools, teaching self-esteem, environment, sex education and recreation. He was only satisfied with the children's projects he was involved in, but felt that he should be more motivated in his community work and do more. He often found it difficult to integrate the different interests which affect his work. He had imagined that his

work would involve more vocational activities and more work on the streets, but he found himself spending most of his time in schools or the comedor (a public soup kitchen for the street children). He was not disappointed, but would like to focus more on street work.

He was very frustrated with his social life at the moment and felt as if he would never be a full member of the community. He was always asked when he would leave and he felt treated as a gringo. He explained that, although discriminating, this was not a condescending attitude toward him, but he felt “put above” and singled out, with people always trying to impress him. There are, however, still Costa Rican friends with whom he felt comfortable enough to visit for no reason and to leave without justification. He met with other volunteers (aside from living with two) at least once a week and visited the Peace Corps office frequently.

When he introduced himself to Costa Ricans, he did not mention his Peace Corps identity, but relied on his excellent command of Spanish to prove residency, because he was afraid he might be mistaken as a tourist and be taken advantage of. With Americans, Matthew did introduce himself as a volunteer, again because he did not want to be seen as a tourist but as somebody who was familiar with Costa Rica.

He still did not attend church, and did his share of laundry, cooking and cleaning. He did not read fiction in Spanish, but understood almost everything that was said to him and learned more by listening.

Thinking back to his life in the US, he missed some luxuries such as telephones, driving a car and recreational sports, but he did not miss TV or going out to bars on Saturday nights.

During the first year his main problems evolved around housing, the community's demand to serve on committees, and local suspicions. He thought that he spread himself too thin and had to eliminate several work areas. He was now getting used to meetings here, and it helped that the organization was improving. He was still troubled by the lack of discipline in the children, but put the fault for that with the educational system.

Matthew explains that to be American meant, at this moment, to be rich, to be either ignorant or focused on tropical forests (seen to be a major issue), to be stressed out or pompous (e.g. the embassy personnel). He described Costa Ricans as genuine, a little deceptive, happy and even gregarious. They are also loud (yelling, whistling), proud and lax.

Matthew expected the next year to go by fast. He would fine-tune his existing projects and had specific plans for his school work. He wanted to do more vocational work, and get internships for the children in local businesses. Before going back to the US he would like to travel and then work, maybe as an archaeological assistant, until his wife finishes school.

The last interview with Matthew was in December 1992. He would leave the service on January 31, 1993, and was in the process of finishing up all his projects. He taught night-school classes to drop-outs from grades 1 through 6, and to three adults who were at the second grade level, which he would turn over to Costa Rican teachers. He did not know what would happen to the sex-education classes he held with adults and children but was hopeful that the camping trips and fundraising activities he did with the community and the children in coordination with Lisa would be continued by succeeding volunteers. His community would be moved shortly; the land has been bought by the government; construction has started and everybody was excited to move. Some of the other projects he has been involved in during the year have been to paint the comedor; select sites for new volunteers and train three new Urban Youth trainees; being an editor for La Cadena, the newsletter of the Peace Corps in Costa Rica; rewrite the Urban Youth program for the main office in Washington, and give talks at in-service conferences on self-esteem. He also worked with the Asociación Demográfica (a private demographic institute) and received a scholarship from them to teach sex-education workshops.

Matthew was satisfied with the amount of work he has accomplished, but not with the results. Most accomplishments do not seem tangible, e.g. he made friends through the educational classes, but the participants may still get pregnant and not be responsible parents. But overall it was worthwhile. If he could do it over again, he would restrict himself

to the sports education longer, to get to know the children better. He felt he has spread himself too thin. Although he did not recommend a succeeding volunteer, there would be a new volunteer each in Youth, Business, and in the hospital.

Matthew was also satisfied with his progress in Spanish. He has mastered street slang, but did not read Spanish fiction. He felt he had grown personally. He became more introspective, and has a better grasp on his limits, capabilities and interests. He thought that previously he tended to lie to himself about his personality, and has learned to verbalize and to come to terms with many issues. He felt more competent in dealing with people and added that he has gotten married. He attributed most of his changing to stepping out into a new frame of reference in a different culture.

During the last year he has made many friends, mainly new volunteers, but also Costa Ricans, and he made close friends in his community, but his best friends were still Americans. He felt that he was only rarely accepted as a part of the community, but was seen mainly as a foreigner who lives in Costa Rica for a while. He planned to stay in touch with his friends after he had left. While he did not want to be mistaken for a tourist, he did not avoid tourists, in fact he played tour guide to some Germans for a week. He also had contacts with World Teach and US Aid In Development personnel.

Matthew continued not to go to regular church services, but he watched the Easter parades and celebrated in the evening with a Costa Rican family. He did attend a first communion, and fell asleep during a mass held in recognition for a community member. He was still being teased about his reaction to the only mass he attended during training, but when he asked about his avoidance of church, he felt he had to explain why he did not practice; he suspected that his explanations sounded more like he was standing on a soapbox, teaching very dogmatically about hypocrisy.

Matthew felt that his community has responded positively to his efforts. They could not understand why, at first, he had moved into a shack in the slum, but they always gave him the benefit of considering him just a little bit crazy. They were sad he was leaving. He felt that he has improved the economic status of maybe four families through business education, but could not foresee the impact of his sex-education classes. He did not feel that he changed the prevalent attitudes about community work where the existing leaders seem unwilling to organize themselves without outside help, but the idea that they need to be the source of change themselves was not there.

During the last two years, Matthew's perception of Costa Ricans changed from an initial positive experience, when he found everybody very accommodating, to a somewhat lower opinion. He found that kindness often hides ulterior motives and that belonging to a family also

includes one in the bickering and gossip. His expectations were too high at the beginning, and he now had a more realistic opinion, although they were still wonderful people. He described Costa Ricans now as loud, jovial, animated, cocky, wishy-washy, helpful, both patient and impatient, social, frugal, gossipy, and festive. It disturbed him that he was expected to fit into the behavioral norm of machismo, which made him feel uncomfortable.

Matthew saw himself now as a member of a specific ethnic group, and redefined that "ethnic" meant to him to look for one's own kind, whatever the qualifiers may be. The fundamental requirement remains to be tolerant. He did not talk kindly about fellow Americans who came as tourists; he called them boisterous, "charged," and always looking like they are lost. In general, he described Americans as lost, cautious, arrogant, sunburned, white, hurried, stubborn, insensitive, unaware, colorful, wealthy, and task-oriented.

He stayed for the full two years of service because he wanted to fulfill his commitment. It would not have felt right to quit early and leave projects unfinished. He might have extended, but one year would not have been enough time to work with a new community. Matthew thinks that others may have terminated because their commitment was not strong enough or because they just wanted to see how it would go. He had an appealing assignment and did not think the service too tough. He might have left for another site or home if the robberies had increased or the

robbers had been people from his community. He would have felt let down and treated as an outsider.

Matthew was very involved with the Peace Corps administration in Costa Rica and has become very critical of it. He feels that, on the federal level, the Peace Corps has become a self-serving organization which is used as an extension of foreign policy. For the administrative personnel it is just a stepping stone to other jobs, while the volunteers, who work out of love, are involved in a completely different work at the grassroots level.

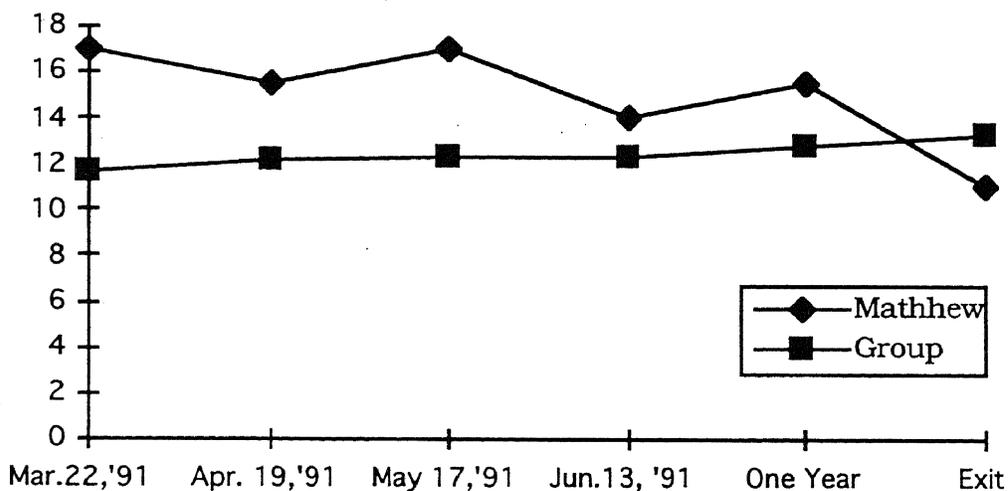
Matthew may travel with his wife and both were interested in doing some more volunteer work in environmental issues, maybe in another Peace Corps program or within the US, but they did not want to make volunteering a career. Matthew was looking forward to going home, seeing his family again and hunting for a job, but he had no long-term plans. Going home was similar to going into the Peace Corps more than two years ago, and there may be some problems in re-adapting to more rigid schedules and more caution in personal relationships. He would also miss the Costa Rican food. Matthew believed that now he would be better able to empathize with Hispanics in the US, especially since he knew what it meant to be out of one's own culture and struggling with a foreign language although he always had the option to leave. He did not approve of machismo, but he could handle it better now that he has seen the other side of it and how Costa Rican women react to it. He may

continue to work with Latinos. A year from now, Matthew thought he might be in New Mexico working to support his wife through graduate school.

### General Acculturation

Initially, Matthew showed very good adaptation skills and adjusted to his new environment quickly and seemingly easily. His social and professional interaction was high, as plotted on the graph in Table 9, calculated from his answers to the ICC scale (see appendix).

**Figure 9**  
**Matthew's Adjustment**

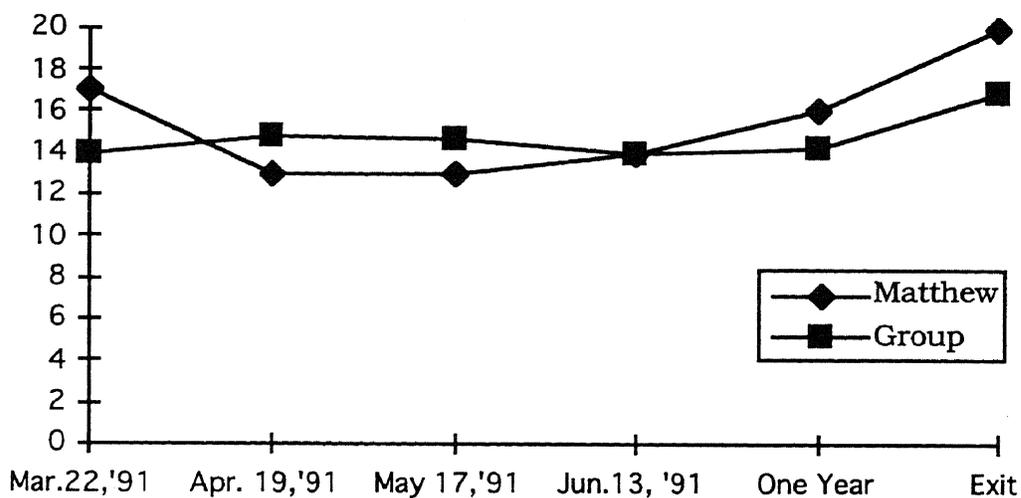


Matthew quickly acquired not only a high command of regular Spanish, but also of slang, and enjoyed many Costa Rican traits. It was during his second year that his adjustment faltered. New conflict arose when he and his wife, together with another volunteer, Lisa, moved into a middle-class neighborhood and experienced not only crime, but also felt

that after an initially quick acceptance by their friends and neighbors, they were still regarded as strangers and their acceptance was not extended further.

Matthew's initial withdrawal rating, shown in Figure 10, was higher than the group's average, since he was located closer to the Peace Corps office than most. It rose again after the first year, again in response to the problems indicated above.

**Figure 10**  
**Matthew's Withdrawal**



Matthew applied some adjectives consistently to Americans or Costa Ricans. His complete answers to the adjective checklist as well as his explanations for the ascriptions are located in the appendix.

Matthew had seemed a model volunteer during his first six months in training. He was very active, highly involved with his community, both professionally and socially, and seemed to manage each conflict with

good-natured adjustment. The last two interviews showed a different picture. At least during his second year, Matthew became more withdrawn from his environment, not only socially, but also professionally by working increasingly in the administration of the Peace Corps. It appears that his behavior was due largely to an increasing disillusionment with Costa Ricans and their reception of him. While he felt welcome and appreciated at first, he seemed to have expected this integration to continue unhindered.

During the second year he had to realize that he was indistinguishable from non-Peace Corps visitors in Costa Rica and not accepted as a resident by strangers. Although his friends and "adopted" family integrated him to a very large degree, he felt "kept at an outer circle of intimacy" and prevented from becoming a full member due to his ethnic background and his future departure. Although Matthew adjusted in most areas of his life to his environment, he withdrew somewhat during the second year by working increasingly for the Peace Corps management. He had also become more critical of the Peace Corps as a bureaucracy, but may have become involved with its management in an effort to improve its operation at least in Costa Rica. This interpretation is supported by his efforts to redefine and rewrite the training and working guidelines for the Urban Youth program.

### **3. Paula**

#### **Pre-Training**

Paula (23) was a Roman Catholic with a BA in Psychology and prior work experience. She had never left the US before coming to Costa Rica, but had some prior knowledge of Spanish. She described herself as a European-American by descent, with Norwegian and Irish-Scottish ancestors. She was very tall and slim, with medium length reddish-blond hair and appeared very delicate, in seeming contrast to her professed hobbies of rock climbing and rafting. She had some social ethnic contact with Asian-, Hispanic- and Native-Americans before. She had some knowledge about Costa Rica and expected no problems.

#### **Training**

Paula praised her training family highly, and described them as “going above and beyond the call to duty” to integrate her, help her with her Spanish, and in general make her comfortable. She spent much time with the other volunteers in her class, and visited the then current volunteer in her site as well as others in neighboring sites. She was very eager to move to her community and felt very prepared. She also felt that the people in her community were comfortable with having a volunteer living with them. She had been assigned to Integrated Community Development, a rather general Peace Corps program which targets general community development and frequently works with women and youth groups. Overall, she felt very comfortable in Costa Rica and especially mentioned its natural beauty.

## **The First Six Months**

Paula's first site was a small, coffee-growing community of about 250 Hispanic Costa Ricans, some from Guanacaste, near the border to Panama. Most residents worked in agriculture, some in the nearby regional capital and in construction. A gravel road connected it to the nearest bus station, and there was electricity and running water, but no phone. The community had an elementary school and two churches, one Catholic and one Evangelical, neither with a resident priest. Catholics outnumbered Protestants four to one. No tourists came through, but a Peace Corps volunteer just finished her service and Paula could continue with already established groups (women, youth, and children).

Finding her community at the first visit was rather intimidating, since I had been directed toward the more difficult of two routes which would have been impossible to pass during the rainy season. I found Paula walking along the town road and during this first interview she confided that she had responded to the stress of being isolated by very carefully reading through the Peace Corps manual about early termination. After having done that for three hours, she felt better. She had therefore responded to conflict with mock-withdrawal, but finally opted for adjustment. Paula had started working with all existing groups, tried to visit people in their houses and attended Catholic mass once a week. She commented on the lax attitude towards scheduled meeting times, and

tried to keep written notes. She felt that she needed to socialize more, but lived with a family who owned and operated the local store, an excellent location for her to meet all community members. The store was the village's main social place where people come to play dominos or to leave messages, followed by the church and the school, all located closely together at the town crossroads.

She had to adapt to a different greeting style, in which men shook hands and women kissed each other on the cheek, while people who know each other hugged. She would always be the gringa, but people saw her adapting when she tried to cook and dress in Tico style. It annoyed her that she was compared to the previous volunteer, often to the point where she was called by that woman's name; by the time Paula left, her community could not remember her predecessor's name.

She met many other Americans who lived in the region, and considered it American behavior that she slept relatively late (until 6:30 or 7:00 am), wore pants, read a newspaper, used a diary and a walkman with tapes from the US. She cleaned her room once a day, cooked with wood, walked everywhere and engaged in small-talk, things she considered Costa Rican behaviors. She felt that Americans traveled much more than Costa Ricans, and that most of women's conversations centered around children, while in the US women would talk more about work.

In March, Paula was busy in planning meetings for a health post and a chicken group. She killed chickens by holding their heads and twirling the bodies and sells them in the city; prior to killing chickens, the women pray for the success of the sale. She visited other volunteers and Costa Rican friends in the nearby city once a week and went to Catholic church every Sunday and every fourth Monday, and sometimes attended Bible readings on Wednesdays.

Costa Rican meetings frustrated her because people socialized before discussing the topic, and they brought their children. Since the time was switched back<sup>1</sup>, people tended to be more punctual. She enjoyed that the priest addressed people in church personally, possible due to the small number of attendants. Paula felt respected and accepted in the community, since she tried to adjust to their lifestyle. Her contact was mainly with women, but she quickly established a professional relationship with the young men in her community after a group had hissed at her (a sound with which Americans call their cats and which is interpreted as a compliment by Costa Rican men and women whom I asked about it). Paula turned around and hissed back, then explained to them that the sound was offensive to her. It may have also helped that she pointed out that she was on her way to visit their mothers.

On professional topics she often felt her opinion discounted since people felt that, as a newcomer, she did not know much about life in the

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<sup>1</sup> The Costa Rican government had attempted to introduce daylight savings time, but had to revert to standart time after a few months since most citizens objected.

community. She was considered more educated and explained that Americans are more intelligent because of the educational system which was more advanced and more widely available, while few Costa Ricans could take advantage of the educational system in Costa Rica. and her community was very disappointed when she explained that she could not get any funding for an already constructed soccer field, since many thought she should also be able to get any kind of funding for the community.

Paula observed that there are no books in the house in which she lived, and her pleasure and newspaper reading, as well as her bi-weekly visits to the capital were more American behaviors. She drank more coffee now, washed her clothes by hand, and planned to either burn or bury her trash once she had her own house.

During April, two more women joined the chicken group ( a total of eight). Paula continued meetings with the women and the health post committee and started planning a pig farm. Plans for the farm developed slowly enough that her initial idea of having the pigs delivered by me with my pick-up truck had to be rethought when I switched to a small jeep more useful when the rainy season started. She became more involved with men as well and planned to work with a mostly male youth group.

She still visited the city regularly and went to church. She was the only participant in my study who spent the Easter week in her community. She attended church every day, twice on Good Friday, and participated in a reenactment of the biblical story, and, on her knees, paced off the Way of the Cross with fourteen stations. Paula pointed out that this was a different way to celebrate Easter than in the US and wished she had been warned to protect her knees.

The last coffee crop had been bad and she wondered how people have money, although some women sold crochet. Although there was no work with the coffee at the moment, people stayed busy repairing their houses and five or six houses had new rooms added to them during the last month. She enjoyed that people seem very nice when greeting her, but lately the greetings seem monotonous and uncaring. She did enjoy being invited to eat when she visited a woman who just prepared a meal. She complained that everybody told her more than she needed to know, especially during meetings. She added that during meetings everybody seemed to talk at the same time and it was hard for her to get control of the meeting. She learned to leave time between meetings, since the first never seemed to be finished on time. She complained about the bureaucracy where one needed friends to "get in", and while the same may be true for the US, it was not as obvious there.

Paula tried not to let things, such as lack of privacy, bother her. She wanted to participate in everything and felt as an extension of many

families who were excited with her that she would rent her own house. At the same time they pitied her for then she would be living alone. She considered it "American" to read and write letters, use a watch, and walk barefoot in the house (which the Peace Corps discouraged). She stopped wearing make-up and, on the Costa Rican side, sat in the store just to chat, liked rice and beans, listened to TV and radio news in Spanish, washed clothes by hand, greeted women with a kiss, wore more skirts now, and asked for the well-being of people's animals. She also observed that she was more friendly to people on the bus, while she would hardly talk to strangers in the US.

Paula moved into her own house at the end of April and doubted at first if she would be able to live by herself since she had never lived alone before. But she quickly managed such household chores as cooking on a wood stove, washing by hand, and even copied her neighbors by visiting for no apparent reason. She continued with the same busy work load during May, gave talks on small business development to two groups in other towns and finally got the funding for the pig farm. Although she had initially refused to teach English, she started to tutor one person.

By the end of May, the chicken group disbanded due to lack of funding. She spent much social time with other volunteers and Costa Rican women in the city, and with the women of the pig group in the community. She also played pool with men once, which was not considered correct behavior for a respected woman, and won three games in a row.

By the end of the month, she tried to shorten private visits to be able to catch up with her paper work. She still went to church every Sunday, attended a revival meeting held for the population of six communities, and read the Bible and other religious literature by herself.

During this month's interviews, Paula mentioned many differences in American and Costa Rican work behavior. She criticized Costa Ricans for starting a project on the spur of the moment without planning, often in the afternoon or evening, while meetings in the US would be held in the morning and involve lots of paperwork. While personal ties help with business in both countries, it was done more openly in Costa Rica, while nobody admits to nepotism in the US. Paula was also annoyed that stores close over the lunch hour. She explained that the farmers scavenged materials to build their houses, that everybody knew everybody's business, and that people who never seemed to have any time for professional issues could always make time for social occasions.

She still enjoyed the polite greetings and the hospitality extended even when a visitor did not announce herself; Americans would never visit without calling ahead and a hostess would not usually offer food. She also liked it that children run up to her to kiss her, but they sometimes overstayed their welcome when they visited her. Paula, who was very active in rafting, rock climbing, and hiking did not approve that women

were excluded from sports in the country side; she pointed out that in the US most sports were open to women and men alike.

Since the Catholic priest could visit the community only once a month, the congregation was split over whether it was legal to have the liturgy read by a lay person on other Sundays, and many people attended church only when the priest was there. Paula pointed out that religion was woven into every other activity, e.g., the women prayed before they killed chickens, sang religious songs at anniversary parties and people knew the holiday of every saint and patron.

Paula mentioned household chores as an area in which she adjusted voluntarily to Costa Rican behavior in the beginning of May, and thought it to be a response to societal pressure at the end. She explained that she acted more Costa Rican in superficial things, but her way of thinking and her dependence on information and global news were American characteristics. She said that she “did” Costa Rican, but “thought” American. Her community appreciated her way of doing things and compared her favorably to the former volunteer. People talked to her about personal issues and invited her to individual projects (her predecessor did only group projects). People asked favors of her, so she could feel comfortable asking for favors in return.

As “American” behaviors she listed again reading, writing letters, keeping up with global news, appropriating more space when sitting in

a public space than Costa Rican women, and closing her front door. As “Costa Rican” behaviors she listed cooking with wood, visiting people without reason, and drinking coffee. She enjoyed getting away with more, did not have to adhere to schedules and found it easier to please people. She stopped using the phone, riding a bike, using her watch frequently, worrying if her clothes match, being afraid of bugs, or being worried about how clean the house looks.

Paula attended the Spanish workshop in June, as did most volunteers. Her women’s group added a few new members, and Paula was happy to report that all groups were getting more independent, a development which is particularly important since she planned to move to Matthew’s site in September. The funding for the pig farm had been delayed, but the application for the health post was finished and submitted to AID. Everybody was happy when she returned from the workshop and she was invited by many families since she was going to leave soon. She still attended church frequently.

Paula complained that only a small percentage of people were dedicated to work, while others just talked about it. It may be universal that farmers are proud of their work; everybody seemed to get excited about the new coffee harvest which would start at the end of August. She also pointed out that all the household work was performed by women and she hoped that the teenagers who could observe women doing other

kinds of work on TV or in the cities, might not adhere to such strong role divisions.

The members of the community arranged for many communal activities, such as bingo, but gave up on arranging a dance since they needed a permit for it. Paula felt that the level of a community's activity depends on its location, with isolated communities having not much activities. A lot of activities were based on religious meetings; the Protestant congregation had much more services throughout the week than the Catholics did, but they had more social gatherings. There seemed to be some division between the congregations, but no hostility, although the Protestants were treated more as an outcast group by the Catholics who acted more like they belong here (compare to Brad's community in section 10). All people were brought up religiously, but since they seemed to proclaim only what they were taught, Paula doubted if they are really spiritual.

Paula was annoyed with the employees at the US embassy who tended to pass jobs on; Costa Ricans stayed with one job for which they were responsible, but might try to refuse it initially. Americans were, however, more punctual and better at keeping appointments made long ago; she felt she had to remind Costa Ricans or they would forget. In both countries, drinking seems part of socializing, but Americans were more sports oriented and favored electronic diversions (movies, electronic games, discos). In the US, children were sent off to play when visitors

came, and visits were shorter. While Costa Ricans may seek out churches when traveling, Americans would not do the same; they also would not voice their religion as publicly as Costa Ricans. Paula also felt that because there were more religions in the US, religious life was more segregated.

Paula considered her behavior to be more American this month, although she also participated in such local activities as sugar cane pressing. Her ideals in connection with development work made her an outsider who had come to help, but for her community she appeared as just another member and they could not remember the former volunteer's name. Paula still read, wrote letters and planned ahead, but she had become more aggressive in securing a seat on the bus, her Spanish had improved and she knew the area, and wore more skirts than in the beginning. She feared that she was becoming too relaxed and reminded herself that she might want to be a part of Costa Rica, but still stood out. She stopped saving "junk" because life was too transient.

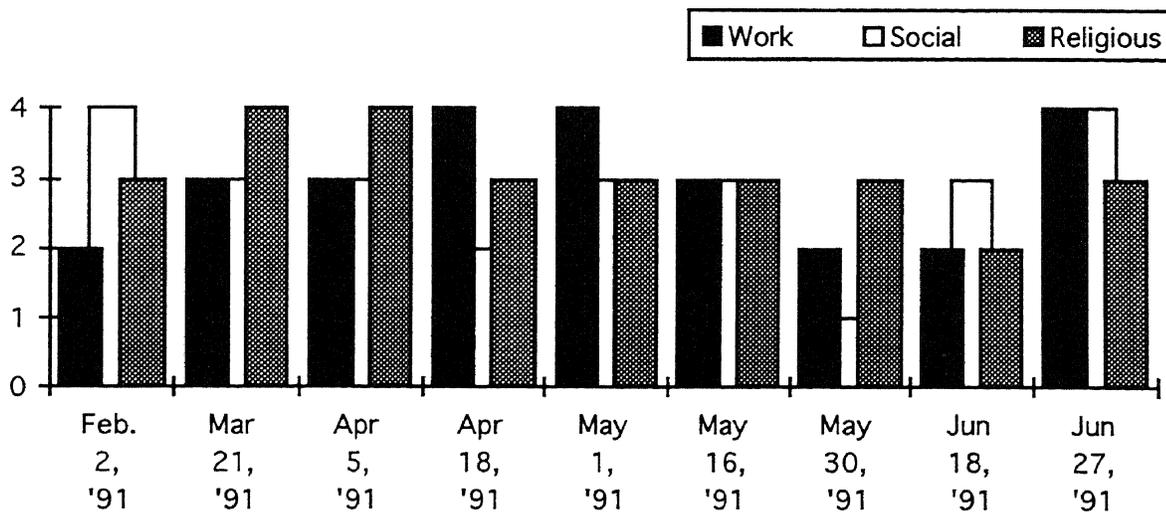
Coming back from her honeymoon in July, Paula would organize her work and prepare everything for her successors, a married couple. In her new site, she planned to work with mothers of school-age children concerning child abuse and to offer environmental issues classes for adults and children. She might also tutor English. She enjoyed the technical gadgets in the US, and that more women were as tall as she. Like her husband, she had to stop herself from starting conversations in

Spanish. She also had no problems returning to Costa Rica and was looking forward to moving to the Central Valley.

### Initial Acculturation

Paula's involvement with her community in work, social and religious life was initially high, dropped during the Spanish workshop and was, like her husband's, non-existent during the last interview, when they had just come back from their honeymoon. Paula did not plan any continued involvement in her first site since she was scheduled to leave at the end of August. Despite Paula's expressed satisfaction with her first community, she seemed to decide to leave it for her husband's site without many regrets. In contrast to other respondents who had followed previous volunteers (see chapter four), Paula did not feel that her community compared her negatively to her predecessor, and she quickly established an identity and a place for herself.

**Figure 11**  
**Paula's Inter-Ethnic Contact**



Another possible explanation for her readiness to leave could be the distance of her community from the Central Valley. With a five-hour busride she did not have the longest commute of my participants (Roberto needed all day, provided he caught all the right connections and the roads were passable), but may have felt isolated in a very small community and longed for a larger city with more resources. Although Matthew liked Paula's community, he apparently never suggested that he should join her. Of course, this would have involved switching to a different Peace Corps program (an Urban Youth volunteer with his expertise in street children would not have found work in a small village) and their decision may have been based mainly on this consideration. Furthermore, Paula had been welcomed by Matthew's adoptive family and may have looked forward to a very friendly social environment.

While all volunteers received a notebook to jot down any experiences with Costa Ricans or Americans they wanted to share with me between interviews (August 1991 - January 1992 and January 1992 - December 1992), Paula was one of the very few who used this option. Consequently, her notes to me are summarized only briefly here. Paula felt more and more comfortable with small talk during all occasions, even business meetings, and used more sayings (dichos). She paid more attention to her appearance. The low use of telephones and answering machines was becoming annoying, since appointments (professional and social) were made on the spur of the moment and one cannot say "Maybe - let

me call you later". Some close friends took to including her and her husband in their plans without checking with them and she felt controlled by that. In her new site she felt less accepted and expressed her disappointment in always being "looked upon as a foreigner". She was very disappointed at her neighbors' apathy, when they did not call the police when they must have seen a stranger in their yard who stole their dogs.

### **One Year and Exit Interviews**

Paula summarized her work experience since July 1991 at the One-Year interview in January 1992. The "pig group" had become very independent, was run by goal-oriented women, and, in the end, only required technical information, while the "chicken group" women had become very passive. The Health Post did not materialize after all, since the committee, without Paula's knowledge, had lied to USAID about owning the title to the lot on which it was supposed to be built. Her tutoring sessions stopped when the coffee season started up again.

Paula worked with street children in her new site. There were about 100 girls and boys between the ages of eight and fourteen who used the comedor (soup kitchen) and she counseled them on work, relationships, self-esteem and the environment. She tried to raise funds in stores and toy factories, and held raffles and bingo to finance overnight trips with the children (approximately 45 had permission to go on such trips). She tried to improve the children's behavior, to make them calmer and more

patient and social. She just started to work with the Casa de Mujer y Familia and gave talks to women about violence, self-esteem and legal rights. She also taught third through sixth grade in one school on self-image, body language and personal goals, adding sex education in the sixth grade. She was planning a women's volleyball team in her community, and some women were interested in playing basketball.

Paula had expected Peace Corps work to be more rustic, isolated, and basic, work which would involve digging wells in a desert or improving infrastructure. All that was already present in her first site which only needed improvement in health care provisions. She was very satisfied with the amount of work in her second site, although she was concentrating on the street children at the moment. She prefers to work in the city, since there were more resources available here, while the country has nothing and the majority of people were not dynamic and want to do things the old way. She felt she had a good response from the six neighborhoods she was responsible for in her second site.

While Paula felt like a member of her community, she would never be fully accepted, since she was more of a novelty, somebody who was here to change people. She had felt more accepted in her first site in the country; in the city she was treated like a gringa, separated and discriminated against, or just another tourist. However, she felt accepted and respected by those people with whom she worked and who knew her. She felt very comfortable with her Costa Rican friends, the

same family which had already "adopted" her husband. In her old site, there was nobody of her own age, and although she could talk about general problems with her neighbors, she did not feel comfortable discussing personal problems.

Apart from living with two other Peace Corps volunteers, Paula often met other volunteers at the office, on the bus or at parties. When she met new Costa Ricans, she did not introduce herself as a volunteer, but she would mention it immediately to new Americans, maybe because they were more likely to know what the Peace Corps was.

While Paula regularly attended church in her first site for social reasons, she attended church only twice in her new site, once because of a concert. She did not pray anymore, mainly because now she had people to confide in, whereas in her old community she felt she had to uphold the "golden image of the brave and independent Peace Corps volunteer."

Together with her husband and roommate, Paula did all the household chores, although she sometimes did the laundry in a washing machine at a friend's house. Her Spanish was at a satisfactory working level, but she would never be satisfied with it. She constantly added new words and phrases, especially technical vocabulary. She did not read fictional Spanish.

From her life in the US, she missed cars, constant access to a phone and the convenience of 24-hour stores, but she did not miss the materialism, the need to buy the newest and latest things. Unfortunately, Costa Rica seemed on the way to the same need for luxuries. Initially, the lack of privacy was a big problem. Although her first community was accustomed to gringos, Paula thought they did not believe her to be capable of washing her own clothes or dishes, and she felt smothered, but she felt safe taking walks alone at night. Everybody was impressed by her reading, since her neighbors do not read for entertainment. She was supposed to attend every religious meeting in the community, mainly for social reasons, while Paula would prefer to separate her religious from her social life. In her new site, she worries about the safety of the house and was bothered by strangers regarding her as the gringa.

Apart from her husband, her best friends were Costa Rican and American, and people came to her to discuss personal problems. At the moment, Paula defined American as being free to chose the way one wants to live, to be educated, adventurous, well-traveled and interested in seeing other countries, to take chances in business, be time-oriented, independent, stubborn, and to keep physical distance. Costa Ricans were welcoming, sharing, less educated, very curious, proud, passive, hard-working, not adventurous to find different work, and very close in personal space. They were religious, but people in cities practice their faith in their own way by going to church less (once a week or less) and

being more spiritual than religious. Not everybody was a practicing Catholic, but she has never met an atheist.

For the second year of her service Paula hoped for more success in her work, to improve her Spanish, and to counsel other Peace Corps volunteers on how to deal with "touchy" community leaders. She expected to always feel like a minority, but there were times where she also felt she might like to live here and promote the Peace Corps. After the service, she would like to travel first, and then go to graduate school (she could take the GRE in Costa Rica). She might travel to Europe and maybe work in Italy for a while, preferably in a rural area, because her husband had relatives from southern Italy.

The last interview with her was in December 1992. Paula was to leave the Peace Corps on January 31, 1993 and planned to have all her projects finished by then. As did her husband, she worked for the Peace Corps' newsletter La Cadena, submitted a video about the Urban Youth program to Washington, and assisted with the training of new Urban Youth volunteers. Aside from teaching environmental and some English classes, she worked with street children and with social service agency, the Casa de Mujer y Familia. Together with a psychologist she tried to establish a support group for battered women, but the group failed after three meetings because the husbands did not let their wives attend. She was more successful with a sewing group which raised funds to start a business by making pajamas, sheets and pillow cases.

She conducted other fundraising projects with clubs and businesses and the children could go on two trips.

Paula was satisfied with her achievements, except that some projects would still remain in the hands of foreign volunteers instead of being continued by Costa Ricans. If she could, she would have started counseling earlier, would have worked more for women's rights organizations, and would have advertised more city-wide for her series of talks on women's rights. Although she would not recommend a successor, she felt the program should be expanded.

Paula appreciated the support and gratefulness for her help she received from both communities, but felt that people tended to over-value her as a "Jack-of-all-trades" who could get any sort of funding and was "super-intelligent". Some people were confused about how the Peace Corps could help them and others suspected ulterior motives. She believed that she functioned as an example for people to know that they can achieve anything if they put their minds to it and that she has opened people's minds to new ideas. She has shown that one can be comfortable about expressing ideas that were not easily revealed, she has tried to make people feel comfortable and to teach them that they can improve. She did not know if any change would come out of this.

While her relationship with their adopted family lessened to some degree, she had more American friends now, especially three who were

volunteers for World Teach. But she held that she had made close friends in her community with whom she would stay in touch after she was gone. While she was with them and tried to fit into most customs and traditions, she felt accepted. When she voices her own opinions which were more liberal from those of her Costa Rican friends, she was seen more as an American. Everybody else treated her as an outsider and tried to speak English to her, and especially in San José she was treated as a tourist. Her Spanish improved in both grammar and vocabulary, and she felt that she spoke good, proper Spanish. It was, however, a release to read fiction in English. Her contact with non-volunteer Americans was often with tourists or embassy personnel, and she helped an American couple find information on how to adopt a Costa Rican child. Paula was aware that she felt superior to tourists and she preferred to have closer contact with Costa Ricans than with tourists. She enjoyed being able to say that she lives here.

Paula echoed the opinion of other members of her training group that theirs was one of the most cohesive groups to have served in Costa Rica, and she enjoyed having found many close friends (and a husband) among them. She worked hand in hand with the Peace Corps management on different levels, and had only few problems, mostly connected to the recent turn-over in the director position.

During the last year she attended church only once, during a wedding in her first site. She explained that she has a spiritual way of worship and did not believe in religion.

From the beginning on she was committed to serve the full term and had debated if she should extend for seven to 12 months or go to graduate school (she just took the GRE together with Lisa). She might have changed site (other than for private reasons) if she had not felt useful or had been harassed, but the only reason for her to have terminated early would have been rape (which had happened to another volunteer).

Before going back to the US she would travel with her husband, and investigate the possibility of doing environmental volunteering. She felt very prepared to go home, and started packing and selling things. She had been back for vacations and was prepared that people would want to hear only about her work and the hardships she endured. She felt that with her increased knowledge of Spanish she would now be able to be more open-minded about Hispanic-Americans and to have more conversations. She may do some more work in development, and may, later in life, serve again with the Peace Corps in Africa or Asia, or serve with VISTA. A year from now she planned to be in New Mexico or Colorado in her first year of graduate school in clinical psychology.

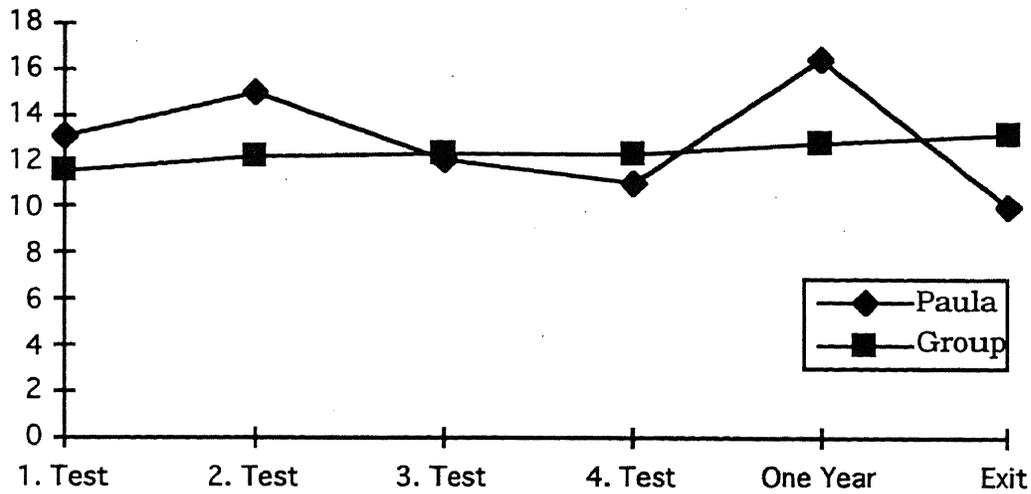
Paula judges that the last two years made her less shy in talking to strangers, more interested in how even mere acquaintances can influ-

ence her, and enabled her to address criticism better. She understood the personal and work behavior of Costa Ricans better now than when she came and felt more comfortable relying on people when she trusted them. She considered Costa Ricans to be very tolerant of personal idiosyncrasies, but felt more comfortable and accepted in the country than in the city. She described Costa Ricans in general as friendly, interested in Americans, pushy, prejudiced, nosy, helpful, too social, great conversationalists, laid back, dependent, and preferring "to party" before business. She described Americans as being concerned with personal well-being, traveling, organized, prejudiced, educated, daring, ethnocentric, preoccupied, independent. She praised those Americans who were selflessly volunteering time in other countries to work for the environment and in development.

### **General Acculturation**

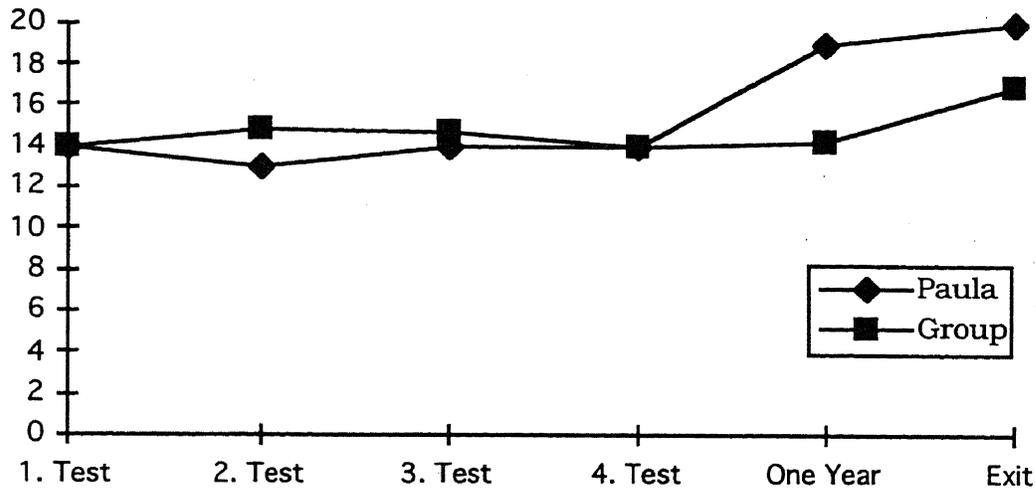
Paula did not remember having had too many problems. Washing everything in cold water brought a concern with cleanliness, and machismo was always disturbing. The main problem was that she never blended in and that she was always thought of as being rich.

**Figure 12**  
**Paula's Adjustment**



Paula's adjustment was consistently higher than the group average, with the exception at the time between the Spanish workshop and her wedding/honeymoon, and at the end of the second year when she had experienced a similar disillusionment as described earlier for her husband. The main point of dissatisfaction for Paula was the continuing verbal harassment she endured on the streets of Cartago and San José, which she interpreted as a sign that she was still seen primarily as an outsider. While she felt subjected to stereotyping, she also had stereotypes of her own, and this showed in her adjective ascriptions.

**Figure 13**  
**Paula's Withdrawal**



Paula's withdrawal was below the group average during the first six months, but rose sharply after she had joined her husband in his site. While the above mentioned harassment may have been a possible cause, it was more likely that she found enough company with her husband and roommate and did not need to interact as closely with Costa Ricans as she had done in her first site. An interesting item was that she visited church regularly in her first site, but discontinued this once she was in her second site. Although she explained at one point that she had attended church for social reasons, she had also remarked on reading the Bible and other religious literature by herself, habits which she gave up as well. Paula's withdrawal may therefore have been caused not as much by external circumstances, but by her change of lifestyle once she got married. To assess this, I will later compare Paula's adjustment and withdrawal to the lifestyle of Monica and Charlotte, the two other married women in my sample, in chapter four.

Paula applied some adjectives (materialistic, independent, idealistic, intelligent, progressive) consistently to Americans. Her complete answers to the adjective checklist and all adjective ascriptions and her explanations for the ascription are listed in the appendix.

#### **4. Monica and Manfred**

##### **Pre-Training**

Monica (59) and Manfred (65) decided to join the Peace Corps as an alternative to retirement. Both had worked in agriculture, and Monica had also worked as a secretary. They described their ethnic background as European-American (German) and belonged to the United Church of Christ. Both were of medium height, with silver-gray hair. Manfred had a full gray beard and was balding, and Monica wore her hair short. They both started to learn Spanish. They had little social and professional contact with an African American physician, but not with other ethnic groups. They had already visited Costa Rica four times and described their knowledge of the country as medium to high. Consequently, they foresaw no problems.

##### **Training**

Both Monica and Manfred rated their integration into their host family during training as very high, and also maintained high contact with other trainees. While Monica felt that she was ready to give working in a community a try, Manfred felt unprepared because of his lack of Spanish. Monica felt very comfortable in Costa Rica and that she would be able to overcome any language difficulty. Manfred had some problems and was not sure if he could "do much to help these people at this time and place." Because of his lack of Spanish, Manfred did not graduate from training, but decided to stay in Costa Rica to help his wife during her service time. They visited their future site three times on schedule

with the other volunteers, but since Manfred had to return to the US for a heart operation, they did not move into their site until April 6, 1991, two months later than the rest of their training group.

### **Service**

Their community was a major town outside the Central Valley of about 6,000, mainly Hispanic Costa Ricans, with a diverse economy, including agriculture and a packing plant. The volunteers had access to electricity, water, phone and busses, there were an elementary and a high school, and Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as proselytizing Mormons. All churches had resident priests. World Teach had two volunteers located in the community.

Monica's work was to be with small farmers and she also planned to organize a women's group. When I visited them for the first time, they had been in their site for about three weeks. Monica had visited a co-op to get to know the people involved, and they had made some Costa Rican and American friends. Monica noticed that people in their community got up very early, and that they worked very hard, but pointed out that stores close for a siesta. She thought that Costa Rican women would not do the same jobs American women did. Her Costa Rican friends were amazed that she drank beer, while her husband did not. Manfred pointed out that he was different from Costa Rican men in that he helped with the housework. He enjoyed a local fiesta they attended, and

felt that people were nice and courteous, but treated them with indifference.

Both felt that their behavior was American; Manfred felt retired and remembered that he was much busier at home, while here he took many more walks. They had not yet gained an impression about what their community thought about them, but felt treated cordially. In contrast to their neighbors, they read, boiled their water and ate corn flakes, while they also started to eat rice and beans for breakfast. Both had given up on using a car or a telephone, watching television, and, in Manfred's case, smoking cigars. Manfred observed that Costa Ricans were "naturally content with less in terms of entertainment", and that they had more family interaction, "like Americans in the 30s".

At the second interview, Monica and Manfred had been in their site for six weeks. Both had visited some farms and fincas to see if the owners would be interested in training on bookkeeping, and an agricultural school with approximately 100 students. Monica also started to teach English in their house. They had some social contact with neighbors, farmers and children, and were invited to a visit to the beach. They did not attend church, since they were not Catholic, and there was only one fundamentalist Protestant church available. Manfred listened to American sermons on short-wave.

Asked about differences between Americans and Costa Ricans, Monica praised the children for being well-behaved, polite (knock before they enter the house) and content; she also liked the school uniforms which Manfred found practical. There seemed to be no concern for labor saving, while Americans knew labor-saving techniques. Manfred added that Costa Ricans put in more hours than some realize, since there was a high amount of intensive physical labor which was cheap. Monica was disturbed when the school's principal blamed a teacher when his daughter failed an exam. Although Monica did not participate in church, she pointed out that Catholics sang more, while fundamentalists were very loud, and Manfred remarked that people tended to walk in and out of the service, and that such behavior would not be permitted in an American church. Both observed these behaviors while walking past churches, but they did not attend services. Monica considered her neighborhood atypical, since her neighbors did not visit that often, and Manfred praised the young people who frequent the town center park in the evenings as well behaved. But dogs ran free everywhere.

Monica felt that she did not need to change much of her behavior since they lived on their own; but Manfred found it hard to break way from customary behavior since he had never been exposed much to difference. Since their community was large and tourists pass through frequently, they were not such an "oddity", and were not seen as complete strangers. They felt that they were given much respect because they

were older. They considered it "American" that they ate corn flakes and pancakes, listened to the Voice of America on short-wave, read the English-language newspaper and magazines, and read for pleasure. They also played cards and still boiled the water. They felt that they did adapt in their cooking by using what was available in local stores and markets. Monica also dressed more conservatively now.

During June, Monica offered a presentation at a chemical company, but nobody came. She taught English to a group of children and helped with church decorations. Their social contact was very low and limited mainly to people they were professionally involved with. Monica compared American farmers who did all the work themselves or worked along with their employees to Costa Rican farmers who only supervised their employees. Manfred complained about tardiness, trouble with the mail and pointed out that more manual labor was done in Costa Rica. He criticized Costa Rican husbands for dating other women, but also criticized young American women who behave "freer" in Costa Rica than at home. Both discovered a difference in the strong connection between church and school in Costa Rica, while the two were less connected in the US. Back home, Catholics and Protestants would get along better as well.

Monica considered her behavior to be typically American, it was "in [her] blood", while Manfred tried to respect Costa Rican culture and followed the rules. He said he was treated well and politely, but that

Monica was known better. Manfred considered Costa Ricans more hospitable than Americans; a slower pace made more time for socializing. Both considered it "American" that they read, wrote letters, ate corn flakes, boiled the water, and that Monica drank beer in restaurants. Both also enjoyed cooking with fresh foods.

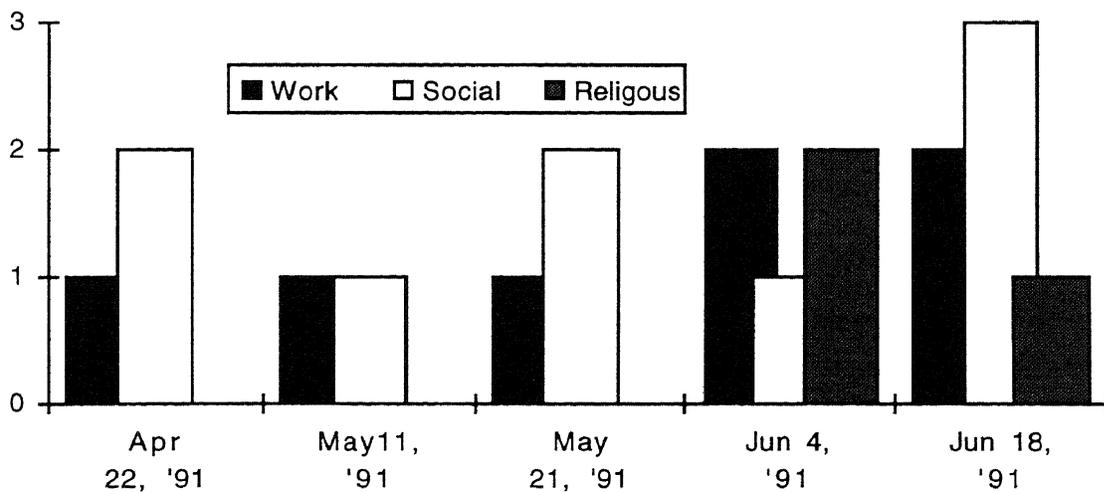
During the second June interview, Monica and Manfred recalled talking to some farmers, while Monica had taught some English. They joined a Father's Day celebration, and attended a church service. Monica admired how hard Costa Rican women worked to keep their house clean, and how early people got up to commute to their workplace in San José (approximately one hour by car). Manfred did not approve of men stopping work in the middle of the day because of the heat. Monica approved that people did not feel the need to dress up to attend church, and Manfred agreed that American churches could open up more.

Manfred's health had shown no improvement over the last months and their physician advised them to return to the US. They left shortly after Paula's and Matthew's wedding. We talked on the phone several months later; they had moved back into their old home which they renovated, and looked back fondly on their time in Costa Rica. Manfred's health has improved.

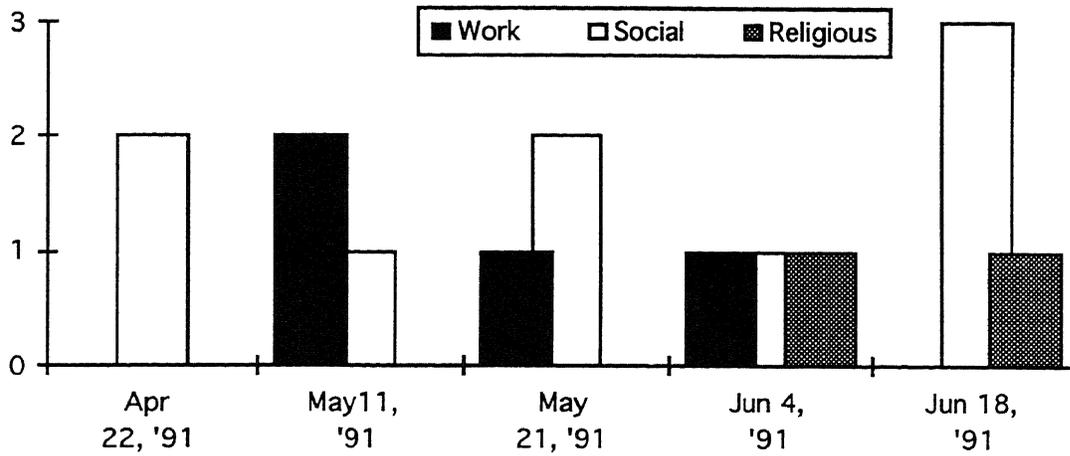
## Acculturation

During their relatively short stay in Costa Rica the couple remained socially isolated. They would work on their projects (which did not come close to the level of the other couples), take long walks by themselves, and visit with other volunteers in the capital city. Their contact in their site consisted of some visits of their neighbors and those of two World Teach volunteers. Both did not express surprise at different living conditions ("we knew it would be different"), but especially the husband often expressed his irritation with the local population which so obviously needed developmental aid, but did not appreciate it enough. The volunteers' arrival passed almost unnoticed, and their work involvement never reached an even medium level. Only the closest neighbors and a few work contacts knew of the volunteers' presence. Their professional, social and religious involvement is plotted on the following graphs:

**Figure 14**  
**Monica's Inter-Ethnic Contact**



**Figure 15**  
**Manfred's Inter-Ethnic Contact**



Monica and Manfred took the acculturation scale only twice, and while there appeared to be a tendency to marginalize themselves, and Monica showed some improvement in adjustment, there was not enough data to interpret that scale.

The Adjective Checklist was applied six and seven times (Manfred did not complete the first application). Both were constant in ascribing the more positive adjectives to Americans. Monica usually described Americans as being more industrious, independent, honest, idealistic, ambitious, intelligent, and progressive, while she considered Costa Ricans to be more spiritual, subservient, conservative, cautious, peace loving, generous, domineering (mostly men), and dependent. Manfred usually considered Americans to be more industrious, materialistic, independent, aggressive, ambitious, egotistical, progressive, impulsive,

and domineering, while he thought Costa Ricans to be more spiritual, conservative, peace loving and dependent. He also often expressed his belief that Costa Ricans were very much in need of developmental assistance and that while Americans were sacrificing themselves to help, they were not appreciated enough.

## **5. Carey**

### **Pre-Training**

Carey (42), with a BA in psychology, had worked in social welfare and had traveled to Mexico and Italy before joining the Peace Corps. She had no religious affiliation. She described herself as an Anglo American and has had very high professional contact with Mexican Americans, but saw no opportunity to extend that contact. She was of medium height, slim, with shoulder-length silver-gray hair. She spoke French and Italian and just started to learn Spanish, had never visited Costa Rica before, and knew only little about the country. She thought she might have some problems fitting in.

### **Training**

Carey loved her training family, especially her “mother”, and kept in close contact with them during her service time. She was involved mainly with that family outside of training, but occasionally included other volunteers. She did not feel very ready to move into her community, but decided to “give it try”. She had some problems which appeared already during training, especially her slow acquisition of Spanish.

Her community was a small, coffee-growing village in the mountains, approximately 20 minutes away by bus from the regional capital. The roughly 1,000 inhabitants were Hispanic Costa Ricans, some of whom claimed Native Costa Rican descent. There was electricity, running water, and one phone, an extension line from the village down the road,

which had a senior volunteer. The pavement ended at the border of that village, but a bus came to Carey's village twice a day. Her all-Catholic village had a church whose priest came once a week, and an elementary school. She had been assigned to Integrated Community Development.

### **The First Six Months**

I visited Carey for the first time after she had been in site for two and a half weeks. She lived with a family who had added an extra room to the house for which Carey paid with the housing allowance provided by the Peace Corps. Carey quickly got busy, founding a women's and a youth group. Her social contact was restricted to her family because of her lack of Spanish. She never went to church. At first, she could not identify any differences between Americans and Costa Ricans, felt she was seen as adapting to Costa Rica, and had no problem with close proximity in conversations since she had experienced that already in Italy. She considered it "American" that she drank lots of coffee without sugar, visited other volunteers twice a week, and smoked in public. She felt she was adapting to the local "wildlife," i.e., insects. She expressed her encounters with insects in her TAT story of picture two, when she described the women as being despondent because "she just saw the twelfth cockroach of the day." Another TAT story, to picture four, involved "someone in a family who had been away to a dangerous situation ... remembers the family together" and could have expressed that Carey missed her twenty-year old daughter in the US<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals with dependent children are not accepted into the Peace Corps.

In March, Carey described her work contact as "medium." Her youth group numbered 26 individuals and she attended their meetings as well as those of the women's group. She gave up on an English class, but started working on a grant application for a pig farm and was, like Paula, very interested in the services of my pickup truck. She was frustrated about her low social involvement which she attributed to her inadequate Spanish, and she attended one church service. At the end of March, Carey was hospitalized with an infection for seven days and enjoyed frequent visits of neighboring volunteers and community members.

Carey remarked that people did not stay focused on one problem during meetings, but would stop and chat. Punctuality was an issue, as well as a lack of planning for intermediate goals. She reported that the women's group meetings would often result in heated discussions, in which she did not participate, again claiming insufficient Spanish. There seemed to be a lack of communication within the women's group; when the group rented a car to attend a meeting together, nobody showed up at the specified time and one woman ended up paying for the car rental. Carey missed having privacy on walks, since she had to greet everybody she met. She was also very protective of animals, an issue which was brought up by her landlady's 3-year old son whom she had observed torturing chicks. This behavior was tolerated by the parents with the argument that since animals have no souls, they cannot feel pain.

Carey felt that she was acting very "American," since she wanted "to get to the point" in discussions, and was more closed off to protect her privacy. She was more communicative with Americans. In contrast to her neighbors she stopped to pet cats and read for pleasure, but she also helped with the cooking.

During the first interview in April, Carey praised the hospital professionals as being very friendly, kind and pleasant. When one patient stole her magazines, she was assured by others that this was not unusual behavior. In April, she again became busy with youth and women's groups meetings and continued the work to apply for funds for the pig farm. She had been invited to some houses for meals, coffee and a birthday celebration. Carey remarked on Costa Rican men who gave up too quickly in finding a job, and on women who prefer to stay home and regard outside work as merely a source for cash, but do not want to be responsible for the money. She also observed how men were being served at the dinner table, while women eat in the kitchen.

Carey considered herself to be very subdued in her behavior. She admired that Costa Rican parents never seemed to lose patience with their children, while she would certainly be a lot stricter with the 3-year old son of her landlady. She thought that her community liked or at least tolerated her, and thought she had money. She still liked to take walks by herself, but received greetings better now, she read, sat alone, and

went into town. Like Costa Ricans, she wore shoes in the house, took showers at midday and snacks between meals. She tried, unsuccessfully, to break the "coffee-habit."

Her work involvement remained busy during May with group meetings almost every day. She tried to socialize with neighbors, but was still convinced that her Spanish was inadequate. She had problems with people being on time for meetings, but the women's group was an exception in that they were all very punctual. Carey waved machismo off as a "usual" social problem and saw that women have a lot of control and responsibility in perpetuating men's behavior; it still disturbed her that children, especially boys, were allowed to do what they wanted. She had attended a wedding, in which the priest had a conversation instead of delivering a sermon; Carey was also surprised to see the children just walk around in church, while an American church would have day-care. She admonished Costa Ricans for a lack of planning and efficiency, and for using too much time and personnel. She thought of Americans as being more organized in planning, but admitted that she may be idealizing that.

Her community did not think she was a "typical American," and her neighbor confided in me that she was afraid Carey might go home soon. A neighbor suggested to her that she should have a boyfriend. Carey felt that some Costa Ricans only pretend to like Americans since the US had something they wanted; she based that opinion on remarks people made

about Americans while watching television. Carey considered it “American” that she did not try to walk on gravel roads with high heels but preferred tennis shoes, she wore pants, smoked and drank beer in public and desired to read. She still liked rice and beans, drank many fruit juices (frescos) and washed clothes by hand.

Her group work stayed high during June, but she also attended the Spanish workshop for one week. She enjoyed seeing her training family, with whom her Spanish did not seem to be a problem, and had discussions about “basic human needs” with her “mother,” which improved her well-being. But when she came back from the workshop, her room had been completely rearranged, which disturbed her. Carey recognized that she had tried to overcompensate for her frustration with people’s tardiness by being later herself; in the women’s meetings she was now the one who was late. She pointed out that talking behind a person’s back was done in both countries. While Americans work hard and then party hard, Americans were also more comfort-oriented at work, while Costa Ricans must use more manual labor to make do with what they’ve got and used mostly social activities in their free time, while Americans needed to do something. Carey was surprised to hear that the church bell was rung when a person died, a Catholic tradition she was not familiar with.

She took her mother’s visit as an opportunity to travel in Costa Rica and I joined them on one occasion. Carey saw the habit of traveling as an

American characteristic, while Costa Ricans spend more time at home. She felt accepted as special and different by her community, but also calls herself their "pet American." While she felt more Costa Rican in being more relaxed, she continued to get angry when her privacy was invaded, such as when her landlady rearranged her room in her absence or borrowed things without asking.

During the previous months, Carey had frequently questioned her ability to remain in her community for the whole two years. Her main concern was her perceived inability to improve her Spanish comprehension and speaking skills, and even the workshop had not helped. During the wedding celebration on July 4, she warned me that she might terminate early and expressed her hope that would not inconvenience me too much (at that time, I had already "lost" Monica, Manfred and Verne).

On August 2, the country celebrates La Negrita, where a statue of Mary leaves the cathedral in Cartago and moves to another church for a month. People pray to La Negrita and promise to walk to Cartago at that day if she helps them. Carey, her visiting niece, and I joined the walkers in San Pedro in the evening of August 1, and walked for six hours to the cathedral. There, we met several people from her community who had walked across the mountains for three days to fulfill their vows. The holiday is celebrated throughout the country and Carey felt it necessary to participate in it, if not by walking from her site, at least from a, for her, reasonable distance.

At the interview in August, Carey reported that the pig farm would not get funded until January, and the women's group needed sewing machines to make dolls for sale. The youth group had connected to the national organization and, after a regional meeting, had started to plan a theater group. Carey might start to tutor English again. While she said that every work contact was also a social contact, her free time was spent sitting on the porch, since she refused to visit people without a specific invitation. She attended church once, and compared it to Pentecostal Church in the US in that mass was not traditionally organized, but more modern and free.

Carey was frustrated that many issues were not clarified in advance and complained that even her Costa Rican program director was late for a meeting. Americans would expect punctuality so as not to lose time, and socializing would take place only after, not during, professional meetings. It annoyed her that the young men in her community hissed at her daughter when she was there for a visit. She realized that Americans should be more social, since they did not extend general invitations if an appointment was possible.

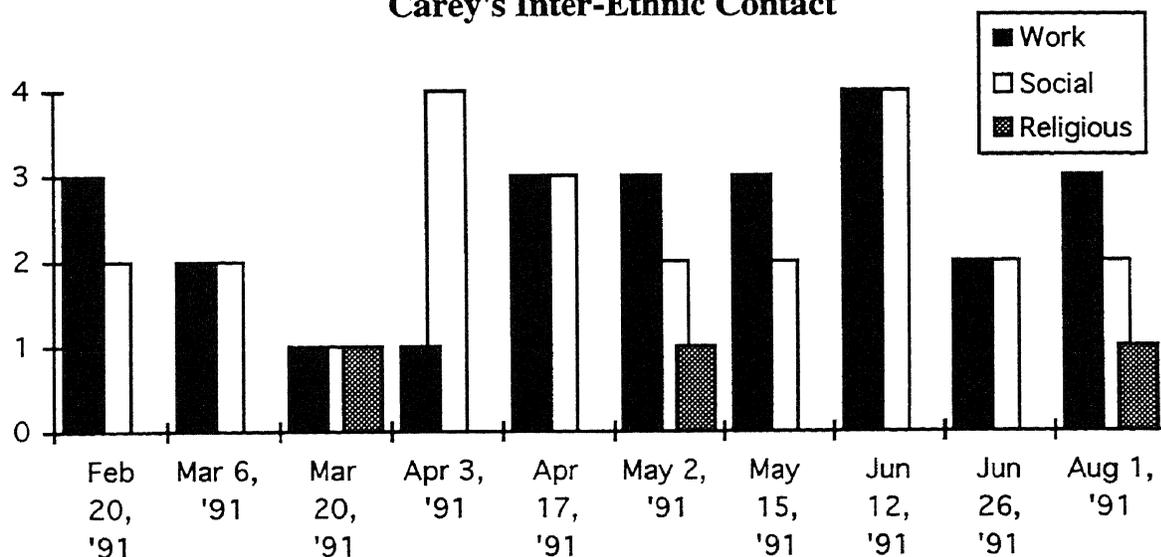
Carey was most comfortable when she interacted with Costa Ricans she knew, and might even use more gestures and be more descriptive out of necessity. She was getting tired of the same conversational topics, though. The community still loved its "pet American," and promised to

help with her Spanish after she threatened to leave. They seemed to appreciate her sacrifice to be in Costa Rica, and expressed their curiosity about her incessant reading by asking her if she had to read or if she wanted to. In hindsight, it may have been prophetic that Carey described the woman in TAT picture two as “laughing hysterically at somebody’s story about wanting to join the Peace Corps ... nobody could be that foolish.” She felt very negative about Costa Rica at this interview, partially because of her landlady’s behavior and her daughter’s travel problems, and partially because her training mother complained that she did not write.

### Initial Acculturation

During the first six months in her community, Carey tried to fulfill her professional obligations, but did not have much success socially:

**Figure 16**  
Carey's Inter-Ethnic Contact



While the graph points to a parallel in work and social inter-ethnic contact, it cannot be interpreted to mean that Carey adjusted exceptionally well around April 1, since that interview explored her social relationship during her hospital stay which was marked by a high social interaction with other patients and visitors from the Peace Corps and her community. At other times, her social involvement was rather low and restricted to the family she lived with, as well as a few neighbors. She tried to adjust in her professional inter-ethnic contact, but, as could be seen from her own reports, her groups quickly became independent and she did not feel needed. Although she did not feel discriminated against, she coined the term "pet American", signifying perhaps that she felt that she was not valued for her potential professional contribution, but seen as a novelty whose attraction slowly disappeared. She was aware of Costa Rican culture and not too concerned with ethnic loyalty, except for traits she considered important for her personal well-being, such as pleasure reading and, above all, privacy.

Her main problem was language acquisition. She felt that although the Peace Corps training had prepared her for technical conversations, she was unable to participate in small talk, an ability which could have furthered her social adjustment. I had many opportunities to hear her speak and respond to Spanish and did not think that her ability was less than that of other volunteers at her level of acquisition; it was, therefore, possible that she used Spanish as a smoke screen to cover other, unvoiced, problems. Her TAT stories were not very helpful, but one vocal-

ized a longing for family togetherness, while another commented on the decision to join the Peace Corps.

### **Final Interview**

When I came back to Costa Rica in January 1992 for the one-year interview, Carey was sitting in the lobby of the hotel most Peace Corps volunteers and I used when in San José. She had terminated her service, left her community on December 23, and was waiting for the completion of her paperwork, while her brother was visiting. What should have been her one-year interview became Carey's final interview.

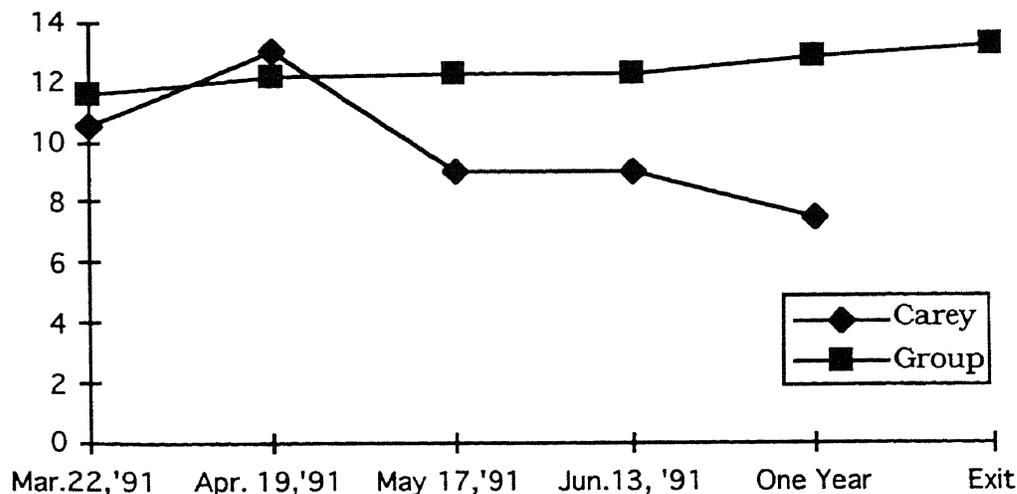
Between August and December of 1991, Carey had taught English to a group of seven to eight adults and children. The Health Department refused permission for the pig farm, and the women decided not to sew for sale after all. At first they tried to develop other projects, but when the coffee season began, everything else was dropped. The youth group was now affiliated with the national youth organization and independent from her. Carey did not feel necessary and said she had never felt much needed; the people in her community were quite self-motivated and would not need another volunteer. Part of her feeling of not being needed came from the sophistication of her community which was very aware of the world, its resources and possibilities. She always felt an outsider and a novelty, which also prevented her from seeking people out; but she expected them to come to her. Again she responded best to TAT picture two, but this time her story was again about the "wildlife": the woman

just “saw the biggest cockroach and would throw up”. She was looking forward to such amenities as running hot water, reliable telephones and her own car, things she missed most in Costa Rica. She was planning to go back to graduate school, possibly in clinical psychology.

### General Acculturation

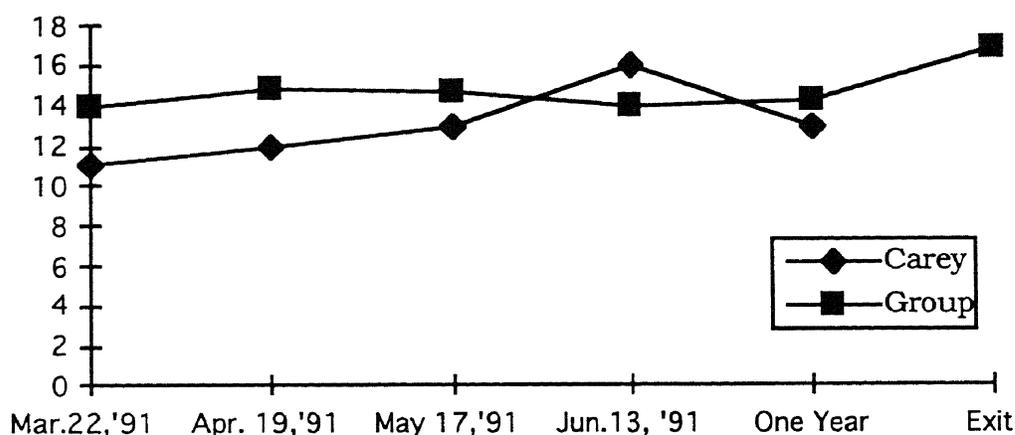
Carey’s adjustment reached above group average only once, at a time when she was highly satisfied with her community and her work progress. Due to her perceived low competency in Spanish she did not have much social contact except with her family and close neighbors, and she had problems with her landlady relating to privacy and personal belongings. Carey was not very forthcoming about her problems with her environment, but pointed consistently toward her low knowledge of Spanish as the main obstacle.

Figure 17  
Carey's Adjustment



Her withdrawal scores were initially lower than the group average since she stayed in her community and did not have much contact with others. She tried to do a job, but, as she pointed out once, she would prefer an eight-to-five office job after which she could go home and have privacy. She had tried to rent a house for herself, which could have improved her feeling of well-being, but Pueblo Nuevo was a comparatively small village and the one empty house was soon reoccupied by the owners who had returned from San José. Her landlady was very negative about other prospects and Carey finally gave up searching.

**Figure 18**  
**Carey's Withdrawal**



Carey was rather inconsistent in her adjective ascription. During her first interview she felt that she had not enough information about Costa Rica to make general descriptions and argued that Americans were too diverse to be described summarily. In later applications of the list she frequently used the options "both" or "neither" instead of emphasizing a characteristic in one group only. Still, she ascribed some adjectives con-

tinuously to Americans or Costa Ricans. Her adjective checklist answers and ascriptions are listed, with her explanations, in the appendix.

Carey's response to various conflicts in Costa Rica was best described as a tentative adjustment with hidden reactions and obvious withdrawal after the first year. I call her reactions hidden, since she would express hostility and frustration to me, but the community she tried to be pleasant and adaptive, and only once openly let them know her feelings. After the Spanish workshop had been of little help, Carey had given an ultimatum, explaining that she would leave if people would not help her improve her Spanish. This led to a short-lived effort on the part of the community to speak slowly to teach her new words and phrases. Equally short-lived (about four weeks) was a Peace Corps effort to have a tutor work with Carey.

There were many "what ifs": what if Carey had rented her own house, what if she had received more help in learning Spanish, what if she had been assigned to a community which had respected her privacy, but needed her more, etc. What is most interesting was the lax attitude of her Peace Corps program director, whom she repeatedly told of her problems, but who did nothing to help. In her exit interview nobody seemed to pay much attention to her reason for leaving and no effort was extended to change her mind. The ease with which the Peace Corps wrote off an effective and dedicated volunteer is difficult to comprehend.

## **6. Lucas**

### **Pre-Training**

Lucas (23) had a bachelor's degree in the humanities, with an emphasis on politics of developing countries, some work experience, and describes himself as an Irish-Italian American. He was tall, very slim, and had short brown hair. He had traveled extensively, but not to Costa Rica. He had been to school in England and France and spoke Japanese, French, and some Spanish. He had low professional contact with Hispanic Americans and foresaw no problems in adapting to Costa Rica, about which he knew little. Lucas was assigned to the Integrated Community Development program.

### **Training**

Lucas tried to integrate into his training family, who had welcomed him enthusiastically. The family was much less active than he had expected and after a few weeks he started to associate more with other volunteers. He was especially disappointed when Christmas was not celebrated in his family; he recounted how the father spanked the children when they played noisily and woke up the baby, and that the presents were opened without ceremony early the next morning. Lucas was very eager to move into his assigned community and was not very concerned about his low knowledge of Spanish.

Lucas' community, located close to the eastern coast, counted about 350 Latino Costa Ricans, Colombians and Panamanians, who worked on the

Colombian-owned banana plantation which surrounded the community. The gravel access road to the village led past the loading facilities through the plantation. The community had electricity and running water, but no phone or local transportation. After the earthquake on April 22, 1991, water was cut off for several months and the elementary school was closed. There was one evangelical church whose priest came once a month. Two volunteers had been here before Lucas, but both terminated early. Lucas's goals were to get a phone, establish a kindergarten and a women's small business group.

### **The First Six Months**

I visited him for the first time after he had been in site for three weeks. Volunteers I talked to before had warned me that he was unhappy and might terminate early, but he did not mention any such intention, and was looking forward to another volunteer from his training group who was supposed to start her second term in a neighboring community. His work involvement was very low, mainly because the development association he should work with consisted of only one member. It appeared that the community had requested a volunteer some time ago, but by the time Lucas was placed, interest had waned. His main contact was with the store owner with whom he spoke mostly in English, but felt disregarded especially by teenagers. He had some problems with Costa Rican time perception and physical proximity and had not adapted any Costa Rican behaviors yet.

During March Lucas' workload increased as he started to teach English in the third to sixth grades in the elementary school. This also led to conflict with the teachers who saw Lucas as competition. He offered an English class for adults and the children asked for a physical education class. He rented a house and spent most of his free time either there or at the store. He complained that meetings were frequently interrupted and that people came too late. He also had problems finishing conversations. He judged his social involvement to be low since most people his age were married, and his colleague who was scheduled to start in the neighboring community returned to the US since the community could not provide adequate housing for her. Lucas did, however, find out that there was another volunteer in a third community nearby.

Lucas started to like rice and beans and fried food, which he considered unhealthy at home. He drank no coffee and walked barefoot in the house, but was also developing a more tolerant attitude towards insects. He considered being on time an American characteristic, but praised the children for being punctual and quiet in his classes. After hearing much about Costa Rican hospitality, Lucas was very disappointed with the unfriendly reception he received in many houses when he visited to introduce himself. He thought that people did not know why he was in their community and were suspicious. Although Lucas repeatedly said that everything was going well, he only spoke negatively about the people in his community. Since the teachers would not make any space for him to teach in the school, he needs help to clean out a room which had been

used for storage. He cannot find any help, possibly because he had helped the store owner to paint a fence across the street which angered many who regarded that as a personal project, not one that concerned the community. He felt watched by his next-door neighbors, whose bathroom he had to use and who remarked on his sleeping late.

In April, Lucas spent Easter at the beach and heard that other volunteers were concerned about him, but felt that he was doing well. But the stories about his community were still mainly negative. His main target were the teenagers who seemed to snub him, and the women who accused him at a meeting of not doing anything but teaching English. It was the highlight of his day that I could finally deliver his long-awaited bicycle to him. He continued his door-to-door effort to get people to come to a town meeting to discuss the development goals of the community. While people agreed to come when he talks to them, only few had enough enthusiasm to come to meetings. Despite the apparent apathy of the community, Lucas had identified several goals he wanted to achieve: to rebuild the neglected teacher's house, to build a community hall, and to get new chalkboards and tables for the school. He hoped that a communal assembly would vote for a development committee responsible to plan and execute these goals. He also wanted to organize a Parent's Party to get people more interested in their children's schooling. Due to the continuing problems with the teachers, Lucas planned to discontinue the English classes in school and to start an English club instead. He started the exercise class.

Although Lucas described Costa Ricans as hard workers who put in long hours, he thought people in his community only worked to get money for food and drink; in contrast to him they had no long-range goals for their lives. He still felt disregarded by the teenagers whom he considered impolite and unresponsive and did not think that people thought much about him. He felt that he had adapted a little by being more tolerant of people talking during class and eating rice and beans and more sweets and sugar, while he considered it "American" that he read, prepared for classes, and missed pastries.

The April 22nd earthquake occurred just three days after the last April interview and Lucas found himself stranded in San José for one week due to destroyed roads, interrupted public transportation and Peace Corps instruction that volunteers from the stricken area remain in the capitol. When Lucas returned to his community, his priority was to help check on everybody to see if they were all right. The school had been damaged and was closed and the development committee finally scheduled a town meeting which was subsequently canceled. Lucas was surprised that no more people than usual went to church after the earthquake; he thought that Americans would have wanted to go to church after such an experience. Since his community had not suffered too much damage apart from losing its water, Lucas volunteered his aid in a neighboring community which had sustained extensive damage.

Lucas was disappointed with some reactions to the earthquake, notably that people in and around the stricken communities would not help more and that members of his own community would demand relief such as clothing and food although the community had suffered comparatively little damage. Although in May Lucas mentioned that he liked to stay up late and sleep in, he was drawn out of his isolation by his involvement in the relief effort. People came up to him to ask for help and he offered his assistance freely, but he thinks that many were upset because of his absence during and shortly after the quake since it demonstrated that he was free to get away from the community at any time. One person, who had become a close friend, went so far as to accuse Lucas of not having done anything.

Lucas still had not acquired as much Spanish as he would like. He kept up his own lifestyle in his house, which involved reading a lot and eating oatmeal, but he also enjoyed rice and beans and was not troubled much by problems with the electricity.

In June, Lucas still participated in earthquake relief irregularly, but since the school was still closed during the first half of the month his work involvement remained low. He did attend church several times and described it as mainly a social gathering of women. His social involvement remained low, and he continued to describe people as inhospitable, but he also recognized that he behaves more socially with Americans. After the school opened again, his workload increased since

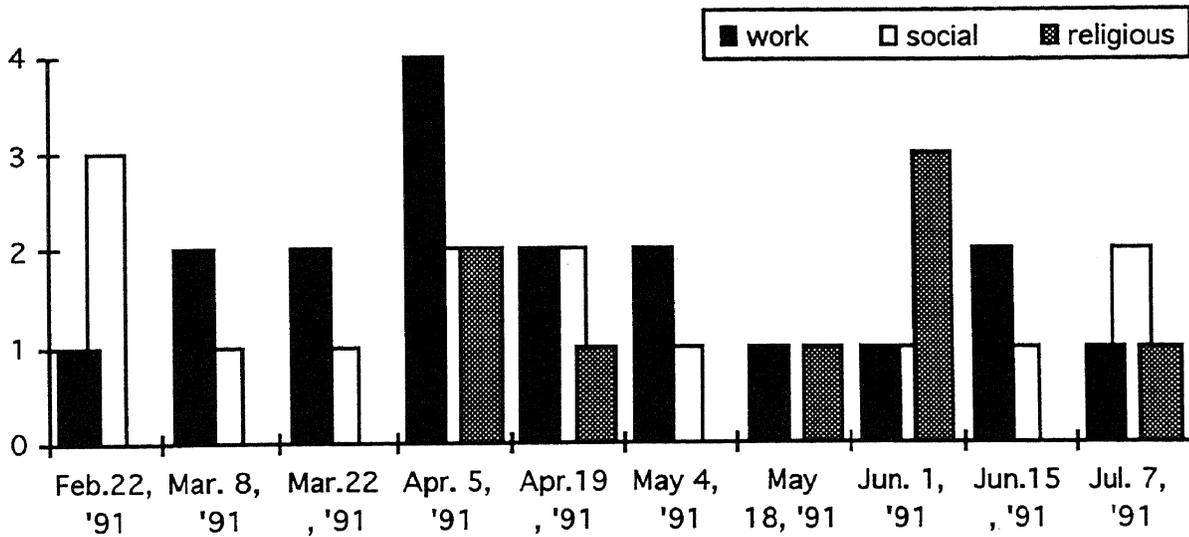
he took up his English classes again. He was also considering to start a new night class and a youth group, and had contacted AID to receive funds for the necessary repairs at the school building. Lucas felt that although some people did not talk to him, this would improve once he could revive the development association.

In July, Lucas reported that he had started to develop a questionnaire about the establishment of a kindergarten. He still taught English and was more involved socially by attending funerals and going to the pool hall. Although he did not attend church, he participated in rosaries. Lucas knew that he behaved very self-consciously when he interacted with Costa Ricans, and he thought that many people still did not know what he was doing or what the Peace Corps was. He did not change his adjective ascriptions, but mentioned that Americans were loud and that Costa Ricans were procrastinating and the women were shy and less aggressive.

### **Initial Acculturation**

During the first six months in site, Lucas' work, social and religious involvement with his community was never very high and the peak on April 5 can be explained by Lucas' door-to-door visits in an effort to get people to come to a town meeting. Although he was rather positive during the last meeting, I was not sure if I should expect him to still be in his site in January of 1992.

**Figure 19**  
**Lucas' Inter-Ethnic Contact**



### **One Year and Exit Interviews**

Lucas was still there and met with me for the One-Year interview in San José. After the April earthquake, August had brought floods and the school was closed again. He continued to work on his questionnaire and to teach his English classes and had added the Colombian owner of the banana plantation to his students. His relationship with the teachers had improved and he helped them teach science and social science classes even on Saturdays to help them catch up. A community building had been added to his to-achieve list.

Lucas was not satisfied with his work so far; he felt that he should have done more, although his program director had advised him not to do his community's work for them, they seem to expect him to hand out

money. Lucas felt unchallenged and was disappointed. He had expected hard work and says that he was taking too many vacations.

While some people were still rude to him and the teenagers still keep their distance, many children now came to visit his house and play and Lucas felt more as a member of his community. But adults still needed a pretext to come and see him, just as he could not stop by somebody's house just to socialize. He left his site about every six weeks to visit San José or another volunteer in a more distant site, and he never sought out other North Americans who were not part of the Peace Corps.

Lucas attended church regularly twice a month. Not only was it something to do, it was also a good opportunity to see the women, while the men can be reached at the Thursday night soccer game. He felt that his Spanish was getting better, but he still spoke English with the store owner. He also felt that he had learned to accept the different life- and work style here.

In December 1992 I found Lucas painting little Christmas trees on recycled paper in what would be the kindergarten. His kindergarten questionnaire had resulted in thirty interested mothers of whom twelve attended a formative meeting. There were no supplies yet, but a donation resulted in chairs and desks and another volunteer from a neighboring community promised to train mothers to teach kindergarten. He had organized a fund-raiser with the school children with movies for chil-

dren and adults, but although many people came nobody had brought the promised food to sell. Work on the community building had started and the land to build a park had been donated. A basketball court would have to wait since somebody planted corn on the land and the construction would have to wait until the corn can be harvested. In school, Lucas continued to teach science and social sciences and although the children got low grades, they all passed. The children had no aspirations to go to high school, but after a visit to the "Earth University," an American environmental education institution, many started to think about the possibility. It could help that the community was now connected by bus to the town where the high school was located.

Although Lucas' work involvement appeared much higher and more successful than at any other time during his service, he was not satisfied. He never worked with a development association as he should have done and could not introduce more work intensive meetings. He never even got started on the phone and the women's group, and did not really believe that the kindergarten would ever exist. He thought he should have tried to be more organized, but also felt that the earthquake and the flood set him back and that nobody was really interested in his work. The first year was wasted. His overall efforts may have made some difference to some people, but the majority was not affected. Lucas felt that the disinterest of the community was expressed most clearly when he got all dressed up for the school graduation ceremony, but nobody thanked him for his efforts.

Although Lucas still did not feel integrated, he did feel more accepted and was more comfortable now, while outside he was regarded as a tourist, and he liked to point out that he lives here. Most people knew that he had no money, but some still stereotype him as a rich gringo. He did like life in Costa Rica and avoided other North Americans, whom he considered “westernized” and boring. He hid from Mormons who proselytize locally because he did not want to be drawn into religious discussions. He had not attended church in while. There was a new priest now; while the first appeared like a used-car salesman, the second was not very popular after he refused to baptize the child of unmarried parents. While the community commented when Lucas did not attend church, they were also surprised when he did attend. He considered his Spanish as no longer horrid, but acknowledged that other volunteers’ Spanish was better. Although he bought some fictional Spanish books, he had not tried to read them yet.

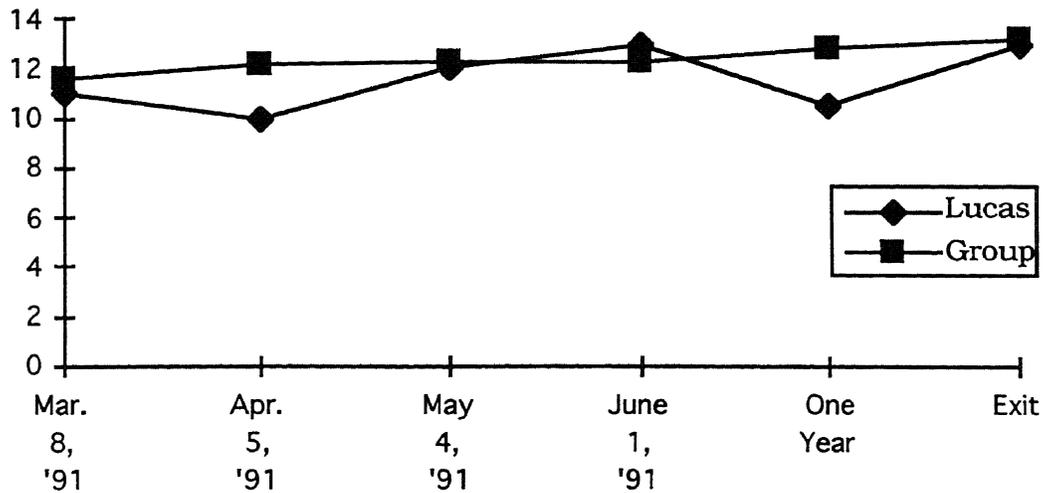
Lucas explained that he stayed for two years because he loved what he was doing, he loved the environment, even the rice and beans, and he was very happy for what he says were the two best years. Others may have terminated early because their expectations had been too high and they could not adjust, and he might have terminated early had he not had a house for himself that permitted him some freedom and privacy. Despite these positive feelings, he did not think he would come back to visit or do any more development work. He may, however, work for

Youth for Understanding, helping exchange students adjust to life in a Latin American country.

### **General Acculturation**

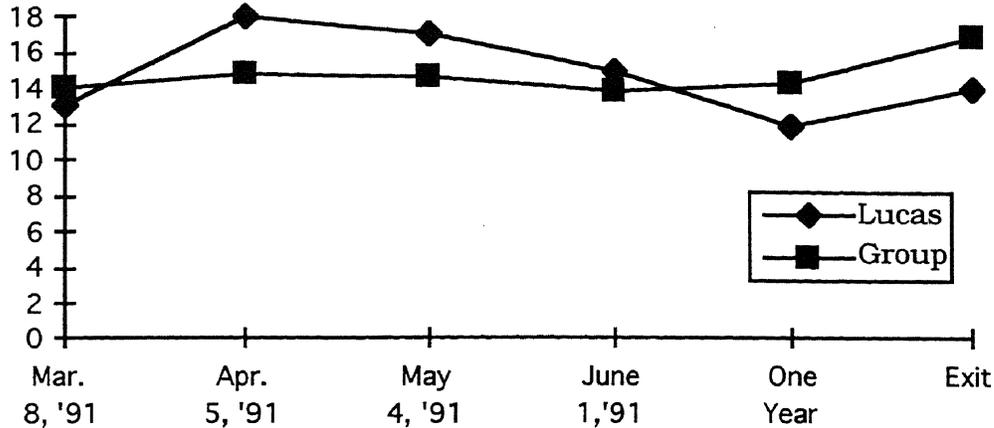
Lucas' integration was mostly below the group's average, with the exception of June, when he attended the Spanish workshop and felt very positive, and the exit interview, when he remembered the positive items of his service time. Lucas' adjustment seemed hindered by three problems; first, he was never satisfied with his acquisition of Spanish and repeatedly rated his competency as low or medium; second, he was disappointed that his community did not exhibit the famous Costa Rican hospitality which he had expected from training and through the tales of other volunteers; and, third, his community seemed unresponsive and disinterested in community projects. While Lucas explained that they were just lazy and only interested in earning money to buy alcohol, a more objective explanation could be that while the people were not migrant workers, they only resided in the area for a few years to work on the banana plantation and then moved on. Such a short-term residency was certainly not conducive to the development of a community spirit which would have been necessary to plan and execute community projects.

**Figure 20**  
**Lucas' Adjustment**



Lucas' withdrawal changed from above group average during the first six months to below average for the rest of his service. The main factor in this change was his participation in the earthquake relief effort. While it did not cause him to adjust better, he isolated himself less and became more aggressive in helping, instead of waiting to be asked to help. While his community criticized him for his, albeit involuntary, absence during the earthquake, his subsequent involvement in the relief effort and his support of the teachers to help the children pass their exams, earned him sufficient regard that he felt more accepted. This work may also have caused him to think better of his accomplishments.

**Figure 21**  
**Lucas' Withdrawal**



Lucas' experience in Costa Rica was not a very positive one, although he rarely admitted to any negative feelings. However, while he would constantly say that everything was fine, most stories he told about his work or any member of his community were critical and negative. His close association with the store owner with whom he spoke English prevented his full immersion into a purely Spanish speaking environment and hindered his Spanish acquisition. His degree of inter-ethnic interaction was low during the first six months, since he seemed to wait for people to come up to him; it improved after the earthquake and the flood when Lucas became more aggressive in seeking out areas to get involved in.

He did not feel discriminated against, but he felt disregarded and ignored, especially by the teenagers who would, in the beginning, not even return his greetings. It never became clear why he focused so much on this group, since his plans to start a youth group did not develop until later. It was difficult for him to get access to the men and women work-

ing on the plantation, since they were gone during the day and needed to rest and perform household chores at night and on the weekend. Women who stayed home during the day with younger children could have refused to talk to him without their husband in the house. And finally, the community had already seen two prior young bachelors leave for personal reasons, one even with a hint of scandal, and was probably not willing to extend a friendly welcome to yet another volunteer who might disappear just as fast.

While Lucas was aware of the host culture and prepared to adjust to many traits, he also over-emphasized one, that of hospitality, and its lack frustrated him. Like all other volunteers, his most "American" traits to which he clung, were reading and expecting punctuality and agendas in meetings.

Lucas found it very difficult to ascribe adjectives to only one group and often preferred the "both" option. In general, when ascribing a positive adjective to Costa Rica, Lucas would exclude his community and often did not compare Americans to Costa Ricans but to his community. He applied different standards to progress in both countries and said that it was more noticeable in Costa Rica. He seemed to have a good opinion about the country in general, but was very disapproving and critical of his community. His complete answers to the Adjective Checklist and some explanations are located in the appendix.

In my opinion, Lucas could have adjusted more rapidly and been more efficient and successful in a community with a more involved development committee and more community spirit. The community in which he was located needed an aggressive, outgoing volunteer who would not be deterred by mistrust and apparent indifference. While Lucas looked back fondly on his life in Costa Rica, he was disappointed with his professional accomplishments and with his obvious lack of integration into his community. Volunteer and community had not been well matched and this prevented the acculturation of the volunteer and the profit the community could have gained from his efforts.

## **7. Lisa**

### **Pre-Training**

Lisa (24) was an ESL teacher and immigrant consultant with a bachelor's degree in international relations and Spanish. She was a Methodist, but planned to go to Catholic mass to integrate, and described herself as Anglo American. She was of medium height, full-figured, and wore her long, light-brown hair in a braid. Due to her work, her professional contact with other ethnic groups was very high, notably with Haitian, Russian, Asian, and Hispanic immigrants. She already spoke Spanish and had some knowledge of Costa Rican history and climate. She had traveled in South America, but had not yet been to Costa Rica. She was assigned to the Urban Youth Program of the Peace Corps.

### **Training**

Lisa had a very good relationship with her training family and also stayed in close contact with the other trainees in her free time. She was looking forward to getting to her site, but expected some problems. Her assignment was a different part of the slum in which Matthew worked. It consisted of at least 200 houses with approximately 450 Latino Costa Rican families, strung on the top of low ridge between Cartago and one of its suburbs. Although illegal, it had existed for five years and the houses were permanent wood structures and had electricity, running water and one phone. The children had to walk to the suburb for the nearest elementary school, and there was no church. The community had several long-time residents in nicer houses (painted, with religious

ornaments) who had formed a development organization and had requested a Peace Corps volunteer. Most of those who had work commuted to Cartago or San José to industry or service jobs, while others were street vendors or simply unemployed.

### **The First Six Months**

I had some problems meeting Lisa at first. The contact address I had was a house in a neighboring community, but she had just moved in with a family in her site. Nobody knew exactly where she was and this proved to be the only time where the otherwise effective strategy of asking “Where is the gringa?” did not work. After spending several hours walking through the slum street, conversing with the children and being sent to five possible house where the gringa might be, I gave up, and we finally met for the first time when she had been in her site for a month.

Lisa’s work involvement was very high from the beginning. She had started working at a soup kitchen for street children and was also associated with the Patronato, the social service agency. Her social contacts included the adopted family of Matthew, and she was invited to coffee, dances, birthday parties and a christening. She did not attend church and while she had said that she was a Methodist during the first interview, now she said that she was not religious. She had no complaints about life in Costa Rica other than machismo, which she encountered not only in the abandoned or abused mothers serviced by the Patronato,

but also in the domestic violence rampant in the neighboring houses in her site. She adjusted to Costa Rica by taking more time and by walking and socializing frequently, and she felt that she was actively creating relationships. She did “American” things by drinking beer with Matthew, visiting a friend in another town and playing volleyball with other volunteers once a month.

In March, when we met only once since she attended a conference in another town, her work involvement decreased a little, because she mainly attended meetings, but had not yet developed projects. Socially she was highly active with her family and by socializing with families on the street. She mentioned that meetings took a lot of time and that problems seemed blown out of proportion, while Americans would organize things and do them. She criticized that nobody demanded or gave personal space. Lisa felt that her behavior was too American and she needed to adapt, but she tried to get along. Life in her site was in a completely different lifestyle, not because of cultural differences, but because of the poverty and the low level of education. She had become aware that her neighbor was physically abusing his wife and her own family was caught up with local elections.

At the first interview in April, Lisa had been sick but continued to work. She had organized a recreational and an arts and crafts group with the street children and spent about 20 hours per week with them. Her involvement with the Patronato was restricted to meetings once a week in

the evening. She also tried to start crafts classes with women. Her social life was very busy with birthday parties, dinners and mere socializing and she now went to church regularly, while her activities with other volunteers have decreased.

She described Costa Rican work behavior as having a "wait and see" attitude, where people take time organizing; they may have ideas, but do not know how to reach a goal. Such a slow pace was not bad, since it allowed for time to analyze more. Americans would jump into things to get them settled, and would use a calendar schedule. Her work with the children was more structured; they played games, learned the alphabet, did arts and crafts and anything else the children wanted. Lisa was very depressed by the high poverty in her site and upset by the high degree of wife beating by husbands who did it to get power. Although Lisa socialized with other families, she also tried to be private to protect herself, and by the end of the month, she sighed that socializing often meant hearing the same stories over and over again. She described Costa Rican religion as similar to American Catholicism in its respect for priests, but it was all talk and fear of hell, a Catholic guilt trip, not a demand for a Christian life.

This month she described her own behavior as American, since she was stubborn and wanted to keep her privacy to read and relax. When she socialized she felt that she behaved more in a Costa Rican style. Working every day and doing needlework were also American traits, while drink-

ing too much coffee, socializing more and being laid back were more Costa Rican traits. Many people did not know who she was, but they were interested and she was making friends. The men regarded her more as a gringa since she refused to serve them and had male friends. She loved her family very much and praised the husband who fixed his own lunch, neither drank nor yelled but discussed problems and loved his wife. Lisa called him an exception to the other men in her site. Although she enjoyed her family, she planned to move in with another family on the other side of her site next month to become more involved with that area of her site. While she was looking forward to the move, she also felt sad about leaving her family.

Lisa's work load remained very high in May with theater, art, sewing and recreational groups for the street children, although her sister came to visit. She was disappointed by a lack of support from the Patronato, and planned a women's and a youth group. She still socialized very much, but now that she had moved she needed to take time to get to know the adults in the area, while the children were easy to meet. Especially in regard to the Patronato social workers, Lisa reported that people took lots of time off from work and left early before the end of the day. There was more talking and coffee breaks and meetings dragged on, but eventually things got done. She would have to be more patient, since it seemed that producing was not the main goal in the Patronato. She described American work behavior as more goal-oriented where there had to be a product, but the steps to reach a goal were better

explained, while she felt that in Costa Rica necessary information was left out. In addition, she praised the US which had at least welfare to take care of poor women and their children.

She did not have that much time to socialize, but felt that people made an effort to integrate her and that social meetings were far less structured than in the US. She was angered that men here want to dominate more, and that children had to work instead of going to school. But in both countries, people wanted to take care of their own and were very suspicious of outsiders. She felt very American, since she had definite opinions on how things should be done. She was stressed and wanted projects to work on to help at least some people. While she was thus more American on a professional level, she behaved more Costa Rican socially. The people in the new area did not know her yet and she was still the gringa, but she got more involved with people who stopped her on the street to socialize, to ask about the US and why she was here, and to ask if she was happy. Lisa felt that she had a hard time with small talk, which might not be an American trait, but the more she got to know people, the easier it was to talk to them.

She listed some "American" things such as reading for pleasure, the use of a calendar, taking an aerobics class and going shopping and sightseeing with her sister, but on the "Costa Rican side" she also learned to crochet, drank coffee, chatted a lot and did not like it that she

seemed more domestic. Her sister observed that Lisa had become calmer.

Many of Lisa's ascriptions differentiated now between Costa Rican men and women. She considered women to be subservient and dependent, while the men were aggressive, egotistical, and domineering. She described Costa Rican men as forceful but impotent; they struggled to provide for their families but could not succeed and got power by beating their wives and children

Lisa continued her classes and groups with the children and the Patronato meetings throughout June, and was very social with the family and friends. She felt very much a part of the community and went to a mass on Corpus Christi day in a private home. Since her family was considering moving, Lisa started to think about renting her own house, something which had initially been discouraged by the Peace Corps since the area was not considered safe. After she had identified a suitable house, received the permission of her program director and bought a parrot, she felt much happier.

Lisa considered the Patronato work unenthusiastic government work and said that not much got done, although the staff had a high burn-out rate. She had tried to organize an informational meeting about cholera after one case had been identified in Costa Rica and the country was very concerned about an epidemic, but people were not interested. While Lisa

felt she was greeted in a friendly manner everywhere, the greetings did not seem serious and people could be unfriendly without reason. It disturbed her that children did not seem to count unless they were sick.

She praised Americans for being more organized, but she also felt that at the Peace Corps everybody was in a rush to get things done. She enjoyed the social interaction during the Spanish workshop, but felt that the workshop itself was too fast-paced and she was not used to that anymore. She felt she was not behaving according to the Peace Corps model anymore, since, while being organized and wanting to get things done, she also enjoyed just being with her community and was not paranoid about success. She felt at home here the way she was and did not need to feel accepted. The children appeared to accept her as positively different from Costa Rican adults who might not all understand what she was doing.

Lisa thought it was "American" to want privacy, including renting her own house, to read for pleasure, to listen to American music and to write letters. She still liked to socialize, even if it was late, and crochet. She did not want to think about differences in American and Costa Rican life and felt that many of her actions were mixed. She had, however, never drunk alcohol in her community, since even social drinking would result in labeling her an alcoholic.

In July she had moved into her own house which she enthusiastically remodeled. Her family was angry with her for moving out, but she felt very good about being by herself. She had added a garden to her already continuously very high work load. Since she spent most of her days in Cartago at the soup kitchen or the Patronato, her social involvement was limited to the evenings, but was still medium to high. Although she usually did not attend church, she did go to one mass and helped decorate the streets for a procession.

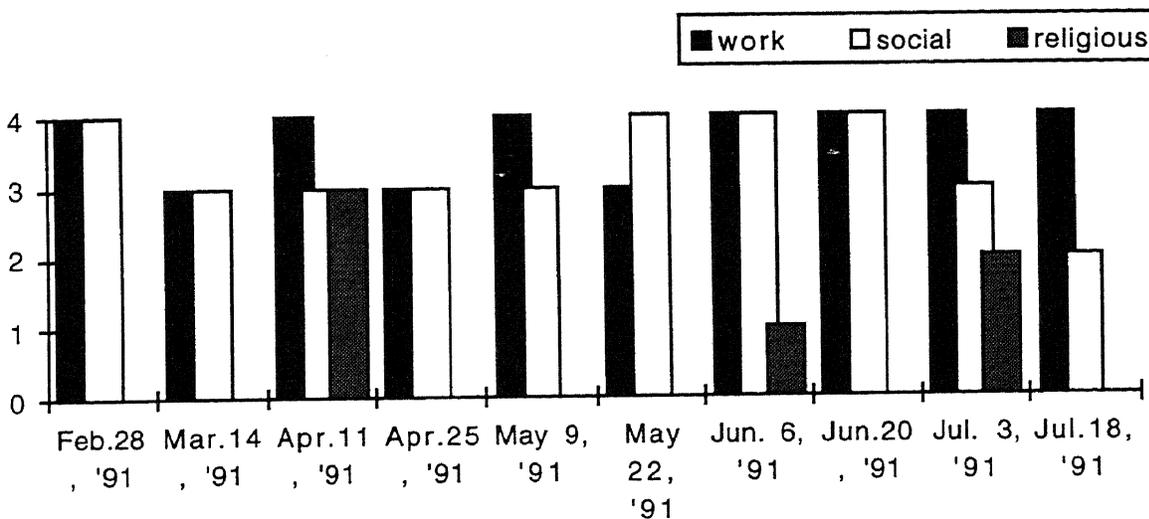
She was still frustrated by the lack of planning and organization in social work, but things seemed to get done. Several planned projects did not work out, promised money did not materialize, and Lisa was disappointed in a lack of commitment. Americans would fulfill a promise since that was expected. They would also be more punctual and less relaxed, while patience was a virtue in Costa Rica. Lisa enjoyed the slow pace in socializing and enjoyed coffee time, although frequent social contacts could be exhausting. Americans were more pressured into activities during socializing, but separated work from play better. While Lisa felt that she was still stuck on American ideals, Americans seem to race and to have to do something, while Costa Ricans could be more relaxed and were under less pressure. Her neighbors felt that she liked to be with them, but many considered her crazy to live in a slum by herself. As a precaution against theft she avoided inviting people into her house.

Although she thought it was difficult to distinguish between Costa Rican and American traits, she said it was “American” to drink bottled water, travel, live by herself, exercise and study for the GRE, while drinking coffee and socializing, being calmer and adapting to a Costa Rican schedule, doing needlework and being less mobile than in the beginning and than other volunteers were Costa Rican traits.

### Initial Acculturation

During this last interview for the first six months, Lisa was happily busy with her new house and working with the children. Overall, she had one of the highest interaction ratings of the group for this time:

**Figure 22**  
**Lisa's Inter-Ethnic Contact**



Especially in her professional and social contacts she was very active and although her environment was depressing and frustrating because of poverty and domestic violence, she adjusted well and seemed content. The main reason for her professional success was her immediate access

to a predefined target group, the street children who used the soup kitchen, as well as her association with the Patronato. Her social success, apart from her outgoing personality, was due to the immediate integration into the same family that had also adopted Matthew and Paula. But these successes could not make up for the potentially dangerous environment in which she lived. Her house was robbed in September and she never felt safe again. On December 16 she moved in with Matthew and Paula, closer to her work places in the soup kitchen and the Patronato, but away from the violence of the slum, where subsequently three people were murdered over Christmas.

### **One-Year and Exit Interviews**

I met her again in January 1992 in Cartago. Her street children numbered over one hundred and she had started taking them on trips. She was conducting programs about drugs and sexuality, still worked in the soup kitchen and was also very involved with the mothers. She was satisfied with her very busy work load. The mothers could be more helpful, but at least they were there while the fathers were not always present. While she was glad about the way her assignment worked out, it was not what she expected it to be when she came; she had believed that she would work more on the street, but the soup kitchen was a very good center.

She felt that she was a big part of the children's life and had many friends, but she would always be the gringa. She felt comfortable enough

to visit people without a professional pretext and tried to meet other Costa Ricans. She was comfortable with her Spanish and did not attend a second workshop offered in October. She went to the Peace Corps office as little as possible, but did committee service. She felt that she finally had privacy and security, although she still did not feel safe. Despite her bad experience, she continued to speak highly of Costa Ricans, and praised them for always having time for people, and being warm, caring, loving, accepting and family oriented.

She expected the next year to go by fast and had a high work load organized. She would tutor, offer more arts and sewing classes and wanted to start a small business class for the children. When she was done, she wanted to see her family, since it seemed harder to talk to them. She was also preparing for the GRE to go back to school.

As she had predicted, her second year was very busy. We met for the last time in December 1992 and she listed field trips with the children, who numbered by now approximately 125, with a core group of about 60 girls and boys between seven and 13. They did fund-raisers and tripled their earnings, toured the city to find offered services, had art classes, and 16 of the children might exhibit their work. Lisa offered home economics classes with some teachers and organized university volunteers to check the children's teeth, eyes and ears. They also played a lot of soccer and volleyball. She did some administrative work with the Patronato, but did not consider them very supportive.

Lisa had several unfinished projects, had requested a new volunteer and had been training her for the past month and a half to continue her work in the soup kitchen. She was satisfied with her accomplishments, especially in having included many Costa Rican volunteers to work with her. Looking back, she regretted not having done more with her community and having been too eager to work with the Patronato, who treated her more as an employee than as a counterpart. Her community was very supportive of her, even though at first they didn't know what she did. She thought she might have made a small difference in the lives of the children, for whom it was a big thing having a gringa work with them. She was still disappointed by the lack of interest shown by the children's' fathers; only one would show some interest. She also felt that the Peace Corps support had been exactly what she needed.

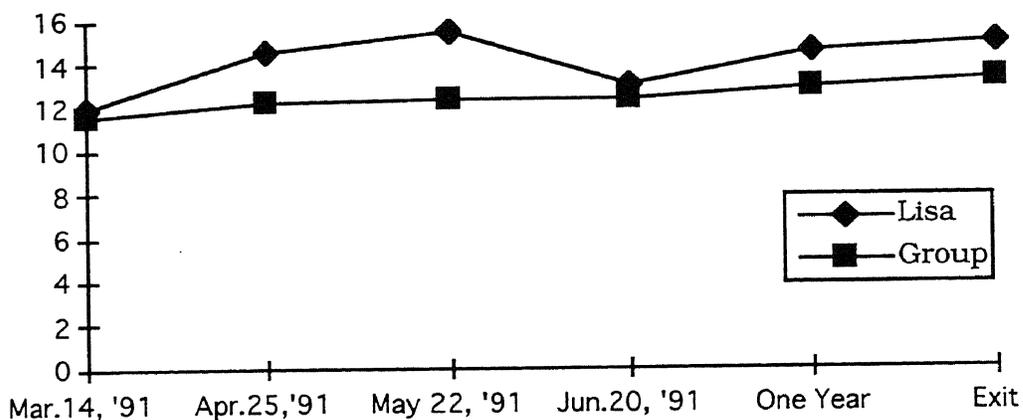
She still had an active social life, including one Costa Rican family, friends and other volunteers. She had some contact with other North Americans, and had met some terrific tourists, but she did not seek them out and walked the other way when she saw groups. She still felt stereotypes at work and on the street, where she was always on guard and had to deal with catcalls, and was especially disturbed when it happened in Cartago. She was seen as very independent, which was wrong for women; it might, however, be a good model for the children who saw that one can do anything one strives for. Lisa thinks that one girl was following that and had gotten stronger.

Lisa would leave early in January and said she stayed for two years because she had made the commitment. Although she did not have enough time to do everything she wanted to, she would not extend because of the bureaucracy involved in the Peace Corps management. Others may have terminated early because they were not happy or could not adapt; Lisa adapted quickly to Costa Rican time and attitude. It was especially the relaxed way of life that she would miss when she had to leave. She enjoyed the socializing, the lack of TV and phones, and would miss the children and her friends.

### General Acculturation

Over her service time, Lisa's adjustment had invariably been higher than the average of the group. Reasons for this can be found in her very

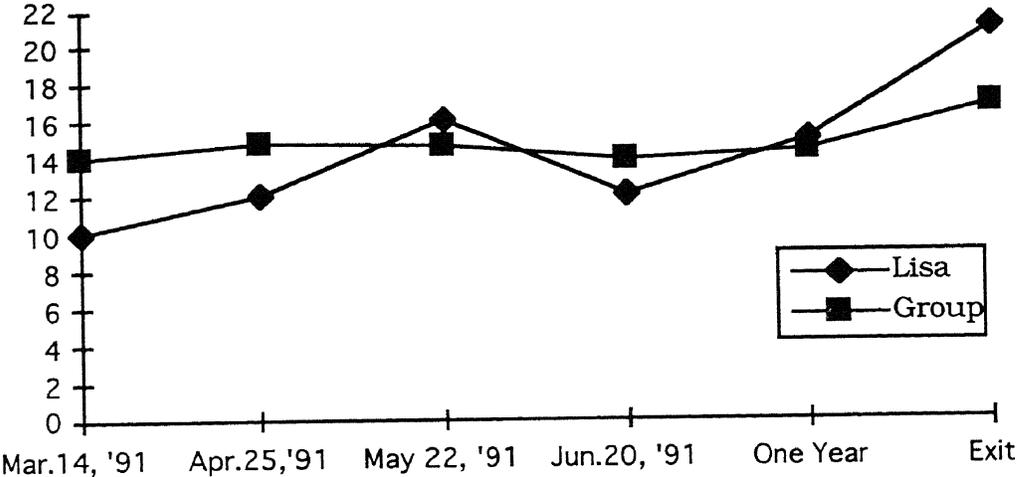
Figure 23  
Lisa's Adjustment



high professional and social involvement, which had been a source of great satisfaction for her and helped her to deal with the many problems she encountered. Her withdrawal scores were not as consistent. The

May 22 score can be explained by the visit from her sister who took Lisa away from her site for a few days. The rising withdrawal scores during the second year were very similar to Matthew's and Paula's scores for the same time. Therefore, while moving together was necessary for everybody's feeling of security, it also seemed to decrease the need for the individuals to associate with Costa Ricans for companionship and led to increased withdrawal from host nationals since co-nationals were readily available.

**Figure 24  
Lisa's Withdrawal**



Lisa was consistent in ascribing some adjectives, such as industrious, independent, and ambitious to Americans only, and others, such as subservient, conservative, egotistical, lazy, domineering, and dependent primarily to Costa Ricans. Her adjective ascriptions and explanations are located in the appendix.

Lisa was one of the most acculturated volunteers. Her interethnic contacts remained high throughout the whole service time, even though she distanced herself more during the second year. Her language acquisition was quick, since she had spoken some Spanish before joining the Peace Corps, and she increased her competency by immersing herself as much as possible in a Spanish-speaking environment by living with families during the first eleven months in site. Although she perceived some discrimination, this was more gender and class related than ethnic. Her awareness and use of Costa Rican cultural traits was also consistently high, and she kept on using those "American" traits identified by everybody: reading for pleasure, writing, and a wish for privacy. Lisa's placement was a near perfect match and she was a great asset to her community and, especially, its children.

## **8. Jody**

### **Pre-Training**

Jody (51) was a horticulturist who was about to finish her Master's degree in tropical agriculture. She described herself as a European American who looked Irish, and was an inactive Baptist. She was of medium height, slim, with long blond hair which she liked to wear open. She previously interacted to a high degree with African Americans on a professional and social level. She had started to learn Spanish, had been to Costa Rica before for one week and had done other international travel. Due to a research paper she once wrote she had some knowledge of Costa Rica. According to her expertise in mangos, she was assigned to the Farm Management program. She had a teenage son who stayed in the US with his father.

### **Training**

Jody had a very high interaction with her host family and spent only little time with other trainees. She felt very comfortable in Costa Rica, and perceived herself handicapped only by having to think through every sentence before speaking, which made conversations cumbersome. Living with a family made her eager to be in her site and to live again on her own schedule.

Her community was a town of about 5,000 Latino Costa Ricans with only one Black Costa Rican. The town center roads were paved, but the access road from the car ferry, about one hour away to the north, was not;

neither was the road to the passenger ferry, about five minutes to the east. The community offered many urban services such as banking, shopping, and two hotels. While many of the town's inhabitants found work in these services, others worked in agriculture or owned mango farms. There was electricity, running water, phones and bus service to the passenger ferry and to other beach communities to the west, which were frequented by international tourists who merely passed through Jody's community. There was no public transportation inland to the north. The local Catholic church had a resident priest who was traveling to other communities and there were three evangelical churches. The children can attend school from kindergarten through high school. The community had a Peace Corps volunteer five years before Jody came.

### **The First Six Months**

When I visited Jody for the first time, she was walking down the road with Susan, a World Teach volunteer, who had just arrived to work in the local school for the year. Jody had been feeling lonely during the month before and was glad for the company. She had already rented a house and had started to visit the mango farmers who were her target group. Susan's service agreement included room and board with a local family who owned the town's largest hotel and restaurant, and it was there where she and Jody met most town people. The hotel owner's husband was also very active in the community's development effort.

During the first interview, Jody listed only punctuality as a problem in professional interactions, but was happy that the farmers would listen to her since she had been introduced as a mango expert. She had problems since she lived alone and some local men came to the house at night. She consequently started answering the door with a machete in her hand. She appeared very strange to her community, which was understandable since she was indeed a rather idiosyncratic person. She tried to adapt by socializing, but thought she needed to increase her house visits. She washed her clothes by hand and swept the house three times a day. In contrast to local customs she ate light and kept Mariposa, her dog, in the house and bought dog food for her in the city across the gulf.

During March, her professional interaction was low, since the mango farmers were busy with the harvest and she was trying to finish her thesis. Her social interaction was high, but mainly with Susan. She sometimes attended the evangelical church. People's tardiness did not change when Costa Rica went back to standard time and nobody apologized for being late. Jody felt she needed to relax in her expectations of punctuality, but she enjoyed the more easygoing meeting style. Socially she noticed that she was not as friendly to men as to women, since some men could misunderstand a friendly smile for an invitation. She had problems expressing herself in and understanding Spanish, but her comprehension of Spanish was better than Susan's, while Susan spoke better; in communal situations the two could thus supplement each other.

She was thought of as strange since she did not socialize as much as she should, although she described it as an acquired Costa Rican trait that she socialized on her way to the store. She was called a gringa, but that label was meant as a description. She felt more accepted and knew more names. She distinguished the mango growers from the town people in that the growers were richer, better educated, more relaxed, and in general just different.

In contrast to people in her community she took walks at night, did not eat rice and beans, but more tuna salad, other fish and fresh vegetables. She was the only one of my female respondents who regularly went out at night to drink beer and one of two who smoked. In her community only men drink in public, drink to get drunk and go on binges on pay day, but there was an Alcoholics Anonymous organization which had also women participants. Jody did not want to talk with the tourists who come through town. They appeared unfriendly, which could be a language problem, always appeared in groups and dressed strangely.

She described Costa Ricans as gentle, family-oriented, but largely uneducated people who did not read for pleasure, and complained that many of her possessions prompted the questions "When did you get it? What did it cost? Can you loan it to me?" People were more physically apathetic in her site because of the heat, but were very sensitive to and interested in a person's life. She considers Americans to be more conservative than

Costa Ricans, politically and in a lot of other ways. They were also more cautious than Costa Ricans and plan ahead.

In April, Jody was still busy writing her thesis, commandeering my typewriter. She did continue her contacts with the mango growers, calling on them and setting a meeting, but hardly anyone showed up. She had adjusted her work schedule to the growers' daily schedule. She went out to talk to the wives first, since the men were in the fields in the morning until it became too hot to work outside, and returned at night to speak to them. Then she went out for a beer. Together with Susan she visited many people to socialize, but talked more with women than with men. She went to two birthday parties, visited Monica and Manfred in their site, and went dancing. The mango growers did not socialize in town, but have their own development and social organizations. In general, Jody judged that public involvement in her community was lower than in the US, and she had expected more of Costa Rican women.

Jody described her own behavior as American and said that people laughed at her since everything she did was different. Neither she nor Susan wanted to behave in a Costa Rican manner, since that would be too restrictive. It bothered her neighbors that she did not have much time to visit, but everybody spoke to her and she was considered different from tourists since she would stay. Tourists were seen as people who just pass through and need to be fed; they were also said to "use the country." Jody's American manners include walking in the morning

and afternoon, and the teenage girls have warned her that her calves would get bigger through that, a physical feature not desirable to them. She also took her dog for walks and dressed differently. On the other hand, she cooked rice for the dog, washed clothes early in the morning and enjoyed traveling by bus. She had stopped ironing her dresses all the time and did not wear make-up all day. While she described many Costa Ricans as friendly, open-hearted, generous people, she also had a bad experience when a necklace was stolen from her in San José.

In May Jody returned to the US for nine days to defend her thesis and receive her Master's degree. It felt good to be able to communicate and to express every feeling. She organized a meeting with the mango growers, who have a meeting every second week, and would extend her professional activities into the next community. A flood had cut off her community from the outside world for a week and had caused a landslide and considerable damage in the next community. She joined many people of her community in the relief efforts there, cleaning up houses and providing food and shelter for about fifty people. Her social involvement remained high, and she had not been to church in many weeks. She attended an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting with Susan to celebrate the success of a woman friend and, since both drank beer in public, they were praised for battling their alcohol problem. Jody considered not drinking for a while, until the congratulations and remarks had died down.

To Jody, many people seem self-employed and had thus more leeway in their schedule, and impressed her by their hard physical labor. She observed a gender difference when the men went to clean the houses affected by the land slide, while the women stayed in the shelter with the children. Normally, Costa Rican men would not clean houses. She remarked on the different attitude to work; while both Americans and Costa Ricans were materialistic, the former talk more about money, while the latter talk more about things. But both work hard, and while Americans seem to spend more hours at work, the local climate did not permit field work in the afternoon.

The more she was in Costa Rica, the more she realized that there were differences to the US, especially in the way Costa Rican social interactions were far less structured on porches and front yards. But Costa Ricans were also more isolated and separatist, since interactions were restricted to the family, and many people in the community were “immigrants” from other Costa Rican regions. The mango growers were a very separate elite group. In the US, communal interactions would be more open and the setting would be different, but life did not revolve around the family, and people cut themselves off mentally from their children. While people here called themselves Christians and rendered lip service, there were not many people in church, while in the US more people went to church and were more devout but talked less about God.

She still appeared funny to her community, since, without trying, everything she did was different, e.g., asking for donations in the relief effort. But Jody would not consider herself mainstream in any society, though it was easier to fake it in the US than here. She ate different foods and dressed differently, but the main item of public discussion seemed to be how she treated her dog: buying dog food; taking her to the vet, and having toys for her, many of which have been stolen by children. She prepared coffee the Costa Rican way, started to eat rice and beans, cleaned her floors three times a day, and got up as early as her neighbors.

During June, Jody finished the relief work, met with the mango growers, taught bookkeeping in school, planned a bookkeeping workshop, and rewrote her thesis. In addition to her high work load she also attended the Spanish workshop and took a vacation, and so she had little social contact in her site. She complained about the lack of punctuality and about a lack of commitment, and was upset about her landlord who had trimmed the trees around her house although she had asked him not to. She considered Americans to be different, since they would be on time, worked more structuredly, and were not dependent on their family, but had outside friends and interests. Jody described the Spanish workshop as typically American, where people worked throughout the whole time and could have used some leisurely Costa Rican pace.

She was still said to do everything different, especially since she did not eat rice and beans anymore, but she did not want to be like a Costa Rican woman and put up with machismo. She was liked, though, and had been told that she should marry somebody and stay here. She still swept her floors three times a day, washed clothes daily and got up early, but wore big, comfortable dresses, read, ate and talked differently and bought dog food. She was considering changing Mariposa's diet, since it seemed insulting to feed better food to a dog than many people here could afford for themselves.

During July, Jody was busy conducting bookkeeping workshops in her and other volunteers' sites which were all very successful and she was planning more. She learned how to graft avocado trees and was considering offering English classes in her and the neighboring community. Together with community members she was planning a gift shop at the ferry dock. Her professional activities also gave her many social opportunities and she had increased her contact to the men she worked with. She even watched a soccer game.

Jody was at first frustrated by the problems she encountered setting a time for the workshop in her site, but was then happily surprised that people came on time or even early and stayed for more than four hours on both days. She also praised Costa Ricans for working hard also on Saturdays, which was payday, while Americans were more on schedule and worked during the whole day, but not necessarily on Saturdays.

There was no division between work and leisure, and people used meetings also for social interactions and discussed examples as real issues, while Americans would stay on the topic and be more work-oriented. She was still invited to visit, but did not like to sit for hours. Americans socialized completely differently, keeping friends and family separate, and being active drinking or going to the beach. They did not just sit and talk.

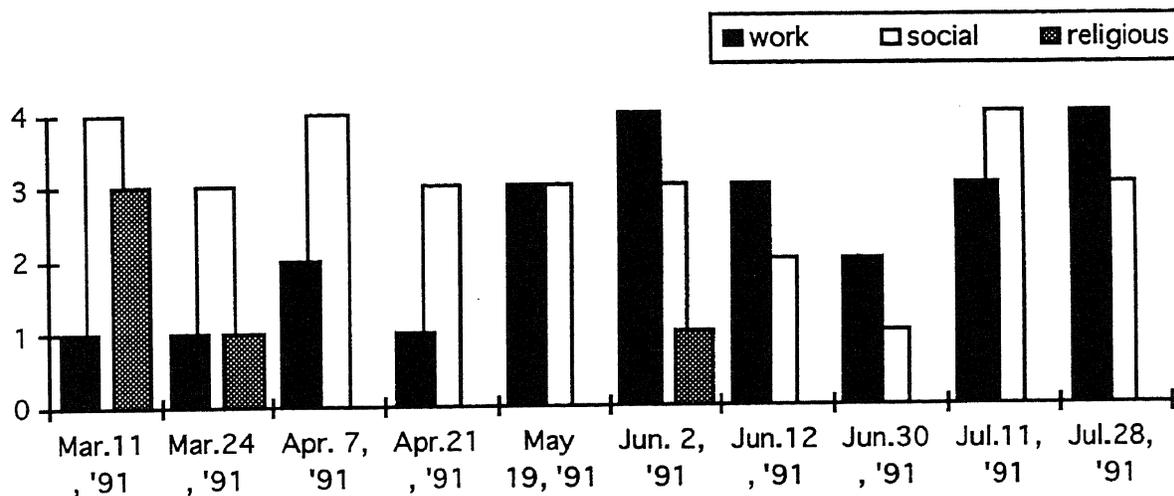
Jody reported that she discussed different topics with Costa Ricans and Americans. With the former, she talked more about household-related topics, although people were aware of US and global politics, and with Americans she discussed broader topics. She felt more relaxed with Americans, and was constantly on guard when speaking with Costa Ricans since she still had problems with Spanish and was afraid to be asked for money. Her community enjoyed her and thought of her as very different and independent, and many people would like her to stay. She considered it “American” that she did everything different and drank and smoked in public, but the type of house she lived in, washing laundry at a sink in the backyard, not walking along the street with a man, and being happy with cold showers were more Costa Rican traits.

### **Initial Acculturation**

During the first six months, Jody established herself as a very independent person who would not fit into any preconceived notion of either North-Americans in general or Peace Corps volunteers in particular.

Her community loved her for that and she enjoyed the attention. While her religious involvement was low, she had a relatively high professional and social contact, after a slow professional start:

**Figure 25**  
**Jody's Inter-Ethnic Contact**



Jody consciously refused to adjust to Costa Rican cultural norms in regard to women's behavior. She continued a lifestyle she had become accustomed to and merely transplanted it into a tropical location with a different language. But her reactions against Costa Rican norms were not presented in a recognizable hostile manner, but in a charming, funny way that made her into a focus of entertainment. Nothing she did could shock her friends anymore, including bringing her dog to dances. Her behavior was extraordinary, but never offensive, and she showed much professional expertise, was friendly and approachable, and quickly gained her community's respect.

## **One-Year and Exit Interviews**

Between July 1991 and January 1992, Jody continued working on bookkeeping with the growers and finally ran out of books. She did a fruit processing class with a women's group, bookkeeping workshops in other volunteers' sites, and added an English class that met three times a week. She continued improving her grafting skills.

Jody was convinced that she could do more, but the high temperature and humidity got in the way. She felt very much accepted in her community, but Susan's term ended last December and while both together were somewhat isolated, Jody was now lonely. She visited San José every two weeks and went on workshop trips. She stopped using her bike, since she passed people too fast and could not stop to visit. Although her Spanish had gotten better, she would never be able to completely express herself. She continued planning the gift shop and would like to start a garden. She started thinking about another term in the Peace Corps or in another volunteer agency, since her current site was not what she had expected; she had thought she would teach such fundamentals as farming techniques and work in the fields.

During my last visit in December, Jody was ready to pack and, after a short vacation at home, start a second term in the Peace Corps in Ecuador. She was hoping for a more subsistence level oriented agricultural program and a climate a little less hot than her current site. She was finishing up most of her local projects and was introducing her

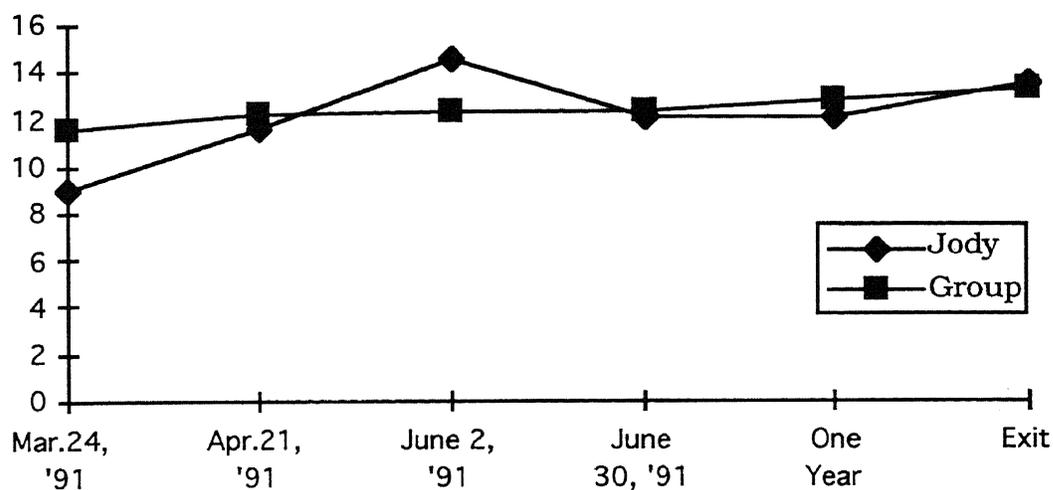
community to a new volunteer who would work in small business administration. Her successor was on a site visit when I came for the interview and Jody and I played "old hands", translating for her, and telling her all the good gossip we knew from the last two years.

Jody felt like a part of the community and although she wanted to move on, she also regretted leaving many people who had become good friends. She would certainly stay in touch with many. Her community had been very positive and appreciative in responding to her efforts. Although people in her community and on the bus to San José knew her, others still saw her as a tourist which disturbed her since she had given much. She made a difference in the lives of at least some people and it was worth it. She was very satisfied with the support of her program director who left her alone. She thought she stayed for two years because she wanted to do such work and because it was good to be in a country where Americans were loved. She intended to stay in Ecuador for two years as well, provided it was not too hot. Others might have terminated because of high expectations or of climate problems; she knew of three older women who had to be transferred out of hot sites. She might have terminated without Susan as companion or if the nightly harassment would have continued or gotten worse.

## General Acculturation

Over the course of her two years, Jody seemed very much a part of her community and to have adjusted very well. Interestingly, her adjustment scores do not confirm my observations:

**Figure 26**  
**Jody's Adjustment**

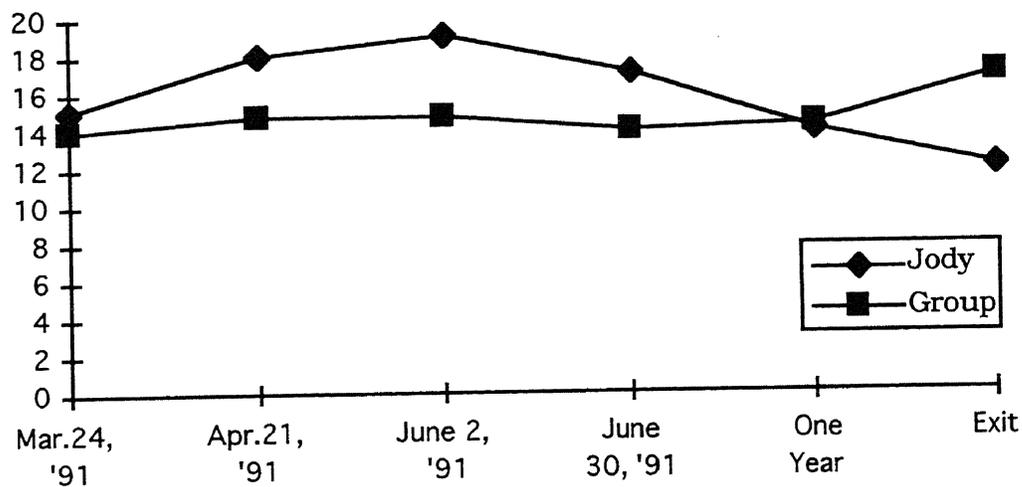


Jody's adjustment surpassed the group's average only once when she helped with the relief effort in her neighboring community. The specific items which kept her scores low were her slow acquisition of Spanish, caused by her close association with Susan during the first year, that she hardly met Costa Ricans who were not from her site, and her use of predominantly English-language media. Her preference for Costa Rican activities, people and foods were case dependent.

Similar reasons may be responsible for her higher-than-average withdrawal scores during the first year. Although there was another World Teach volunteer placed in her community during the second year, their

relationship was never as close as Jody's relationship had been with Susan. Working more with the women in fruit-processing classes and planning for a gift shop (which never materialized), as well as her conscious effort to stop and chat more, brought her in closer contact with her community.

**Figure 27**  
**Jody's Withdrawal**



Professionally, Jody was one of the most successful volunteers, especially since she managed to gain the respect and cooperation of a male target group who considered their work to be men's work. She came highly recommended as an expert and lived up to everybody's expectations. Her acculturation was not as successful. While her inter-ethnic contact was high and she felt only gender-, but not ethnic discrimination, her language competency remained at a medium level. Being very conscious of the required Costa Rican behavior for women, she actively reacted, talking about machismo and marianismo with women, and re-

fusing to follow the local gender role. Her modeling of an independent, professional and happy woman did not encourage any imitators (at least not to her knowledge), since women who did envy her also explained that Jody, as an American, was just different. Jody was rarely affected by criticism directed against her behavior, but was annoyed when wearing a pretty dress or letting her hair hang down was immediately commented on with the question if she was looking for a man. She could never convince people that she did not arrange her life around men, but would cherish the discussions about it, anyway.

We have not been in contact since that last interview, but her success in Costa Rica leads me to hope that she would enjoy her life and work in Ecuador as well. She was the only person in my sample to enter a second term, and while others complained also that development work in Costa Rica was not as subsistence-oriented as they had wished, nobody else sought out a more challenging country.

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