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Exceptional opportunities

Hierarchies of race and nation in the United States Peace Corps recruitment materials

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A few years ago, I was contacted by the U.S. Peace Corps recruiter at a large public university in the United States, who asked if I would be part of a panel of returned volunteers at a recruitment event. She then said she would love to meet me and that I was welcome to stop by her office anytime to reminisce about Peace Corps experiences. I took her up on her offer and dropped by one day to chat. When I entered the office, a small room on the fourth floor of the student center, she was in the midst of a conversation with someone else. Sitting down to wait, I noticed a colorful display on my right. A rack of pamphlets advertising Peace Corps service possibilities caught my eye – and held it when I noticed the titles. "An Exceptional Opportunity for Latinos," one read. "An Exceptional Opportunity for African Americans," said another. "The Business of Helping Others Help Themselves." "Use Your Talents to Help Others Grow."

As a postcolonial scholar, I was immediately intrigued and started rifling through the rack for a sample of each type to take home. My actions garnered an odd look from the recruiter. "What are you going to do with those?" she asked me after her guest had left.

"Study them," I replied.

"I see." She looked vaguely anxious. "What department are you from again?"

"Communication," I answered. "I'm interested in how these represent race and gender."

She visibly relaxed. "Oh! Well, obviously each minority group has their own pamphlet, and both men and women are pictured in all of them."

For many organizations, representations of diversity are enough to warrant pride in the organization, as if images are in and of themselves an accomplishment of equality (Ahmed, 2006a). Although 24% of current Peace Corps volunteers are minorities (Peace Corps, 2013b), and the Peace Corps "actively recruits people with a variety of backgrounds and experiences" (Peace Corps, 2013d), the recruitment materials still reflect a certain understanding of who the normative volunteer – and representation of the U.S. – is and should be.

In this essay, I explore Peace Corps recruitment pamphlets as a case study that illustrates the necessity of considering the intersections of whiteness and postcolonial theories in critical analyses of international volunteer organizations. Specifically, I describe how the images and text in these pamphlets portray the volunteer of color as an oddity who needs to be persuaded and rewarded to join the Peace Corps, as opposed to the white prospective volunteers who have the privilege of choosing to "*give* two years of their lives" (Peace Corps, 2013c; emphasis added), and

the interpenetration of these racializations with neocolonialism. As a communication scholar, I focus on the way communication constitutes organizational processes (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009) by examining how the recruitment pamphlets reconstruct ideas of the normative U.S. volunteer.

I first explore the ways in which communication scholarship can supplement Critical Management Studies and argue that it is especially valuable for considering international organizations. Then, after introducing intersectionality, I make the case that international volunteer organizations should be analyzed through a lens that is sensitive to both whiteness and postcolonial dynamics. Next, I contextualize the specific volunteer organization that I examine within recent work on international aid organizations writ large. In the following case study of Peace Corps recruitment pamphlets, I display ways communication scholarship can support critical management work and the importance of considering intersections of race and nation in international scholarship. Finally, I conclude with a short discussion and implications.

Communication and Critical Management Studies

Although organizational communication scholars often refer to management literature, the relationship is not reciprocal (Mumby & Stohl, 1996). However, multiple scholars have argued that organizational communication can contribute to Critical Management Studies (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009; Mumby & Stohl, 1996; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004). For one, organizational communication claims that communication is constitutive of organizational processes (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009; Putnam & Nicotera, 2008), which can assist management scholars in deconstructing power relations that are built into organizational structures. Second, a focus on communication reveals how text and conversation are interrelated in the construction of organizational action (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004), allowing the discursive to be connected to the material (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009). Third, organizational communication offers a means to challenge the dominance of the managerial voice (Mumby & Stohl, 1996), a central concern of critical management scholars as well. Finally, organizational communication problematizes universal knowledge claims and rationalities (Mumby & Stohl, 1996) and presents experimental methods of destabilizing such rationalities (Broadfoot & Munshi, 2007).

However, organizational communication is not the only subfield of communication studies that relates to Critical Management Studies. The usefulness of communication writ large has been established (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009), but often critical management scholars refer only to *organizational* communication texts. I argue that intercultural communication work can also be beneficial. Specifically, a focus on critical intercultural communication has recently emerged (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010) and has prompted calls for work overlapping with critical organizational studies (Allen, 2010). As Critical Management Studies moves toward analyses of transnational organizations (Connell & Wood, 2005; Hearn, 2004), examination of global processes (Baines, 2010; Gopal & Gopal, 2003) and postcolonial approaches to research (Jack, Westwood, Srinivas & Sardar, 2011; A. Prasad, 2003; Prasad, 2012), critical intercultural communication has much to offer.

For one, critical intercultural communication highlights the importance of connecting the micro to the macro level. As Nakayama and Halualani (2010) explain, the field is "best suited to pay close attention to and follow how macro conditions and structures of power . . . play into and share microacts/processes of communication between/among cultural groups/members" (p. 5). Through this specific focus on micro/macro connections, they note that "critical intercultural scholars can . . . craft timely responses and strategies for how to interrupt dominant conditions and constructions of power" (p. 5). Thus, "there are limitless possibilities for what

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critical intercultural communication studies can shed light on in terms of intracultural and intercultural relations on local-global levels" (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 5). Finally, critical intercultural communication is often explicitly intersectional in orientation (Allen, 2010; Moon, 2010; Nakayama & Halualani, 2010).

Intersectionality

Although critical management scholars are beginning to make headway in intersectional studies, the complexity of contemporary power relations requires a more attentive focus. Intersectionality recognizes that "it is ultimately futile to attempt to disrupt one system [of power] without simultaneously disrupting others" (Fellows & Razack, 1998: 337). Scholars often recognize multiple fields of power; however, "[i]n the field of organization studies and organizational change there is little evidence that the importance of these intersections is acknowledged" (Holvino, 2010: 249).

Intersectionality has been richly theorized at a variety of methodological levels. West & Fenstermaker (2002), for instance, look at the embodied performance of difference. By examining how a person 'does difference,' they consider gender, race and class as intersecting performances. On the other end of the spectrum, McCall (2001) interrogates organizational processes at the macro level by studying systems and quantifiable markers of inequality. Acker (2006) is situated somewhere between, theorizing what she terms "inequality regimes" and how they function to maintain hierarchical power relations within a particular organization. Thus, her theory operates on an organizational level, rather than addressing either individual performance or systemic relations.

The preceding authors have created a solid foundation for intersectional studies in organizational work, but Holvino (2010) adds dimensions to intersectional theory that have been lacking. First, she suggests "a reconceptualization of gender, class and race as simultaneous processes of identity, institutional and social practice" (p. 262) and thus creates a connection between the disparate analytical lenses of Acker (2006), McCall (2001) and West and Fenstermaker (2002). Second, she claims that "the simultaneity of race, class and gender . . . be expanded to include ethnicity, sexuality and nation in organizational analyses for . . . the explanatory value of these categories in today's organizations can no longer be ignored" (p. 262). Thus, Holvino builds the basis for the following case study by pointing out the necessity under current global conditions to account for nation as well as race and gender and by creating a theoretical link between micro and macro processes in intersectional intercultural work.

In the following section, I use Holvino's (2010) interventions as a starting point for arguing that postcolonial and whiteness theory should be used in conjunction to perform more complex intersectional analyses of international aid – and particularly international volunteer – organizations. Scholars have argued for the importance of incorporating postcolonial theory into intersectional analyses (Baines, 2010; Leonard, 2010); however, in intranational work, dynamics of nation are often unexamined. Simultaneously, though nation takes the foreground in international work, it sometimes obscures the importance of race. By attending to intersectionality, "we are more likely to observe how power and privilege may play out in intercultural interactions" (Moon, 2010: 41), both intranationally and internationally.

Intersections of race and nation

Although race is often discussed in critical analyses of international aid, it usually refers to the race of the people being aided (Balaji, 2011; Bell, 2011), rather than that of the Western aid workers, or in the way that racial hierarchies are constructed in the aid organization itself. Those being aided

are often placed at one end of a black/white dichotomy, while the Western organization is considered simply white. A thorough analysis of the way race interacts with colonization *within the aid organization itself* rarely occurs. Thus, Western international power is often equated with white dominance in a way that obscures the complex work that is necessary within the organization in order to construct and put forth such a monolithic racial projection. On the other hand, work that is not internationally focused often fails to recognize the ways in which "bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism" (Ahmed, 2006b: 111) and that scholars should not try to "understand race and racism on their own terms, without discussing colonialism as integral to them" (Ono, 2009: 14). In the U.S. Peace Corps, the racial cannot be separated from the colonial; in fact, in order to perform an analysis that takes into account the ways that these aspects affect one another, I turn to an intersectional analysis that is informed by postcolonial theory and whiteness studies.

Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory and criticism is a radical perspective that de-centers Western rationalities, methods, and ways of being. Postcolonialism "represents an attempt to investigate the complex and deeply fraught dynamics of modern Western colonialism and anticolonial resistance, and the ongoing significance of the colonial encounter for people's lives both in the West and non-West" (A. Prasad, 2003: 5). Thus, postcolonial theory interrogates not only the foundational remnants of colonialism in continued global life but also neocolonial representations, actions and resistances. In Critical Management Studies, postcolonialism seeks to highlight that organizational processes maintain national and cultural hierarchies as well as gender and racial hierarchies.

Even though postcolonialism is "uniquely productive and highly heterogeneous" (Prasad, 2012: 15), it still occupies a marginal position within organization studies writ large (Prasad, 2012). In fact, even within other critical fields such as feminist studies and critical race studies, postcolonial theory is not often addressed (Holvino, 2010; Ono, 2009). When considering international aid organizations, postcolonial theory cannot be overlooked. In the pamphlets that I analyze in the following case, volunteers are often pictured with Host Country Nationals,[1] and thus the relationship is presented as foundational to what makes this person an authentic Peace Corps volunteer. If an analysis were to ignore the colonial aspects of such representations, vital understandings would be missed.

Whiteness theory

Whiteness is not simply the state of having a white body but rather a socially constructed ideology that is inherently oppressive and without any biological basis, yet having material consequences (Roediger, 1991). Whiteness oppresses by façade; it is a racial identity that masquerades as non-racial, universal and 'normal' (Frankenburg, 1994). It holds a silent power, for it claims to be 'just the way things are.' Yet, at the same time, it is not monolithic and stable but changes form depending on the current social moment (Omi & Winant, 1994) or interpersonal situation (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). In fact, whiteness is so slippery that in some situations, "[a]ntiracism even becomes a discourse of white pride" (Ahmed, 2012: 170). When whiteness is accepted as an invisible norm, differences are ignored, and "white people, their assumptions, and ways are empowered" (Grimes, 2002: 382); thus it is important to bring such invisible norms to light, that they might be dismantled.

However, there is a dearth of research in organization studies with this specific focus (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Grimes, 2002; Nkomo, 1992), even though scholars have argued that race has been incompletely addressed in the field (Nkomo, 1992) and that organizational communication in

particular is underwritten in racially problematic ways (Alley-Young, 2008; Ashcraft & Allen, 2003). At the same time, some organizational scholars have recognized the importance of considering whiteness in cross-cultural work (Leonard, 2010). Similarly, in critical intercultural communication, the links between whiteness and (inter-)national power dynamics have begun to emerge in fruitful ways (Moon, 2010; Moon & Flores, 2000; Shome, 2000; Steyn, 2010).

Intersections

These two theoretical perspectives must be brought into communication with one another, in order to deal with the complex dynamics of international volunteer organizations. Alley-Young (2008) specifically takes the relationship between postcolonial studies and whiteness studies as the focal point of his piece. He examines the two theoretical perspectives' intersections and divergences, finding that both can supplement the other in meaningful ways, arguing that "[j]uxtaposing postcolonial and whiteness perspectives allows for an exploration of the myriad ways in which the body is inscribed, displaced, replaced, and obscured with meaning" (p. 318). Clearly, whiteness is an important facet to consider in postcolonial power relations. As Shome (2000) explains, whiteness is inseparable from global imperialism as it "secures its hegemony in a highly racialized global system" (p. 368). Thus, whiteness is important for any postcolonial project to take into account.

However, the postcolonial aspect is also invaluable. Moon and Flores (2000) raise concern that whiteness, when interrogated on its own as a single dimension of power, may serve to reinscribe *other* dimensions of power such as colonialism, patriarchy and heteronormativity. As part of an explicitly intersectional project, postcolonial theory can help to interrogate whiteness in a way that counteracts the ability to obscure itself. By connecting postcolonial theory and whiteness studies, scholars may examine how "[c]olonialism makes the world 'white,' which is of course a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies" (Ahmed, 2006b: 111), as well as the way that "there continue to be close ties . . . between constructions of whiteness and of Westernness" (Frankenburg, 1994: 16). Peace Corps recruitment pamphlets offer an excellent text in which to display the necessity of drawing postcolonial theory together with whiteness theory in intersectional analyses.

The U.S. Peace Corps and international aid organizations

Before turning to the case study, it is important to first contextualize the Peace Corps within current studies of international aid and assistance. Within Critical Management Studies, the international volunteer organization is relatively under-theorized. Transnational organization studies examine large corporations (Connell & Wood, 2005; Elias, 2008; Hearn, 2004) or international nonprofits (Dempsey, 2007, 2009; Ganesh, 2003; Ganesh, Zoller & Cheney, 2005), but the international volunteer organization is rarely interrogated. The Peace Corps specifically has been addressed by only a few scholars within social sciences (Hall, 2007; Milligan, 2000). Thus, to many, the Peace Corps still "symbolizes an ideal form of American altruism" (Hall citing Cobbs Hoffman, 2007: 53). This speaks to why the Peace Corps often escapes the critical scholarly gaze that is levied against many other international aid organizations.

The efficacy, necessity and ethicality of international aid campaigns are widely debated (Richey & Ponte, 2011). As aid campaigns themselves gained notoriety and popularity in the early 2000s, so did scholarly work on the topics. Particularly, new forms of celebrity aid (Dieter & Rajiv, 2008; Repo & Yrjölä, 2011; Yrjölä, 2009) and brand aid (Richey & Ponte, 2008, 2011) caught the attention of critical scholars. By connecting celebrity popularity and capitalistic

consumption to international aid, these campaigns and ads displayed the interrelations between global capitalism, poverty and disease in a much more explicit fashion than had previously been noted.

However, few scholars – in any field – have examined the contemporary manifestations of the Peace Corps or other international volunteer organizations. Although international volunteer organizations may hold similar goals to other aid organizations, the method of offering assistance to communities is very different. By offering a *person* as the means of help, rather than money or goods, the volunteer takes on a focal position. The volunteer becomes not only the means for people to help themselves, thus assuming a sort of savior role, but also a representation of the nation by which the volunteer is sent. Thus, international volunteer organizations invoke power dynamics in vastly different ways than traditional aid and make it imperative to consider the intersections of racism and colonialism in embodied form.

The Peace Corps was created in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy at a time "when popular faith . . . in the value of American ideals and the possibility of their translation into official policy was being shaken to its core" (Hall, 2007: 53). After World War II, the world felt as if it had lost its moral compass, and the U.S. felt it had lost "the frontier" (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998). In the wake of *The Ugly American*, which gave form to "a damning image of American foreign policy in the Third World" (Hall, 2007: 55) and a fear that the Soviet Union seemed more attractive to newly decolonized nations, the Peace Corps served to bridge the gap between a national desire to "believe in the fundamental goodness of America" (Hall, 2007: 55) and a feeling of the "moral ambiguity of Cold War policy" (Hall, 2007: 53). Additionally, the Peace Corps attempted to elide the tension "between a foreign policy of self-aggrandizement and a foreign policy that promote[d] the values of democracy and peace" (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998: 4) internationally.

The following case study analyzes Peace Corps recruitment pamphlets from an intersectional position, concerned particularly with relationships between nation and race but also gender and class. By engaging in postcolonial whiteness analysis of these Peace Corps brochures, I examine the connections between U.S. Americans and white bodies, how those relate to U.S. Americentricism, and the discursive construction of the volunteer in relation to the Host Country National. In showing how the discourse equates the normative U.S. American with whiteness and reinforces U.S. American global dominance, I present a case for the importance of considering the intersections of postcolonial and whiteness theory in analyses of international volunteer organizations.

Peace Corps recruitment pamphlets: A case study

The Peace Corps is an independent U.S. government organization that has sent more than 215,000 Americans to serve in 139 countries over the past 50 years (Peace Corps, 2013b). On the website under the heading "Who Volunteers?" it states:

> One of the goals of the Peace Corps is to help the people of other countries gain a better understanding of Americans and our multicultural society. The agency actively recruits people with a variety of backgrounds and experiences to best share our nation's greatest resource – its people – with the communities where Volunteers serve around the globe.
>
> *(Peace Corps, 2013d)*

The description of the Peace Corps as "multicultural" and recruiting a "variety" of people is notable and seems to be sensitive to issues of race and gender. However, as Ahmed (2006a) has written about in institutions of higher education, the *marketing* of diversity does not necessarily

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correspond to diverse *organizations*. In fact, she claims that such strategies can serve to conceal underlying, persistent inequalities and even construct new forms of racism through the initiative itself (Ahmed, 2012). When diversity is represented in recruitment pamphlets for an international volunteer organization, an organization where people become the face of one nation to another, racial and neocolonial dynamics intertwine in important ways.

At the university where my research took place, the recruitment pamphlets are prominently displayed in the Peace Corps office, directly to the right of the visitor seating. Portable and intriguing, they offer easy informational access. Nine different eight-panel pamphlets are available, each folded from a single piece of glossed paper. Each pamphlet has both color and black-and-white sections, with action shots of volunteers in the field as well as formal headshots of individuals augmented with written text. Every pamphlet has a plain white back page with a mailing address, Peace Corps logo, and tagline: "Life is calling. How far will you go?" Also similar in each brochure are the immediate center pages, with a box in the top right corner describing the "Mission of the Peace Corps" and the left-hand page with the same general information regarding the Peace Corps in each pamphlet. However, the surrounding pictures are different in each pamphlet. Although the remainder of the layout is similar, the text, pictures and focus differ greatly from one pamphlet to another.

Five pamphlets focus on a specific type of work that can be done as a Peace Corps volunteer. I will refer to these as Work pamphlets. They are entitled, respectively:

- "Community Development Through Mentoring and Teaching" (Education)
- "The Business of Helping Others Help Themselves" (Business)
- "Use Your Talents to Help Others Grow" (Agriculture)
- "A Journey of Hope" (HIV/AIDS)
- "Opportunities in Health and HIV/AIDS" (Health)

The other four pamphlets focus on the "opportunity" present for specific ethnic groups. These I will refer to as Worker pamphlets. They are entitled, respectively:

- "An Exceptional Opportunity for African Americans"
- "An Exceptional Opportunity for Asian Americans"
- "An Exceptional Opportunity for American Indians and Alaskan Natives"
- "An Exceptional Opportunity for Latinos"

By analyzing the ways that text and images work together in these brochures and the differences between Worker pamphlets, as well as across the Work and Worker pamphlets, I argue that these brochures serve to reinscribe whiteness as normative and normalize a neocolonial U.S. Americentric perspective.

Case 1: The work pamphlets

The pictures in these brochures are unlabeled. The supplemental quotes and other text do not refer to the pictures themselves but rather lend a certain air to the brochure as a whole. Since the images picture both volunteers and Host Country Nationals, who is the volunteer, and how is that made clear? One of the first things that struck me in the Work pamphlets is that volunteers of color are rarely pictured alone or with similarly aged peers. I began to see that in every picture featuring a volunteer of color, there is a clue present to alert the reader to who the volunteer is. However, white volunteers are often pictured alone or with similarly aged peers. This implies

that the volunteer of color must be given legitimacy of some sort but that the white volunteer is already legitimate simply because of his white body.

Clue 1: The volunteer of color is shown with children.

Volunteers of color are often pictured teaching or holding children. On the cover page of the Health brochure, a Black woman whom we are led to assume is the volunteer is shown holding a baby. In two different pictures of the Business pamphlet, two volunteers of color – one woman and one man – are shown standing over a group of students who are sitting at a table. The Education pamphlet cover shows a female volunteer of color standing and instructing a classroom full of sitting children. In all of these images, the 'volunteer' of color is placed in conjunction with those who can automatically be ruled out as prospective 'volunteers'; the children cannot possibly be volunteers because of their age.

Clue 2: The volunteer of color is pictured with technology.

Working with technology can also be seen as a clue. Two volunteers of color are shown working with a computer, which, when read through the colonial discourse of "industrialization as synonymous with Westernization" (Frankenburg, 1994: 200), serves to legitimize the people of color as volunteers. The text of the pamphlet reinforces this interpretation, stating that "[i]n response to the changing needs of a global economy and the expansion of computer use in developing nations, the number of business and information technology volunteers continues to grow." Thus, these pictures can be read as additional clues; the volunteer of color is shown working with technology in order to make up for the lack of a white body and still be seen as a legitimate volunteer.

Of course, this connection of the U.S. American volunteer to technology and the representation of the Host Country National in opposition as needing technological assistance, is not apolitical. From a postcolonial perspective, it is important to note that information and computer technology (ICT) can serve a neocolonialist function (Gopal, Willis & Gopal, 2003). In fact, Gopal, Willis and Gopal (2003) go so far as to say that "far from being emancipatory, as the elites of both core and peripheral societies would have us believe, ICTs might actually represent the most potentially effective means of continuing the project of dominance inaugurated during colonial times" (p. 239).

Clue 3: The volunteer of color watches as the Host Country Nationals work.

In the Business pamphlet, one woman of color is sitting on the outside of a circle of women who are sewing. The outside woman simply sits, watching. The obvious separation from the group, as well as her hands-off, aloof demeanor reveals a difference from the other women. That difference can be read as 'volunteer.' Thus, watching as Host Country Nationals work is another way the volunteer of color can be authenticated.

Obviously, the Western volunteer – who is ostensibly there to serve and is represented as sitting back and watching as the Host Country Nationals do domestic work – has gendered as well as neocolonial implications. It reaffirms the 'place' of the (female) Westerner in the host country – there to help with teaching, technological or other 'advanced' work that places her in a position of authority over the Host Country Nationals and yet 'charmed' to learn about the 'quaint' work of the natives. This representation is reminiscent of Prasad's (2003) ethnographic imagination, where "identities and relationships that are vividly reminiscent of colonial dynamics" (p. 150)

are reproduced out of nostalgia for the ethnographic adventurers of old, displaying a neocolonial desire.

Clue 4: The volunteer of color is branded with Peace Corps insignia.

If all else fails, the volunteer of color is simply shown wearing Peace Corps insignia. The Peace Corps branding is an obvious volunteer designation, which leaves no doubt as to the volunteer's legitimacy. This last resort is used in the Education and Business pamphlets and often in conjunction with other clues.

No clues necessary: The white volunteer stands out/alone.

When the volunteer is a person of color, there are 'clues' that reveal who the volunteer is. However, for the white volunteer, no clues are necessary. In multiple pamphlets, white volunteers are pictured interacting with peers: an older, female volunteer talking with an older woman at the market, a male volunteer at a table of what appear to be businessmen, a male volunteer teaching with an assumed Host Country National peer, a female volunteer shaking the hand of a Host Country National farmer. The reader does not need to be clued in to who the volunteer is in these pictures; whiteness itself is enough of a designation. This not only normalizes that the volunteer is housed in a white body but that the normative U.S. American is white. The racial conceptualization of the 'volunteer' in the context of Peace Corps is inextricably tied to the nation.

Furthermore, white volunteers, unlike volunteers of color, are pictured alone. One man is shown on a computer, another holding a farming implement of some sort. In a third picture, a white man and a white woman stand in front of a chalkboard, the suggestion being that they are teaching, though no students are shown. The Host Country Nationals do not need to be shown in these pictures because the whiteness of the body is enough for the volunteer to be recognized.

Additionally, these images imply that the Host Country National is a person of color. Though Peace Corps works in Eastern European countries and in other places with predominantly white populations, few pamphlets display images of such peoples. Even the three images present are small and hidden in corners. Compared to the large, full-panel pictures of Host Country Nationals of color, the implication is that the normative Host Country National is of color, just as the normative volunteer is white.

Case 2: The worker pamphlets

As mentioned, four Peace Corps pamphlets are designed to appeal to prospective volunteers of certain races/ethnicities: African-Americans, Asian-Americans, American Indians/Alaskan Natives and Latinos. There is no one pamphlet specifically for the white would-be volunteer. The sheer fact that these pamphlets exist, combined with the fact that a white one does not, has racial implications: that the volunteer of color needs to be enticed into Peace Corps service, while the white volunteer does not. Thus, the white volunteer is considered to be of a certain, privileged class that can *choose* to serve overseas, whereas the lower-class volunteer of color must be *persuaded*.

For instance, the Worker pamphlets are titled: "An Exceptional Opportunity for . . .," implying not only that Peace Corps work is something that will benefit the non-white volunteer but that it is also out of the ordinary – an exception to the rule. This can be taken in more than one way: the experience of volunteering is outside of the norm for people of color or that people of color are outside of the normal embodiment of 'the volunteer.' I argue that both readings are

active, serving to reinforce a perception of the volunteer of color as low-class and the normative volunteer as white.

The word 'opportunity' is also worth discussing. When used in the Work pamphlets, 'opportunity' refers to how the volunteer *creates* opportunities for the Host Country National rather than how the volunteer himself is *given* opportunities. Instead, the word 'service' is used to describe Peace Corps volunteer work in the Work pamphlets. These two different framings of Peace Corps as 'opportunity' or 'service' reveal the different class conceptualizations attached to white and non-white volunteers, as well as a hidden paternalism. The white volunteer is assumed to be of middle-class background, to have the economic privilege to decide to spend two years 'helping others' and doing 'service,' while the non-white worker is assumed to be low-class, not having the privilege to decide to help others, as she must help herself. Thus, the Peace Corps is framed as an 'opportunity,' and the reader is given examples of what she will gain from Peace Corps work. The low-class worker of color must be given incentive in order to serve.

This assumption of privilege in the normalized white worker also reveals a paternalism in the action of 'serving.' The volunteer is the one who serves, and it is the *white* volunteer who serves. Here, whiteness becomes conflated with being U.S. American. It is implied that the white volunteer has more knowledge and skill than the Host Country National and is thus able to 'help' or 'serve.' In a neocolonialist fashion, the Host Country National is relegated to a passive role, that of 'being helped.' Yet the Host County National is not alone in this; the work of the volunteer of color is rarely presented as 'service.' Instead, it is an 'opportunity,' an 'exceptional' offer, revealing not only a neocolonial paternalism but also a racist paternalism.

Of the four Worker pamphlets, the one designated for Latinos is of particular interest. Unlike the other pamphlets of its type, this racial (or ethnic) group is not expressed as a type of 'American' (as opposed to African-*American*, *American*-Indian, etc.). It seems to dissociate the Latino from a U.S. American identity. In fact, Latinos are described as in a constant state of immigration, having only just arrived in this country that is not yet their home.

This is especially clear in the quotes chosen in the pamphlet. Keeping in mind that these quotes are "filtered through Peace Corps logic" and "chosen as 'appropriate' by Peace Corps editors" (Polonijo-King, 2004), they say more about what Peace Corps designates Latinos to be than what they declare themselves. I would like to focus on one specific quote, important enough to fill an entire pamphlet segment:

> When my daughter told me she wanted to join the Peace Corps – ouch! – she almost killed me. At the time, she was helping me pay the house bills. But then I started thinking that she would be helping my people, and she would see, with her own eyes, the scenes that I told my children about. The decision she made was right. Her experience in the Peace Corps has been very good for her.

This is the only quote used in any of the pamphlets from the parent of a returned volunteer rather than the volunteer herself. As the intended reader of this pamphlet is a prospective Latina/o volunteer, the implication of this quote's inclusion is that it will assuage fears Latinas/os have of leaving their family for two years. The use of a parent reflects a perceived need for family approval in the Latina/o home, a need that is not reflected in any of the other pamphlets. That this ovation to family approval is found in the Latino pamphlet alone implies that family approval is not something that the normative white worker needs to consider or that the normative U.S. American needs to consider.

The focus on family approval only in the Latino pamphlet implies a deviation from the norm: that of white independence. This, then, ties back into the lack of explicit recognition of

the Latina/o's U.S. Americanness in the title of the pamphlet. The ideal of U.S. Americans as independent is reinforced by separating the family-dependent Latina/o from the normative U.S. American. This separation is furthered by the mother's use of the term "my people" in reference to those Host Country Nationals her daughter went to serve. Together, these moves serve to alienize the Latina/o in a similar manner to the way Mexican immigrants were constructed in the 1930s "as outside of the national body" (Flores, 2003: 373) through a "rhetorical border" (Flores, 2003: 378) between Mexican 'aliens' and 'real' U.S. Americans. In a similar manner, the Latina/o here is presented as a perpetually just-arrived immigrant, renormalizing the 'real' U.S. American as white.

Discussion and conclusion

Even ostensibly 'positive' representations can reproduce colonial and racial power structures (Said, 1993), and work that "highlight[s] the best of human empathy and compassion" can have colonizing implications (Balaji, 2011: 50). The Peace Corps, though it attempts to represent both the humanity of its mission and the diversity of U.S. Americans in these pamphlets, ends up reinscribing both neocolonialism and whiteness. The way that the normative volunteer is constructed as white through text and image reinforces an idea of the white man's burden: that the entirety of the globe is the white man's responsibility because only he has the necessary knowledge, skills and privilege to care for it (Balaji, 2011; Cloud, 2004; Mohanty, 1991). The Peace Corps recruitment pamphlets thus construct a white volunteer who is privileged enough to *choose* to serve others and who has the necessary skills that Host Country Nationals lack. However, by being offered this "exceptional opportunity" – however paternalistically – U.S. Americans of color are invited to take part in the white man's service to the developing world. This reveals a tension in the discourse: from one side, it seems as if this burden of world service is primarily a racial ideology, and from another it seems to stem primarily from nation. Only through the simultaneous analysis of race and nation can the critic explain this complex interaction between whiteness and neocolonialism.

Whiteness is slippery and may change form in order to maintain power (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994), at times supporting racial hierarchies, yet also obscuring them in order to reinforce U.S. global dominance. These discourses work to simultaneously accept and reject the volunteer of color as U.S. American and continually recode the ideological basis of the white man's burden, switching between race and nation where the need arises. Through this case study of an international volunteer organization, it is clear that critical management scholars need to consider postcolonial and whiteness theory as interwoven (Alley-Young, 2008). Examining physical embodiment as representative of a particular nation or people requires a more nuanced analysis of intersecting power dynamics.

This case study also demonstrates what communication studies – both organizational and intercultural – has to offer Critical Management Studies. Through a communicative analysis of the way the normative volunteer is constructed, in both image and text, a basis emerges for future organizational analyses of both the Peace Corps and other international volunteer organizations. By tying the micro discourses of the organization to macro discourses of U.S. American culture, the analysis adheres not only to critical intercultural communication standards (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010) but to critical management ideals as well (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). This chapter offers not only a call but an invitation for future partnerships between critical communication and Critical Management Studies: each field has much to help the other in reaching our mutual emancipatory goals.

The Peace Corps itself poses an interesting problem for the critical scholar. Is the Peace Corps a national institution that should be maintained? What might shifts in its discourse enable? Hall

(2007) and Cobbs Hoffman (1998) argue that the Peace Corps serves to mitigate tensions in the national imaginary through myths that give "coherence to the nation state" (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998: 6). Of course, this coherence comes through an emphasis on "individual idealism as a way to rise above glaring contradictions in domestic and foreign policy" (Hall, 2007: 56). If, as Hall (2007) argues, the Peace Corps largely affects the U.S. American perspective on themselves, then the reinforcement of whiteness and neocolonialism affects not only intercultural relations but also U.S. American cultural imaginaries. Thus, the Peace Corps as an institution simultaneously enables political progress within the nation and reinforces hegemonic ideals within the national imaginary.

Given this complexity and the work at hand, I would like to suggest three directions for future scholarship addressing the U.S. Peace Corps. First, future scholarship should examine how the national imaginaries about what Peace Corps volunteering is (or will be) affect volunteer work and intercultural relationships in the field. How do these recruitment materials create an expectation of work for the Peace Corps volunteer, and how does this expectation partially constitute the volunteer's actions and experiences in another country? Second, researchers should explore the experience of minority Peace Corps volunteers. If the normative volunteer is implicitly constructed as white, how does this affect the experience of volunteers of color? Finally, scholars should engage with management relationships in the Peace Corps. Volunteers on the ground are often geographically and communicatively separated from their Peace Corps overseers but have local, Host Country National supervisors. What are the relational dynamics among the distant organization, local supervisor and intercultural volunteer? "Because of its deep appeal to the country's imagination" (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998: 4), examining the Peace Corps allows the researcher access to fundamental tensions in U.S. culture and international relations. Ultimately, I hope that future research will help to address the question of how one might recognize the problematic aspects of the Peace Corps while still embracing the desire for intercultural partnership.

Note

1 'Host Country National' is the preferred Peace Corps term to refer to citizens of the countries to which Peace Corps volunteers are sent.

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