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Experiences With Peace Corps' Third Goal: Perspectives Of Peace Corps Mali Volunteers

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**EXPERIENCES WITH PEACE CORPS' THIRD GOAL:
PERSPECTIVES OF PEACE CORPS MALI VOLUNTEERS**

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PIM 68

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of International Service, Leadership, and Management at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| APCD | Associate Peace Corps Director (see Appendix E for sample job description) |
| CCT | Cross-Culture Training |
| IST | In-Service Training |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| PCV | Peace Corps Volunteer |
| PCVT | Peace Corps Volunteer Trainer |
| PCMali | Peace Corps Mali |
| PC Staff | Peace Corps Mali Staff |
| PST | Pre-Service Training |

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ABSTRACT

When asked what the best part of their service was, the large majority of Peace Corps Volunteers will light up as they describe a cross-cultural experience or relationship. Peace Corps Volunteers want to share these sentiments with Americans. I conducted a qualitative case study by interviewing three fellow Peace Corps Volunteers and evaluating 35 survey responses, in order to explore Peace Corps Volunteers' perceptions of Peace Corps' Third Goal- to share a host country culture with Americans. The interviews were transcribed and then compared and contrasted. From the interviews and survey findings, it has been found that the Peace Corps Mali training program and interactions with Peace Corps Staff gives the impression that Goal 3 is not as important to meet as Goal 1- skills exchange and project development; Volunteers are not trained on techniques to share their experiences responsibly; Volunteers do not consider cultural exchanges as satisfying "work" due to its perceived, abstract nature in measuring the outcomes; and that the frustrations related to Goal 3 are also contributing to Volunteers carrying out unsustainable projects. It is concluded that the implementation of the recommendations of this study would put an action to Peace Corps Director Aaron William's words of Goal 3 as one of his top priorities, showing Volunteers in the best way that Peace Corps believes all their goals carry equal weight of importance. Additionally, the lack in promotion of the importance of Goal 3 does not start in Peace Corps training, it comes from the culture of "Development" and American values, leaving Volunteers at a loss for how to meet Goal 3 successfully.

Chapter One: Introductory Context and Background

“The logic of the Peace Corps is that someday we are going to bring it home to America.”

President John R. Kennedy

Since Peace Corps’ establishment on March 1, 1961, over 200,000 Americans have served in 139 host countries. The organization recruits college graduates and professionals to address a wide range of global needs. Americans who take on a Peace Corps service will live and work within a community of host country nationals, have a counterpart national to help with orientation, experience different livelihoods and learn a foreign language. When I and my fellow Peace Corps Volunteers begin our training in July 2009, we were made aware of President Kennedy’s vision and the following three goals for their service:

1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

(<http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=about.mission>)

The focus of this study is Volunteers’ perceptions of Goal 3, one of the ways to “bring it home” as President Kennedy stated above. Peace Corps’ official website states that Goal 3 is important because, “When Volunteers and friends of the Peace Corps support and engage in Third Goal activities, they help Americans gain a great understanding of the world. They foster the spirit of world peace and friendship. They also inspire Americans to be civic minded by example.” In addition, as of 2009, Peace-Corps has developed ten “Core Expectations.” The tenth Expectation being Goal 3 related: “Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values and

traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service” (Peace Corps Mali Volunteer Handbook, 2009, pg. 8).

Throughout my service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mali, my interests in Cultural Anthropology and PCVs’ general interests in wanting to share the magnitude of their experiences sparked many informal conversations about the Peace Corps program. A re-occurring topic of discussion was that Volunteers feel like Goal 3 is not given as much value in practice as it is given on paper, nor do they feel prepared to share their experiences. One Volunteer said, “I know *what* has happened, but I don’t know *how to explain it*” (personal communication). Another Volunteer stated, “The one message that I got, over and over, from training was that you have to learn language in order to integrate because you have to integrate in order to get the projects done” (personal communication). The conversation in which this was said was about how some Volunteers feel that Peace Corps assigns the most importance to projects and that any cultural learning goals (Goal 2 & 3) exist only to enhance Goal 1’s developmental outputs. Another Volunteer said, “When someone asks me what I have done in Mali, I tend to just list off the funded projects I did or make some jokes about how much tea I drink and time I spend sitting around. But it is not like that is all I want to say, it’s just that that is all I know how to share or that I think they want to hear” (personal communication). Which leads to the true motivation of this study: We, the Volunteers, want Goal 3 to be equally respected as Goal 1 by both Peace Corps and our family and friends at home. My recognition of the healing that comes from cultural understandings has led to my personal commitment this study and its recommendations. According to Peace Corps’ 2010 Volunteer Survey Open Ended Responses for Mali, 76% of the written responses to “What has been the best aspect of your Peace Corps service?” had to do with cross-cultural learning and relationship building. Volunteers want to be able to share this aspect. However, the current in-country training received by Volunteers in

Mali is heavily focused on technical project skills and integration- not on how to share experiences. Other informal conversations with peers have concluded that Peace Corps Mali's could show Volunteers that the administration has respect for Goal 3 by improving/increasing the cross-cultural training (CCT). Giving a more balanced attention to all three Goals in training will not only show Peace Corps' respect for the cultural aspect of our services, but also help in shifting what family and friends are expecting from Volunteers.

In order to begin addressing this issue, this study exhibits Volunteers' perceptions of and experiences with Goal 3 by holding in-depth discussions. This study also includes a summary of the current cross-cultural training program of Peace Corps Mali and specific entry points where cross-cultural training could improve Peace Corps Mali outputs.

The Volunteers I have talked with have shown such a passion for the subject, that the study also includes a sort of action research, giving a group of Volunteers the opportunity to brainstorm, and then contribute ways for Peace Corps Mali to support Volunteers in "responsibly" sharing their experiences.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Practical Applicability

Volunteers join Peace Corps for a variety of different reasons; giving each Volunteer her own definition of “success.” However, *all* success stories from Peace Corps have two things in common: a foreign setting and multicultural partners- whether it is peer Volunteers or host-country nationals. According to Shenker and Zeira (1992), Volunteers’ anxieties with meeting both culturally and project-based goals are well warranted in the fact that “cultural differences can contribute to increased conflict and misperceptions, which results in poor performance” (Tirmizi, 2008, pg. 2). In Peace Corps, conflicts due to cultural misinterpretations include, but are not limited to: Volunteers ending their service early due to internal/external frustrations with a new culture or counterparts, Volunteers losing the respect of communities, disagreements escalating to a point where Volunteers do not feel safe, host communities making false assumptions about Americans, Volunteers making false assumptions about host communities, etc.

Compounding Volunteers’ anxieties is the fact that most American students go through an educational system that is focused on independent work, leaving Volunteers that are straight out of college with little to no experience working in business teams, let alone multicultural ones (Shor and Freire, 1987). The “storming stage” within every team is inevitable, but what is learned about one’s self and her teammates is what is vital to Americans becoming more civic minded and fostering cross-continental friendships- the inspiration behind Peace Corps’ Third Goal (Halverson, 2008). This study makes the assumption that in order for a Volunteer to complete her service with a sense of success and, consequently, the confidence to continue her work on Goal 3 when she returns home, she must have the tools to *understand* and *share* the cross-cultural experiences she has had. With the proper facilitators, Peace Corps Volunteers can

be trained in the reflective, observational, and articulating skills that allow Volunteers to comprehend and responsibly represent their host culture (Halverson and Tirmizi, 2008).

Cross-cultural training (CCT) can prepare Volunteers to have daily formal and informal interactions with host country nationals. Those experiences allow PCVs to form their own opinions of their host country. The hope is that PCVs' findings can break down generalized stereotypes that Americans have of a Peace Corps host country into contextual understandings. This sort of awareness that Goal 3 promotes positions PCVs as liaisons between Americans and cultures of the world. Goal 3 is ultimately meant to allow Americans to gain an understanding of a culture they have never experienced firsthand. According to Halverson and Tirmizi (2008), training to work in multicultural teams consists of learning and comprehending the following: Culture and its impact on teams, the impact of social identity and individual behavior on teams, stages of team development, group process, leadership styles most effective for multicultural teams, intercultural communication, conflict, and problem solving.

The Volunteer-counterpart team is essential to the success of Peace Corps and the host country. Tirmizi and Halverson (2008) define multicultural teams "as a collection of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems, and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries and beyond" (pg. 5). In today's global society and economic market, multicultural teams are essential to maximizing profits of businesses and achieving indicators of success in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Tirmizi, 2008). "Harnessing the synergy or potential for high performance that is present in a multicultural team can lead to more creative approaches to problem solving and decision making" (Tirmizi, 2008, pg. 4). Therefore, the skills PCVs must develop in order to understand, share, and responsibly represent their host country

are not only beneficial to their service, but are also highly valuable to their post-Peace Corps careers. It can also be assumed that investing in the success of Peace Corps' Third Goal means investing in the intercultural exchanges between PCVs and host country nationals: leading to improved sustainability of projects.

A 2001 Peace Corps publication describes the following in reference to its' Goals and training:

In order to accomplish all three goals, Volunteers must understand and appreciate the culture of their host country as well as their own. Cultural exchange is an integral part of the transfer of knowledge and skills and its impact is truly life changing for both host-country community partners and for Volunteers. Much of the work of Peace Corps staff at posts entails fostering an environment that supports and encourages cultural exchange... The first goal refers to American Volunteers contributing to social and economic development in their host countries. The second and third goals refer to mutual cultural exchange. These goals are based on the concept that for development and peace to occur, people of different cultures must understand and respect each other's cultural differences... For some Volunteers, what they learn and share about both cultures is as important as success in the technical side of their service. When Volunteers return, the United States is enriched because of their service. The impact of the over 155,000 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) sharing their broader understanding, experiences, skills, and commitment has come to be known as the *domestic dividend*.” (Program and Training Booklet 3, 2001, pg. 7,9)

At www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal, return and current Peace Corps Volunteers can register their Third Goal plans and “receive a free Third Goal Resource Packet complete with souvenirs for 32 audience members, a Peace Corps map that can be used with online activities,

and other materials.” RPCVs/PCVs can also submit their Third Goal photos, videos, and activity highlights to share. On the website, “Peace Corps encourages all returned Volunteers to help achieve the Third Goal, helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans, by engaging in one or more of the following Peace Corps initiatives: Peace Corps Digital Library, Speakers Match program, and to help recruit new Volunteers.” The PC Digital Library includes collections of Volunteer photos and stories, Staff photos and stories, brochures, newsletters, speeches, essays, letters, congressional reports and legislation, press briefings, posters, graphics, agency photos, and reports.

Peace Corps Volunteers are asked to participate in the World Wise Schools/Correspondence Match program. This program basically pairs Volunteers with a classroom in America in order for the PCV to share stories through letters or blogs. According to Peace Corps’ 2010 Volunteer Survey Open Ended Responses for Mali, several PCVs signed up for the program but did not receive a match or connect with the match. There were also several comments on the connection falling apart after one or two exchanges. On the other hand, many PCVs received engaging matches and enjoyed the experience.

Practical Applicability

Following is a short list of stakeholders who have an interest in this study and some reasons why:

- Peace Corps Volunteers who have participated in this study will have built capacity in reflection, articulation of problems, finding the root causes of problems and developing actions that address those root issues, and the self-confidence/sense of accomplishment that comes with action research.
- Peace Corps as an organization will benefit from the promotion of Goal 3’s importance in development and global peace.

- Peace Corps training staff will benefit from direct, constructive feedback from PCVs that are genuinely interested in making Peace Corps the best program it can be.
- Friends and family of PCVs will benefit from the rich and effective information that comes from a PCV's proper reflection on her/his experience.
- Host country citizens of Peace Corps programs will benefit from a more responsible, holistic, and purposeful image of their homes being shared with Americans.
- New understandings of development work have been documented and contributed to the ever-evolving development approach.

A Note to the Reader:

An assumption that comes from the Literature Review, my education, and my experiences, is that Goal 3 is a non-linear process of **learning, understanding, and sharing**. As you read the description of the training program, the perceptions of the interviewees and the results of the survey keep in mind what aspects of the process are being addressed or neglected. I believe that if you interact with my writing in this way you will not only better understand the recommendations, but we will have a uniform platform which to criticize or contribute to my interpretation of this study.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Overall Approach and Rationale

Since Goal 3 is such a contextual experience for each Volunteer, I was certain that PCVs should participate in posing questions and proposing actions. A participatory action research approach is the most appropriate for this case study. This way, “the data comes from the group interaction” (Morgan 1997, pg. 6). Additionally, “group discussions provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants’ experiences and perspectives” (Rossman 2003, pp97-98). Unlike quantitative research that consists of a physical and social reality that can be tested and defined objectively, qualitative research acknowledges subjectivity and utilizes the flexibility of multiple research methods that are interactive and humanistic (Rossman 2003, pp8-10). Therefore, individual interviews were conducted and informal discussions were had to develop implementation strategies and recommendations. As the Cross-Culture Trainer for a new group of Volunteers, I was able to summarize the training program of Peace Corps Mali from the perspective of this research and tailor implementation strategies thought of by the participants and I to fit into the existing program.

Population Selection and Sampling Strategies

I personally described my proposed study to current PCVs in the Mopti Region of Mali that have already expressed interest in the subject during informal discussions, until 3 action research team members were identified and willing to participate.

The survey was sent via email to the master list of all current PCVs in Mali. That list excluded current trainees.

Data Gathering Procedures

Interview participants were asked to answer the *Overall Questions* (Appendix A) in writing. After reviewing the responses, I held 45-60 minute individual interviews in order to ask

probing/clarifying questions. This way, participants had already started their reflections on the topic and I, the facilitator, had an understanding of where participants were coming from. Since scheduling and traveling is difficult, this preparation also saved time.

I used SurveyMonkey.com to create, and send, the survey (Appendix B) to all current PCVs.

Data-analysis Procedures

I transcribed each individual interview. The transcripts were coded to identify themes related to the *Overall Questions*. Due to different, unforeseen circumstances, the action team was unable to come together as one group for discussion. However, after reviewing the common themes of their interviews, I was able to work with each participant individually to find entry points for action that they were excited about. Via phone and email, I kept participants updated on each other's progress. Since I was the Cross-Culture Trainer during this phase, I was also able to make suggestions to each participant on how to tailor their ideas so that they are compatible with the Peace Corps philosophy and program.

I used SurveyMonkey.com to organize the responses to the survey.

Trustworthiness and Methodological Limitations

The limitations of my methodology are my personal subjectivity as a Peace Corps Volunteer and my ability to accurately record the information from informal discussions. In addition, the participant pool was limited and voluntary. Lastly, 35 of 145 PCVs responded to the survey.

The following standards were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study: (a) the proposal was reviewed by a representative of SIT's IRB, (b) an experienced professor, Samdani Fakir, guided the research process, including periodical conversations via email, (c) I triangulated sources of data by interviewing PCVs of different educational/ career experiences,

(d) triangulation was also exercised through the multiple points in time data was collected and by using a survey to widen the scope of the study, (e) I spent up to an hour in individual interviews in order to allow for probing questions and a full understanding of the interviewee's experiences, and (f) once transcribed, each participant received a copy of their in order to validate their responses with their signature- here the participant had the opportunity to elaborate, correct, extend, or challenge the content of the transcript.

Ethical considerations

I informed the participants in writing about the inquiry: the topic, the purpose, methods of data gathering, and methods by which we will maintain confidentiality and assure privacy, and requested their voluntary agreement on the same.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analyses

Findings: Training Summary

The following description of Peace Corps Mali's Training Program does not include measurements of effectiveness or importance beyond simple observations made during the research process. This objective summary admittedly diverges from the primary focus of this study. However after some debate, I have decided that the inclusion the summary serves four main purposes that cannot be skipped:

1. Permits you to better understand the participants' perceptions by understanding the training they received
2. Demonstrates the extent of the **learning, understanding and sharing** sectors of the current cross-culture training agenda
3. Illustrates the structure/nature of the program- allowing for a better understanding of the recommendations made at the end of the study.
4. Gives an opportunity for the reader to interpret the program and the findings of the study in a different manner than I have, and therefore provide alternative insights and practical recommendations.

The Peace Corps Mali Training Program includes three phases:

Phase 1: 9 week Pre-Service Training (PST)

Phase 2: First 3 months at site

Phase 3: 2 week In-Service Training (IST)

Pre-Service Training

“PST is designed to help each Trainee gain the observational and experiential tools needed to formulate an initial understanding of Malian culture, as well as an idea of what

constitutes “culture” in general. Training will also facilitate the process of adapting to a new culture... and provide an opening from which Trainees can discuss ideas with their facilitator, new friends in the community, other Trainees, and staff” (Peace Corps Mali Training Orientation Manual, 2011 pg 23). Peace Corps Mali Training Orientation Manual (2011 pg 5) declares that “by the end of PST Trainees will:

1. Demonstrate a comfortable level of Intermediate-Mid in the language of study (the local language or French), achieve at least 95% of the Learning Objectives (LOs) and an ability for self-directed learning in the field;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the differences and similarities of Malian and American cultures and how to adapt their living and working habits to these realities;
3. Demonstrate the knowledge, skills, attitudes and responsibility to live and work effectively in a different socio-economic environment while maintaining their health, well being, and safety and security;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of Peace Corps’ development approach that encourages appreciative inquiry, critical thinking, teamwork and community participation, creative problem solving, resource awareness, information gathering and analysis, flexibility, patience and self-sufficiency, as well as the involvement of women and minorities in this process.
5. Practice adherence to Peace Corps Mali policies during training and demonstrate an ability to continue such practices during service.”

In order to meet these goals, training responsibilities are divided into the following sectors: Safety and Security, Medical, Cross-culture, Language Learning, and Technical Training. All trainees are assigned a technical sector. Peace Corps Mali sectors include Health Education, Environment, Water and Sanitation, Small Enterprise Development, and Education.

Due to the nature of this report, the following descriptions are focused on the cross-cultural aspects of the Peace Corps Mali Training Program.

Cross-Culture Terminal Learning Objectives:

1. By the end of PST, Trainees will recognize how the history, values and culture of Mali influence their services in present-day Mali.
2. By the end of PST, Trainees will demonstrate a comprehension of adjustments required of an American who is living and working in Mali.
3. By the end of PST, Trainees will develop strategies to cope with the stresses of living and working in a Malian cultural context.

(Peace Corps Mali Training Orientation Manual, 2011 pg 18).

Cross-Culture Sessions in Chronological Order (length in hours)

1. Introduction to Malian Culture: Malian Do's and Don'ts (2hrs)

This session introduces the Cross-culture Trainers and the learning objectives/expectations for all Cross-culture sessions. As a group, trainees discuss the definition of culture, identify the seen and unseen features of culture, and consider relationships that may exist between the seen and unseen features of culture. The Language and Culture Facilitators (LCFs) give Mali-specific examples of the features of culture that have come up. For example, if “clothes” was mentioned as a feature of culture, than an LCF would give some examples of how the religious culture of Mali effects the clothes Malians wear. Additionally, LCFs may share how unseen Malian values effects the seen behaviors at meal times. Trainers and LCFs perform a short skit to demonstrate some basic Do's and Don'ts while eating in Mali. Next, the skit is repeated but with the trainer replaced by a trainee who just observed the skit.

Afterwards the group discusses differences they noticed between the behaviors of the trainer in the first skit compared to the behaviors of the trainee in the second skit.

2. *Stereotypes and Values Clarification (2hrs)*

This session introduces some stereotypes and value differences that most Volunteers encounter throughout their service, starts to get trainees to recognize Malian values through the behaviors they will see at homestay, and emphasizes that each person's values will determine his/her reactions to conflict and other situations. LCFs are asked to write a list of stereotypes they have about Americans and trainees are asked to put together a list of stereotypes they have of Malians. The lists are shared and discussed. After each presentation, the opposite side is given the opportunity to ask questions. For example, the Malians may write that Americans are alcoholics. A trainee may ask, "Why do you think all Americans are alcoholics?" Here an LCF will have the opportunity to explain behaviors he/she sees that leads to the belief that Americans are alcoholics. Next, the group is asked to create a list of their nationality's top six values. The lists are posted in front of the group. The trainer then leads a discussion on the similarities, differences, and behaviors that are a result of certain values. There is also a discussion on how each person believes his/her values are the best values. Finally, the group is broken up by nationality again and asked to read the same conflict scenario. Each group is asked to identify who is to blame for the conflict. As a large group, the similarities and differences of answers to the conflict scenario are discussed.

3. *Diversity (2hrs)*

This session shows trainees how each Volunteer's experience is affected by their background. Additionally, it helps to show trainees how Volunteers can support each other when faced with stereotypes, misunderstandings, or intolerance. Finally, the session assists

trainees in being aware of their own stereotypes and biases in order to respond more effectively to each other. The session is typically question and answer between trainees and a panel of current PCVs, each of which represents different backgrounds. Panel members typically represent Asian-American Volunteers, African-American Volunteers, GBLT Volunteers, Married Volunteers, and Volunteers 30+ years of age.

4. *Video Show on People and Cultures of Mali (2hrs)*

A video is shown during dinner that explores the traditions of different ethnic groups in Mali

5. *Introduction to Homestay: Question and Answer (2hrs)*

This session describes the purpose of the Homestay program, security issues at homestay, and things to expect. It is ran by question and answers between trainees and staff.

6. *Cultural Festival (2hrs)*

During the Cultural Festival, trainees have the opportunity to listen to Malian music, learn Malian dances, buy fabric made in Mali, and try different foods they will encounter in Mali. The festival is also an opportunity for trainees to practice their bargaining language with local vendors and learn the general prices/names of things in Mali. Current PCVs, trainers, LCFs, and staff are all invited to the festival and are encouraged to socialize with the trainees.

7. *Culture Shock and Cultural Adjustment (2hrs)*

This session aims to explain how trainees can identify culture shock and strategies to cope with it. Additionally, this session draws on the trainees' past experiences in overcoming culture shock in order to promote peer support. Current Volunteers attend to share stories on how peer Volunteers have helped them cope with culture shock. Since this session takes place after the trainees' first stint at homestay, there is a short discussion on things trainees noticed and that shocked them at homestay. Based on their past experiences, trainees and

staff share stories on how they learned to adjust to similar culture shocks mentioned in the discussion. Finally, Peace Corps official “Culture Shock Diagram” is discussed. It presents five stages of culture shock for the average Volunteer: Initial Enthusiasm, Initial Shock, Initial Adjustment, Further Culture Shock, and Further Adjustment.

8. *Decentralization Process in Mali (2hrs)*

A Malian official who works on Mali’s Decentralization Committee is invited as a guest speaker. The speaker explains Mali’s old system of government, and the transition into the decentralized system. The speaker also discusses major political events in Malian history and what decentralization means for Mali. In addition to the guest speaker, Peace Corps Senior Staff is invited to answer questions related to how decentralization affects Volunteers’ services.

9. *Unwanted Attention and Sexual Harassment (2hrs)*

This is a session mostly lead by the Safety and Security, and the Medical trainers. The Cross-culture trainers attend in order to give culturally appropriate strategies to preventing and coping with unwanted attention. Throughout the session, trainees are taught to identify the differences between unwanted attention and sexual harassment in a Malian context.

10. *Communication and Conflict Resolution (2hrs)*

This session discusses different communication styles and behavioral differences between professional Malian and American settings. However, the majority of the session focuses on introducing conflict resolution techniques appropriate in Mali; mainly the third-party system and joking cousins. The LCFs, trainers, and staff share different stories of when they used Malian conflict resolution techniques to give the trainees an idea of when they are appropriate. After some discussion, the group is divided into groups of five and asked to develop a step-by-step process they can follow when confronted with conflict during their

service. An LCF is placed in each group to ensure the process is being culturally sensitive. The groups are then given conflict scenario to work through their process.

Community Based Training (CBT)

Peace Corps Mali uses a CBT approach which “provides trainees with more practical and applicable skills, and to better prepare them to enter the Malian community” (Peace Corps Mali Training Orientation Manual, 2011, pg. 11). Trainees spend approximately 46 days out of 66 total days during PST living with a Malian host family and attending approximately 172 hours language classes in their communities. CBT “incorporates Trainee Directed Activities (TDA) that are centered on formal and informal language training, host family experience, technical knowledge and skill building, and cross-cultural exercises, which emphasizes community involvement and participation” (Peace Corps Mali Training Orientation Manual, 2011 pg 5). For example, a TDA promoting language acquisition and host family participation may require the trainee to discuss the host family’s family tree. Community Based Training requires trainees to eat with their host families and sleep in a designated room in the host family’s house. This experience allows trainees to observe, and consequently learn, how to live in Mali. The homestay program is also a great opportunity for trainees to observe the things they learn during Cross-culture sessions.

Language and Culture Facilitators (LCFs)

Peace Corps Mali Training Orientation Manual (2011 pg 13) explains that “LCFs at each homestay will be liaisons and points of contact between Trainees and Peace Corps. They will also meet regularly with host families to ensure that the homestay is progressing smoothly and that Trainees are integrating with their families and the community. The LCFs are not there to

solve every problem, but to offer assistance in matters of language/communication, food, culture, etc.” LCFs also lead all language classes throughout training. On average, for every three trainees, there is one LCF.

Community Based Cross-Culture Sessions

Throughout their time at homestay, trainees also attended different informational sessions lead by their Language and Culture Facilitators (LCFs). As of PST 2011, such sessions included:

1. Ethnic Groups and Joking Cousins (1hr)
2. Gender Roles and Respect for Elders(1hr)
3. Social Ceremonies (1hr)
4. Meeting Procedures in Mali (1hr)
5. Professional Behavior in a Malian Work Environment (1hr)
6. Debrief on Reading Materials on the History of Mali (1hr)
7. Debrief on Reading Materials on Religions in Mali (1hr)
8. Religious Ceremonies (1hr)

In-Service Training

After their first two to three months at site, Volunteers will return to the training center for In-Service Training (IST). According to Peace Corps Mali Training Orientation Manual (2011 pg 4), IST is “two weeks of intensive technical training. During this phase your training will be focused on specific technical needs.” Technical training refers to learning how to build a garden, how to build a well, how to teach nutrition lessons, how to improve everyday products in Mali, how to create an income-generating activity, etc. The idea of technical training during PST and

IST is that the Volunteers need to first learn the skills their villages have requested before Volunteers can exchange skills or start funded projects.

However, it should be noted that the vast majority of technical training (in both PST and IST) includes instruction on how to present such skills in a culturally appropriate manner. Consequently, technical sessions are also referring to Cross-culture sessions in order to promote sustainability and feasibility of projects.

Goal 3 Related Resource Summary

Peace Corps offers many resources to help guide a successful service. Although several resources may offer advice on cultural understanding, it is often in the context of how to have successful projects, not how to share the culture a PCV is learning with Americans. Below are short descriptions of the most recognized resources by PCVs during their services.

- *Cross-Culture Reader*

A copy of the Cross-Culture Reader is given to each Trainee during their first Cross-Culture session. This Peace Corps Mali-specific booklet is filled with information that Volunteers refer to throughout their services. Topics discussed within the Cross-Culture Reader include:

- Do's and don'ts of Malian politeness
- Some useful Bambara expressions for every-day life in Mali
- A short overview of Mali (the environment, the people, the politics, the social conditions, the economy, and the history)
- Religions of Mali (Islam, Animism, Christianity)
- Ethnic groups of Mali
- Family names of different ethnic groups
- Joking cousins

- Languages of Mali
- Malian vs. American non-verbal communication
- Culture Shock
- Potential answers to difficult questions (regarding religious beliefs, race/nationality, GBLT, marital status, being asked for money, etc.)
- *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*

The *Culture Matters* book is a text created by Craig Storti with Peace Corps' former Cross-Cultural Specialist, Laurette Bennhold-Samann. In Mali, each PCV receives a copy that they are free to write in and keep with them at site. Within the Introduction to the workbook, it is written "crossing cultures is a dynamic, complex process, where context is everything. A list of behaviors or a script can only take you so far... This workbook will help you function outside the script, to understand the values and beliefs behind behavior, and ultimately, how the local people think" (Storti, pg 1). This workbook essentially aims to give Volunteers tools to understand their cross-cultural experiences and to be culturally sensitive- even if one does not agree with all aspects of a culture (Storti). Activities within the workbook explore topics such as:

- Understanding Culture: concepts of universal, cultural or personal; the process of cultural conditioning; defining culture; the notion of "in the mind of the beholder"
- Concepts of Self: individualism vs. collectivism
- American Culture and American Diversity
- Styles of Communication
- Concepts of Time
- Culture in the Workplace

- The Locus of Control (the degree to which individuals believe they can shape their own destiny): activism vs. fatalism
- Social Relationships
- Adjusting to a New Culture

It should be noted that there is a certain understanding amongst Volunteers and Staff that the Culture Matters workbook is not popular, for a myriad of reasons. I believe a discussion of these reasons would be too large of a tangent from the focus of this study. Therefore, simply note that although the information in this book is valuable and enlightening to me as a Cultural Anthropologist, it is difficult to find a Volunteer that actually uses it.

- *World Wise Schools Correspondence Match*

The World Wise Schools Correspondence Match “essentially pairs up a Volunteer with one classroom in the United States” (CWWS guide). PCVs stay connected to their classrooms via letters, email, or blogs. The guide booklet for this program can be found online, or is emailed to Volunteers. The booklet briefly explains to participants that the PCV is most often the first glimpse into a new country for the students, and to think about what messages are being sent. The booklet reads that “many children view those who are different from themselves as ‘weird.’ Although differences may be entertaining and sometimes important to illustrate, try to emphasize the similarities between the United States and your host country as well. What are some of the common concerns and joys that both peoples share” (CWWS)? The end of the booklet offers the following ideas for PCVs to share: “a day in the life of...”, pictures, maps of the community, food, communications, or a funny thing that happened. This is really the only resource I have come across that deals directly with the sharing aspect of Goal 3. Although it is emailed to everyone, I have spoken with several Volunteers who have not referred to it or don’t know it exists.

Findings: In-depth Interviews

All three interviews were based on the same questions (Appendix A). I want to make you aware that the training program and session plans change slightly each PST. The PST described above is the Feb-April 2011 PST. However, earlier facilitators trained the interviewees and survey takers.

Interview Mr. A

Background

The first interview was with a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Water Sanitation Sector, who will be referred to as Mr. A. At the time of the interview, Mr. A had spent 2 months at site. Mr. A shared that he grew up in “a small, mid-western town where the majority of people have little international experience, or exposure.” However, Mr. A’s parents were involved in international work and are both Return Peace Corps Volunteers, leaving Mr. A with a different experience than his friends. In addition, he had studied abroad in college. According to Mr. A, his exposure to different cultures has made him “more understanding of differences that people have and find it easier to adapt to other people and to understand.”

He described a successful service as “the lives of the beneficiaries improved and were set on a course to continue to improve. The beneficiaries being not only the people with whom one works directly with during their 24-month service, but also all the other peoples with whom they interact.” In terms of the role of Goal 3 in international development work, Mr. A supports the fact that deeper understandings of the target community results in more culturally sensitive projects, and therefore more successful projects.

Experiences with Goal 3

At the time of the interview, Mr. A’s experiences working towards Goal 3 were limited to answering questions via phone conferences with university students. Mr. A believes that the

most successful exchanges of culture occur with family and close friends: due to the many opportunities to talk over time, friends and family are able to reach an “intimate level into the lives and cultures” of Mali. However, he explained that communication with America is difficult when one is in Mali and therefore his Goal 3 activities will most likely take place after his service. After saying this he added in a disappointed tone, “where there is little structure or compensation for manifesting it.” Another difficulty Mr. A discussed was that he did not see many incentives to work towards Goal 3. He defined incentives as “helping someone have access to means of sharing the information gained from their experiences.” Mr. A went on to explain that “Goal 3...is put on the Volunteer as to kind of go about in their own way and accomplish in their own way, and there is no real aid.”

When asked what it meant to responsibly represent Malian culture to Americans back home, Mr. A replied that “It is important to understand our emotions and the contexts in which we share our experiences and the cultures of others. We must understand that those in the States are only getting our side of the story so it is important that it be as comprehensive as possible.” He explained that a Volunteer can use their “3rd gender status” in order to assess, and then share, the many angles of a situation. The “3rd gender” is the concept that PCVs in Mali are not confined to either male or female gender roles, but are able to breach both because they are American and a guest. In addition, Mr. A likes to journal and speaks with peers who have experienced similar situations in order to come to a responsible understanding.

Perceptions of Peace Corps Training

When it comes to sharing his experiences, Mr. A says that the World Wise Schools program is the only help/preparation Peace Corps gives to Volunteers. He continued by saying, The Cross-Culture training is helpful towards Goal 3, but only by accident. The goal of CCT was always geared towards successful integration, leading to a productive service-

project wise. But none the less, CCT helped to understand the cultural differences in a more healthy way... For Goal 3 to truly be successful, more has to be done on the administrative level to promote the sharing of ideas with the States. The only real exposure I had to Peace Corps was through recruitment booths, and both my parents were PCVs. That is disappointing.

Interview Ms. B

Background

The second interview was with a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Environmental Sector, who will be referred to as Ms. B. Her formal studies included a course on globalization and ethics in development, with a focus on Africa's history and cultures. In addition, her senior thesis was titled "Political Participation of women in West Africa." At the time of the interview, Ms. B had been at site for 14 months. When asked to examine her biases, she declared herself "a feminist as a result of my undergraduate work on gender roles, etc." She also wrote, "I dislike Aid and the entitled culture that has arisen as a result of said Aid...This leads me to focus mostly on Goals 2 and 3 because I believe it is in those goals that the value of Peace Corps lies."

When defining a successful service, Ms. B wrote, "A successful service to me means that I have thoroughly experienced Malian culture, shared U.S. culture with Malians, and shared Malian culture with Americans. However, I think that the longer one is here, the more one wants to help his/her village, and is drawn more and more to doing a funded project... I also think that having something concrete to talk about with people back home makes me feel more like a success than expressing abstract ideas of culture."

Experiences with Goal 3

Ms. B dreams to be part of legislation writing- to be part of long-term and sustainable change. She described Goal 3 as the center point of her service; she shared her experiences with

Americans through an online blog, corresponded with her cousin's 6th grade class, and gave formal presentations on Mali when she went home on vacation. In fact, she said, "one of my favorite parts of my service is conversations I have with family and friends about Mali." Specifically, Ms. B really enjoyed sharing her experiences with 6th grade students. She explained that the students asked many 'critically thinking' questions and keenly listened to her explanations. More than once Ms. B noted that her Goal 3 experiences made her feel really good about her Peace Corps service; that what she was doing mattered and was making a difference, "because so little of the work [projects] I do in Mali seems to matter."

During the interview, Ms. B shared some difficulties in working towards Goal 3. For example, she firmly believes that it is important to share both the positive and negative aspects of Malian culture she has observed. However, she finds it difficult to share the negative aspects of a culture without triggering judgment from the listeners. She concluded that she is "here to honestly share their culture (and sometimes my own difficulty in understanding it)." Another difficulty Ms. B identified was America's current treatment of Islam. Due to the fact that her Malian friends are Muslims, she feels defensive when talking to friends and family back home. She explained that "it is very hard to talk about religious tolerance with most Americans right now... In this light, Goal 3 is more important than ever."

Ms. B wrote that for her to responsibly represent Malian culture to Americans, she "should share Malian culture in as honest a way as possible, including both good and bad aspects (with the recognition that good and bad are judgment points that mean different things to people of different cultures)." She also thought it important to "take the time to research Malian history and culture, and try to find out the historical meaning of their traditions." Ms. B believes that in order to carry out Goal 3, PCVs must put in the time at their site, immersed in a Malian culture. According to Ms. B, this time spent at site makes Peace Corps development efforts less

patronizing than the average NGO's work and "that you are interested in doing it in a culturally appropriate way... that you are not just there to give them a hand out and leave." Additionally, Ms. B illustrated that Goal 3 allows her to show Malians that their culture is important and worth sharing.

Perceptions of Peace Corps Training

Ms. B discussed how the only training she received on Goal 3 endeavors was in relation to what is appropriate and not appropriate to write in an online blog. She went on to explain that the Cross-Culture Training helped her with her own interactions with Malians and has used some of the material to help explain aspects of Malian culture to friends and family. Throughout this discussion she talked about how she wishes Peace Corps training would include more discussions on our own biases and worldviews, especially in reference to how Volunteers' personal perceptions effect what they write in their blogs. In addition, she thought it would be a good idea to actually discuss what "responsible representation" meant. Throughout the interview, Ms B. enforced that "the best way to get across to PCVs that Goal 3 is important is for Peace Corps itself to believe its importance... Our APCDs frequently ask us what projects we are working on. That's fine, but after that, why don't they also ask us what we have done cross-culturally? Peace Corps can add new training on Goal 3, which are important, but how Peace Corps shows how it values Goal 3 in its office environment, and in how it communicates with PCVs about Goal 3, is much more important."

Interview Ms. C

Background

The third interview was with another Peace Corps Volunteer in the Environment Sector, who will be referred to as Ms. C. At the time of the interview, Ms. C was also at site for 14 months. Ms. C's formal experience with development is limited to an "Introduction to

Globalization” class in undergraduate and her time in the Peace Corps. However, throughout her childhood she was surrounded by different cultures; whether it be playing with Persian and Korean classmates at her pre-school in downtown Brooklyn, integrating with her elementary and middle school classmates in upstate New York, adjusting to different cultural norms at her high school in Long Island, exploring the diversity at Bernard Baruch College (America’s most culturally diverse school), or charming her customers as a cocktail waitress and bartender in SOHO Manhattan. As a result of her total history, her opinion on development is “if you do not understand the people you want to work with or work for, not much is going to be accomplished.”

When defining a successful service, Ms. C wrote, “My service would be a success if I wanted to live amongst another culture, make friends, and understand their way of life...*again*. If I can’t relate to my American friends and family what the people of Mali are like, or how I felt living with them, or what it is that I enjoy about their lifestyle, all in a way that would satisfy my Malian friends and family... well, that’s a failure of the Third Goal. Failure of Goal 3 wouldn’t mean that my entire service was all for naught, but I wouldn’t consider my service a success either.” A good part of the interview with Ms. C related to her opinion of her service and the influences on her opinion. “My big thing here [in Mali] was I wanted to serve my country, and I wanted to learn about another culture. Development work, and anything like that, is not in my aspiration statement. I had lost sight of that by other people’s expectations... As other Volunteers were telling me about what they were doing, and as I was getting asked questions by my family about my work, I was getting tag teamed by the two of them.” It wasn’t until the nearest PCV to Ms. C had moved, and Ms. C was isolated from the opinions of other PCVs that she was able appreciate what she had accomplished outside of funded projects and defend her personal expectations for her service.

Experiences with Goal 3

Ms. C's approaches to Goal 3 have evolved throughout her service. She started with writing letters about her homestay, first three months at site, her thoughts on Mali, and her Malian friends to several people on a weekly basis and working through the World Wise Schools program to share Mali with her old high school. More recently, Ms. C has taken a different approach to Goal 3; she "began to ask Malians what it is that they would like her to tell Americans about them and their home." Therefore in her letters she juxtaposes her opinion with that of a Malian friend.

During the interview, Ms. C talked about her struggles with sharing pictures of Mali with friends and family in America. She explained that if she presented a picture of the market to show the sorts of things for sale or the women's beautiful outfits, all her friends and family see is the trash on the ground. Supporting the idea that PCVs must first understand and experience Malian culture before they can share it. Ms. C talked about the difficulties she has had in deciding what parts of herself she will let go of in the name of integration. She concluded "you still want to maintain your identity while you are in another culture but it is inevitable that you are going to sacrifice some things about yourself."

Ms. C described the importance of responsibly representing cultures with the idea that "If you have friend that comes from a different background, you want to talk about them in a way (to others) that represents their person correctly. You laugh together, share food, hit on the same cute guy at the bar- you don't want to present them in any less of a light than they deserve." In another part of the interview, Ms. C explained that it is important to tell the positives and negatives of her experiences, but it is critical to also explain what is influencing her opinion.

Perceptions of Peace Corps Training

Ms. C also discussed how the only training she received on Goal 3 endeavors was in relation to what is appropriate and not appropriate to write in an online blog. She went on to explain that she received *Culture Matters* during PST, “without going into much detail as to how it could help us during our training or adjustment period at site or how to relate our experiences in Mali back to people at home.” On the other hand, Ms. C did admit that the Cross-culture Training during PST allowed her to better understand and integrate into her community and that “understanding a culture is the first step to Goal 3.” According to Ms. C, “Peace Corps Mali does a good-enough job of ‘setting-up’ Volunteers for Goal 3 success, but they drop the ball and don’t guide Volunteers as to how they can decipher their experiences and bring them home.”

Analysis: In-depth Interviews

All three interviewees expressed that the nature of Pre-service and In-service Training and their interactions with Peace Corps Senior Staff gave them the impression that cross-culture goals do not carry as much weight as development projects. During my interview with Mr. A, he talked about the roles each Goal played in a PCVs’ service. It was his understanding that Goals 2 and 3 promoted good communication between him and his community. He felt Goals 2 and 3 were accomplished as “byproducts” of Goal 1. He explains that, “if you have a successful project you have to communicate well... But both of those are really just byproducts of trying to be really successful with Goal 1.” Despite his background and belief in the power of cultural exchanges, at the end of the interview, Mr. A came to a realization that “it’s a shame that even without Goal 3, you would feel successful.” Interestingly, Mr. A. also does not interpret the lessons he has learned from his own cross-cultural experiences as an incentive to work towards Goal 3. This indicates to me that because the current training agenda does not express the

importance of Goal 3, it also fails to express the positive/essential impacts of sharing what is learned from a cross-cultural experience.

The interviewees shared the feeling that Senior Staff gave off the impression that Goal 1 activities take precedence over Goal 3. “Our APCDs frequently ask us what projects we are working on. That’s fine, but after that, why don’t they also ask us what we have done cross-culturally” (Interview J)? This attitude is a result of Peace Corps’ lack of promotion for the “sharing” aspect of Goal 3 during training/throughout services and the “we must integrate in order to have successful projects” perspective that PCVs get from training. In actuality, integration is also crucial to the understanding stage of Goal 3.

When Volunteers get the impression from Peace Corps Staff and training that Goal 1 is the most important, and Goal 3 is good if you get to it, Volunteers can be pressured into doing projects that are rushed and unsustainable. Unsustainability not only wastes U.S. tax dollars, but further promotes a debilitating dependence on international aid. Ms. B expressed that her motivations for joining Peace Corps were more focused towards cultural exchange. When she was talking about the promotion of Goal 1 and lack of importance placed on Goal 3 during training, she expressed the following emotion: “It used to bother me, it used to really piss me off. Then I would think, well maybe I do need to do funded projects... I need this to look good on my resume.” When she would compare her work to those of other Volunteers, she would think “I’m not working, I’m slacking off, I’m not living up to my potential.” Ms. C expressed that “I also think that having something concrete to talk about with people back home makes me feel more like a success than expressing abstract ideas of culture.” The interviewees revealed that their feelings of “not working” unless they were working on a funded project is a direct result of their own culture, training experience, interactions with PC Staff, and the image that their friends and family have of Peace Corps.

It is my opinion that accomplishing Goal 3 is a non-linear process including learning, understanding, and sharing. One must understand her own culture and how it affects the way she sees and understands her host country. She must also be fully immersed into her host country long enough to experience a range of emotions, events, and seasons in order to learn about her host country. This immersion time also allows for self-reflection and contributes to reaching an understanding of her cross-culture experience. Therefore, a Volunteer's work on Goal 3 must start during service. The sharing aspect of Goal 3 can document a PCV's experience with the process, lessons they have learned, and cultural discoveries. All the interviewees had documented their experiences through Goal 3 activities during their services, whether it was writing letters, classroom chats, blogging, or talking on the phone. However, the point the interviewees made was that they each carried out these activities without any guidance or encouragement from Peace Corps. Volunteers understand that self-motivation is expected, but why is there such a clear encouragement towards carrying out Goal 1 and not Goal 3?

It can be argued that the PC Mali's cross-culture training, to an extent, prepares Volunteers for the learning and understanding of the Goal 3 process. But the interviewees agree that Peace Corps Mali does not support the remaining step: training in actually sharing your message with communities in the United States. "Peace Corps Mali does a good-enough job of 'setting-up' Volunteers for Goal 3 success, but they drop the ball and don't guide Volunteers as to how they can decipher their experiences and bring them home." Mr. A said that "we never saw any other ways that other Volunteers have shared things with people in the States or heard experiences of successful or unsuccessful ways of sharing information with the States." When it came to what was appropriate to write in a blog, Ms. B and Ms. C recalled being told not to post the name of their village for security reasons, to avoid talking about negative things or drama between community members because some Malians may read it online. Ms. B and Ms. C

expressed frustrations that this was the extent of the blogging advice. They had hoped there would be explanations of the impact blogs will make on Americans; the way that some kinds of photographs, stories, or language could perpetuate African stereotypes. The interviewees wanted a discussion on how PCVs could be more responsible in what they post online, especially since they tend to be representing people who may never have the means to represent themselves online.

Something else the interviewees spent a lot of time discussing was what it meant to “responsibly represent Mali.” Even though this idea is the official 10th Core Expectation of Peace Corps, Volunteers do not know it as such. For Volunteers, this is an expectation that comes from personally wanting to respect the people who have given a stranger friendship and hospitality. Ms. C expressed that “you laugh together, share food, hit on the same cute guy at the bar- you don’t want to present them [host country nationals] in any less of a light than they deserve.” Understanding that what she says about Mali her friends and family will take to heart, Ms. B finds that “sometimes it is hard to know how to appropriately communicate negative aspects of a culture.” The interviewees believe that Volunteers should take the time to digest their experiences before sharing them and to look inward towards their own biases. Ms. C described training as “incredibly inadequate” when it comes to helping Volunteers preparing to be responsible representatives. Ms. B concluded that “You can tell the truth about your experiences, but explain what may be influencing your view. Include the voice of actual Malians; have them explain their opinions and train of thought. You cannot represent anyone responsibly without that person’s input.”

Other common themes among the interviews were the difficulties in approaching Goal 3. Each interviewee believes that Goal 3, or cultural exchanges, are abstract ideas and therefore difficult to measure and represent. Mr. A said that,

The improvements of someone's life that you've brought by just opening their scope to the other ways that people live... is something that is really hard to measure... You know maybe it is just them [Peace Corps] being realistic. To maintain this kind of organization they have to have things that they can show for their work... So really, they [Peace Corps] work towards having Goal 1.

The fact that measurements of cultural exchanges are not made available to Volunteers, also influences PCVs' definition of "work" discussed earlier in the analysis.

Peace Corps Mali does not go over the measuring and evaluating techniques for Goal 3. On the other hand, the quarterly Volunteer Report Form clearly shows how Goal 1 is measured by the project type (A.I.D.S awareness, environmental, etc.), amount of people effected, etc. while only asking Volunteers to describe their cross-cultural experiences in a text box. When you stack the facts that PCVs are not given measurable ways to report their cultural accomplishments, and only project success stories are highlighted in the bi-monthly newsletter for PC Mali, PCVs are left with the impression that Goal 3 does not qualify as "work" like Goal 1. Volunteers that do not see living in their communities, learning a new language, and adapting to a new culture as work can get very frustrated with their services and are at risk for opting to take Early Termination. As a result, Peace Corps loses all the money they invested in training and supporting those Volunteers, and a community loses the time they have invested in teaching those Volunteers.

Another difficulty that the interviewees shared was frustrations with not knowing how to explain their experiences so that family and friends (who only know the stereotypes of Africa) could understand what they have learned. Volunteers often say that the realizations they have had due to their Peace Corps experiences are hard to describe to non-PCVs; almost a "you had to be there" sort of attitude. This is a frustration that comes from wanting to responsibly represent

Mali. The interviewees agreed that they wished Peace Corps gave them more training on how to put their experiences into words to share. Ms. B specifically expressed that,

Another problematic condition- especially in this day and time- is our treatment of Islam. Islamophobia is raging in the US right now. When talking with Americans, I feel compelled to defend Islam for no other reason that most of my Malian friends are Muslim. It is very hard to talk about religious tolerance with most Americans right now- Muslim is thrown around like a bad word, even on CNN. In this light, Goal 3 is more important than ever. However, it is often difficult to discuss Islam right now.

While discussing all the difficulties addressed in the analysis, each interviewee wanted to make the point that these are common realities for Volunteers and that PCMali training does not introduce techniques for overcoming these difficulties.

Findings: Survey

After reviewing the transcripts of the three interviews, I sent out a survey to all 145 current PCVs in Mali. Among those who responded were: 20 first year PCVs, 13 second year PCVs, and 2 third year PCVs. The survey questions were inspired by reoccurring elements in the three interviews. Although the survey was used to gather a wider scope of PCV perspectives, the true motivation behind the survey was to collect statements and figures that would inspire the team in terms of making relevant recommendations. Below is a summary of the results.

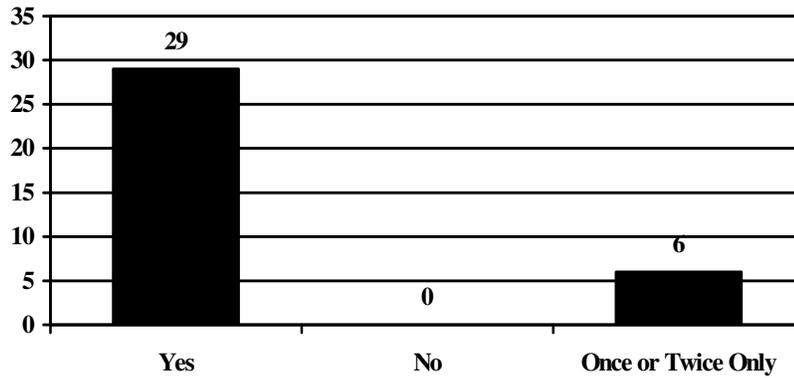
The PCVs were asked to describe their APCD's attitude towards Goal 3, according to what they have heard, seen, and experienced while working with him/her. Most of the responses describe what goes on between the PCV and her APCD, and not the PCVs' interpretations of the APCDs' attitudes towards Goal 3. Below is the breakdown of responses for Question 2:

- Twenty of the thirty-three responses were similar to "It's never brought up," "my APCD has never discussed Goal 3," or "I'm not sure."

- Five PCVs wrote that their APCD was not supportive of Goal 3. Responses included:
 - “He/she doesn’t talk about it nor does he/she seem proud or interested when I discuss projects that are not within my sector.”
 - “I don’t believe my APCD has any feeling about Goal 3 at all – in response to my first VRF, for both Goal 2 and Goal 3 activities, he/she wrote ‘Thanks for all your PC Goal 3 activities’ with no input on any specific items.”
 - “Rarely expressed as a priority of Peace Corps service”
 - “I think they would consider Goal 3 to be exactly that. The third most important Goal. I think World Wise Schools is beginning to be emphasized a little bit more in our sector... but I don’t really think my APCD really cares at all.”
- Eight PCVs wrote that their APCD was encouraging towards Goal 3. Responses included:
 - “encouraged communication back home”
 - “We don’t really talk about it, but he would advocate it completely if we were to discuss it.”
 - “My APCD definitely promotes Goal 3, but is understandably more concerned with our sustainable, local projects.”
 - “Have not had much contact with my APCD. During PST he/she was very engaged, wanted to share Malian culture with us and eager to get us to have a great experience and share it with our friends and family back home.”
 - “My APCD always had an encouraging attitude toward Goal 3.”

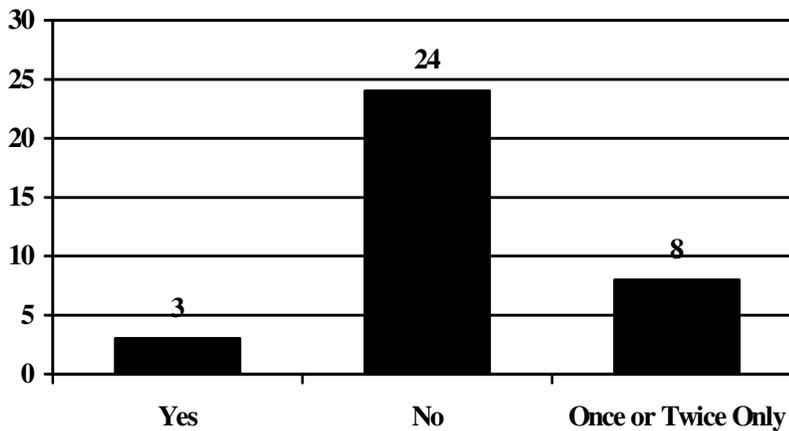
PCVs were asked, “During your service as a PCV, has your APCD encouraged you to prepare for Goal 1, or project related activities?” Chart 1 displays the results below.

Chart 1



PCVs were also asked, “During your service as a PCV, has your APCD encouraged you to prepare for Goal 3 (sharing Malian culture with Americans) related activities?” Chart 2 displays the results below.

Chart 2



The PCVs were then asked to describe their feelings towards the success of their service when they are not working on a funded project. Below are representative of eight responses.

- “I typically feel like I’m not doing much when I’m not doing project work, but I know that isn’t true ... I see informing people about the US and representing my country, as very important.”
- “I never did a funded project, but I felt great pressure from Malian PC Staff to do a funded project.”

- “I would say that depends on whether I’m letting myself judge my own success or I’m letting outside pressure judge how successful I truly am. I definitely think PC sends a mixed message in terms of funded projects. It is definitely something that needs to be addressed among staff members.”
- “I feel like I am not successful when I don’t have a funded project going... There is a lot of pressure in Mali to do funded projects, both from staff and more I think from other PCVs. But, I think that the unfunded projects are perhaps more important in the long run.”
- “... I have a hard time sometimes, feeling I am doing enough if my work doesn’t have a certain tangible aspect, as funded projects do... I think this sentiment is reinforced by the orientation of PC staff towards ‘projects,’ as well as by our own Volunteer culture in Mali.”
- “... there is definitely a sense that work hasn’t started until you are doing a funded project.”

However, eighteen other responses share that they are comfortable when not working on a funded project because they understand the importance of the time they spend with their communities and learning language. They express an awareness that when their services are finished, the relationships they formed will be everlasting. There is also a mindfulness of the fact that when it does come time for a funded project, the time they spent integrating into their community will benefit the operation.

Additionally, 54.3% of the PCVs who responded said that they had been pressured into doing a funded project that they believed to be unsustainable. Below, Chart 3 describes what pressured them (the PCVs selected all that applied to them).

Chart 3

| Cause of Pressure | # of Selections |
|---|-----------------|
| Hearing fellow PCVs talking about their projects | 10 |
| Friends and family's expectations | 4 |
| A personal feeling that you should "do something to help" | 8 |
| Peace Corps Staff's expectations | 8 |
| You are bored at site and want to be productive | 5 |
| Your personal expectations for your service | 8 |
| The community really wanted it | 13 |
| Other | 3 |

PCVs were asked in their opinion, how would Peace Corps Staff describe a "star Volunteer?" Twenty-four responses described Peace Corps' "star Volunteer" with only mentioning Goal 1-related accomplishments and integration, without mentioning sharing their new understandings of Mali with Americans. This is pointing out a few things: PCVs perceives Peace Corps to give an unbalanced significance to their three goals, Goal 3 is advertised as a non-requirement for a successful service, and the PCV culture of working disproportionately towards Goal 1 is encouraged, or at least ignored, by PC Staff.

Analysis: Survey

It is hard to determine how the PCVs interpreted the fact that their APCDS did not bring up Goal 3. To the PCVs, did it mean the APCDs did not value Goal 3? Or was it that PCVs were simply not comfortable interpreting their APCDs' attitudes on a subject that has not been breached? There were some responses that favored both of the questions above, but the majority did not specify what the lack of discussion meant.

The significance of Charts 1 and 2 is apparent when you look at them side by side. 82.9% of the responses showed that the PCVs were encouraged by their APCD to prepare for a Goal 1 activities more than once or twice (with the other 7.1% of PCVs showing that they were

encouraged at least once or twice). On the other hand, Chart 2 shows that only 8.6% of the respondents were encouraged by their APCD to prepare for Goal 3 activities more than once or twice (with another 22.9% encouraged once or twice only). Therefore, while all 35 PCVs were encouraged to work at Goal 1, only 11 PCVs were encouraged to work at Goal 3. One PCV wrote, “My APCD definitely promotes Goal 3, but is understandably more concerned with our sustainable, local projects.” These figures and statements are supporting the idea that PC Mali is disproportionately encouraging the three goals. It should be noted that responses did show that some APCDs were more supportive of Goal 3 than others.

Similar to the interviewees, eight of twenty-six responses shared a feeling that they were not “working” when they did not have a funded project going. These responses can be interpreted in a few ways. First, it gives the impression that Volunteers don’t know that Goals 2 and 3 are real work, with real results, they could do between funded projects. Another interpretation is that Volunteers do not realize that all the time they spend learning language and “drinking tea” is work put towards learning and understanding Malian culture- processes that must occur for them to meet Goal 3.

Chart 3 shows what pressured 54.3% of the respondents into doing a funded project they believed to be unsustainable. Each of the pressures mentioned in the chart can be considered contributors to PCVs’ frustrations with their service. In terms of Peace Corps funding, this is showing that half of all the funded projects associated with these 35 Volunteers were carried out with the belief that they are unsustainable. Unsustainability leads to lost money in a tight budget. If Volunteers were shown that each Goal truly carries equal weight in leaving a lasting impact on the world, then hearing fellow PCVs talk about their own projects would be less intimidating, the image of Peace Corps that friends and family have of Peace Corps will be more accurate to the mission statement, and Volunteers will better understand the impacts of unsustainable

development. In short, PCV frustrations are throwing away Peace Corps money by either PCVs leaving service early or by moving forward with unsustainable projects. This could be mitigated if PC Staff were to advertise Goal 3 as a real “work” option in-between sustainable projects- instead of jumping pre-maturely into a funded project just to stay busy.

Chapter Five: Recommendations

I am sure PC Staff receives criticisms from Volunteers, and we, Volunteers, always have recommendations. This study, from the beginning, was inspired by the fact that Volunteers have real frustrations with their Peace Corps experience and real ideas for how to make it better. What I want out of this study is to show my peers that our ideas matter when they are constructive and practical. I think, often times Volunteers don't agree with this or that during their service, but at the end of the day they walk away from Peace Corps with positive memories. I hope the recommendations not only improve the quality of Volunteers' experiences, but also create well-rounded Volunteers that represent all three goals of Peace Corps.

Due to Internet blogging and cell phone technology, PCVs are sharing their experiences earlier in their service than ever. Therefore, it is also advised that the following recommendations, if accepted, be implemented during PST, IST, or Regional IST. The implementation of any of the recommendations will show Volunteers that PC Staff does take culture-exchange goals seriously and considers any efforts towards those goals as important work. Finally, each recommendation includes an aspect that promotes Volunteer Support, not only between trainees, but also between PCVs and trainees. Any activity or discussion that promotes Volunteer Support is also empowering PCVs to take responsibility of their own service and collaborate as a team.

Finally, the recommendations below are just short descriptions, and by no means are complete in their development. Therefore, the implementation of these recommendations will require the dedication of someone to research, develop, facilitate, and evaluate. Ideally, this could be a full-time position (if only temporary) supported by Peace Corps Head Quarters as an investment in, for lack of a better word, streamlining this process of Third Goal training and evaluation for all Peace Corps Programs. The creation of this position would be putting an

action to Director Aaron William's words of putting Goal 3 as a top priority. Another option, if the logistics could be worked out, would be a Response Volunteer who can dedicate their full attention to the process. Although confirming this position would mean that Peace Corps is willing to invest in promoting the success of Goal 3, it is much less aggressive and showing of Peace Corps Head Quarters' commitment. As a last resort option, Peace Corps Mali could develop a Peace Corps Volunteer Leadership positions, where a PCV would be able to at least commit half their time to the project.

- **Issue to Addressed:** PCVs feeling of not being educated on Islam, or able to breach the subject with Americans living in an Islamophobic culture.

Recommendation: Mali Volunteers are part of a small group of Americans that have the opportunity to live in an Islamic culture and experience Islam in a peaceful and approachable setting. With misunderstandings of Muslims being re-enforced by the media, Volunteers have a real opportunity to even the playing field. However, Volunteers are struggling with how. A session on Islam could include: a respected Imam and a host-mom (perhaps friends of a PCV) as guest speakers to talk about how Islam effects village life and the historical explanation for behaviors PCVs will see at site; a facilitated discussion on how the speakers either enforced or changes their previous impressions of Islam; a discussion with current PCVs to introduce talking points they use start the conversation with friends and family, and techniques that PCVs use to relate certain aspects of Islam to non-Muslim Americans. It is important to include Staff, LCFs, Muslim trainees or Islam Studies majors in the preparation of this session to confirm the content and avoid misrepresentation. Inviting the guests to speak and interact with the trainees will allow them to retain information better than LCF-lead presentations on Islam. Following up on this session at IST will be a good way to re-enforce the information and techniques with what they have experienced at site, not to

mention have PCVs share how friends and family ask about this is an aspect of Goal 3 during service, not just when you get home. A related session plan has been started by a participating RPCV. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to polish it and attach as an Appendix in this study. The session plan will be completed and sent to Peace Corps Mali when it is ready.

- **Issue to Address:** Perception that Peace Corps gives more importance to Goal 1 than Goal 3. PCVs believe the benefits of Goal 3 are abstract and non-measurable in the short term.

Recommendation: Have a session that is centered on Peace Corps' decision to have Goal 3. This session would enforce why cross-cultural understanding is important, and the impact Peace Corps believes it can make on international relations. Specific success stories will be key- showing tangible outcomes. This session can also introduce the skills PCVs gain in multi-cultural teams and how those skills are highly valuable to employers. It will be important to share with PCVs how Peace Corps Head Quarters measures and evaluates Goal 3. This discussion should be followed by a brainstorming session that elicits expectations trainees have for their service in terms of Goal 3 and ways they could measure their own success and hold their peers accountable to Goal 3. PCVTs should be involved in this discussion in order to facilitate and offer "real-life" advice. The results of this session should be recorded by each trainee and given to their APCDS. This way, APCDs can have specific Goal 3 topics to follow up on during meetings and have more informative responses to the cultural sections of the VRF. If APCDs were able to look at a piece of paper that had a Volunteers' expectations for their cultural experiences in Mali, then they would be able to ask specific questions and give thoughtful suggestions. Those questions, tailored to each PCV, will show, more than anything, that PC Staff supports Goal 3 efforts.

- **Issue to Address:** PCVs are not trained to uphold the 10th Core Expectation. PCVs feel uncertain about how to share negative or completely foreign aspects of Malian culture without re-enforcing stereotypes.

Recommendation: Although Peace Corps Volunteers are not official ethnographers, the third Peace Corps Goal and the tenth Core Expectation does require PCVs to observe, interpret, and then share their host country culture with Americans. Friends and family take what PCVs share as first-hand facts, as if all PCVs are trained in observing, interpreting, and sharing foreign cultures. This is especially true for Volunteers serving in Africa, a continent of cultures misrepresented in mainstream media for decades. If what PCVs are saying about host countries is being referenced like a cultural account written in a reputable ethnographic journal, what ethical responsibilities exist for PCVs representing a host country where the majorities do not have the resources or skills to represent themselves? Addressing this question in an open, honest, and participatory session is key to the success of Goal 3 and the 10th Core Expectation. Trainees and Staff can work together to gather a list of questions to ask themselves in order to check the messages PCVs are sending while doing Goal 3 activities.

A Volunteers' Goal 3 work is comparable to an ethnography shared by a professionally-trained anthropologist. Therefore, a code of Ethics used by anthropologists to remain responsible representatives is a good guideline to follow when developing the list of questions for Volunteers to refer to. Rallis and Rossman's (2003) offer a respected code of ethics for qualitative researchers. Appendix C offers my personal interpretation and reflective questions of Rallis and Rossman's (2003) code of ethics. These types of questions will help Volunteers find a responsible way to share the "positive" and "negative" aspects of Malian culture that they experience without re-enforcing stereotypes. In addition, an

experienced PCV can share with trainees how to point out the parallels between Mali and America. For example, a PCV may want to share a story about domestic violence in Mali. Instead of ending the story there, a PCV could also include statistics on domestic violence in America or around the world in order to spark a discussion on the causes of domestic violence in general. This averts readers from concluding “Malian men beat their wives” to “Domestic violence is an issue all around the world, why?”

When talking about the 10th Core Expectation, an idea suggested in the survey was to put on a skit. Show different scenarios of a PCV talking with Americans who know very little about Mali. Have the first PCV only focus on the “negative” things in Mali. The second PCV will just go over the top talking about the awesome aspects of Mali. The final PCV could share the good and bad in a constructive manner. Have the trainees discuss the outcomes of each scenario and the different reactions the Americans gave. Getting PCVs to notice these different reactions will help them to identify and measure success they are making in Goal 3. This activity can also point out different consequences of the language we chose when sharing Mali.

Finally, a simple list of talking points or phrases to steer conversations away from perpetuating stereotypes and towards sending a contextual message that PCVs want to share. Similar to the suggested responses to tough questions in the Cross-Culture Reader, PCVs can keep and refer to this list throughout their service. For example, a PCV’s mom asks “what is it you do all day if you are not doing a project?” Instead of the PCV sarcastically defaulting to “oh, well I drink a lot of tea, and I guess I study my language,” she can respond with “well, Peace Corps follows a different development philosophy where it is critical to build strong relationships with the community before getting started on projects. So, I have gone to X,Y,Z and met so-and-so. I am learning a lot that will help my future project to be

successful. As a PCV I also need to prepare for Goals 2 and 3. Guess what I learned about my host family?!” This and other situations are very common for Volunteers and can be easily put into a list with talking points.

- **Issue to Address:** Peace Corps Mali provides quality training on integration and project development, but not on sharing techniques (beyond World Wise Schools) for Goal 3.

Recommendation: Ask around for interesting Goal 3 success stories. Include in the search the ex-pat community, other PC countries, Mali PCVs old and new, and Malian staff. All of these groups have shared their experiences with culture, and will have great ideas. Inviting these people to be part of a panel will provide trainees/PCVs with techniques to work towards Goal 3. Many times over PCVs are invited to speak at PST/IST because of their outstanding project work. PCVs have not been invited to training because they have excelled at Goal 3- even though PCVs do incredible cultural work. This is sending a strong message to trainees. Furthermore, the Jeliba newsletter highlights Volunteer projects, but not Goal 3 accomplishments. An “idea corner” could be included in the Jeliba where Volunteers can exchange Goal 3 techniques like blog subjects or helpful ways to explain Malian behavior to family.

This panel discussion would also be a good time to have training on how to blog. The facilitator can draw on points made during the 10th Core Expectation session mentioned previously. PCVTs can share how pictures can be misconstrued, how language, word choice, and tone in a blog can be misinterpreted by the reader, topics that have started long threads, and what trainees think it means to represent, online, people that most likely do not have the ability or resources to represent themselves on the internet. A PCV in the Risky Business stage learned a lesson that can be shared with trainees. The PCV had posted a cute picture of a host sister on her blog, like many Volunteers do. Someone from that host family lives in

America and decided to search the name of her hometown in Mali. The PCV's blog showed up in the search. The family member in America called the PCVs' host mom to tell her that there is a picture of her daughter online. The PCVs' host mom was so angry, the PCV left as soon as she could to Bamako to remove the picture. The PCV said that there was tension for a while because the host mom was so angry. The lesson here is that this reaction exists. Even though a random family member in America will not catch most PCVs, the reaction of one family should be respected and assumed to be the general reaction to posting pictures online unless the people in the photographs have been explained the extent of the internet and permission was granted.

In Appendix D an interviewee shares her method for responsibly sharing Malian culture with Americans. She offers advice on how to get Malians to talk about Mali. The PCV writes, "I wanted to get Malians to talk to those students, but because of the cost of international phone calls and my lack of technological skills, I decided that the best way to go about getting the two parties talking was an on-going, old-fashioned interview. It wasn't going to be a typical interview, however: rather than sit down and ask one person a slew of questions, I'd present a single question, once a day, to a number of different Malians with whom I felt comfortable. I formed a question; I chose a person; I chose a time: after dinner." Appendix D shows her explanation for breaking down questions so that she receives insightful responses, not just generalizations.

Finally, introducing www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal to PCVs can get them interacting with the online resources and advice Peace Corps provides. I personally never viewed this website until I was doing research for the Literature Review of this study.

- **Issue to Address:** PCVs’ feelings that they are not successful or accomplished unless they are working on a funded project.

Recommendation: In the survey alone, eighteen PCVs expressed that they are comfortable with their service in-between projects because they understand the importance of the time they spent with their community. The recommendation would be to get those types PCVs as either trainers or as guest speakers at PST, IST and Regional IST. As a panel, they can describe how it feels to not be involved with a project, the indirect pressures from friends, family and fellow PCVs, and what beliefs they have that motivate their cross-cultural work. Included in the panel should be an APCD who can explain the important work that is done in between projects- helping to redefine the definition of “work.” Having been in staff meetings with the APCDs I know that they more than appreciate of cultural exchange work. This way, trainees will hear it directly from PC Staff that the integration work Volunteers do is contributing to the learning and understanding phases of Goal 3, and it matters.

- **Issue to Addressed:** Unapproachable content of the Culture Matters workbook.

Recommendation: As a cultural anthropologist at heart, I believe the content of the Culture Matters workbook is insightful, and necessary, for any Volunteer to understand the impact of their experiences on their identity and the impact culture will have on their relationships with host country nationals. However, I also believe that many of the exercises require a level of language that is not reached until later in a PCV’s service. By the time a PCV reaches that language level, the exercises are exploring many aspects of culture that a PCV has already learned by just living there. Therefore, I think that we could make the workbook more approachable by going through and categorizing exercises into different language levels. That way Volunteers can go right to an exercise they can handle without having to go through three that were too difficult and lead to them giving up on the whole book. PC

trainers could also use the ideas of different exercises and tailor them to an intermediate-mid language level. If these were specifically pointed out at PST, then Volunteers would be more likely to do them at site. In order to promote the workbook, or to a greater degree the message of the workbook, a group discussion on the introductory pages would help to get Volunteers engaged. Trainees could even come to the discussion prepared to explain an exercise and ideas to tailor it to their language level. Giving specific activities makes cultural exchanges seem more like work according to PCV standards- they have objectives, outcomes, and achievements. Having many activities available allows Volunteers to choose the ones that are most interesting to them. As Volunteers accomplish these activities they can not only share the experience in a blog or over the phone, but will discuss it with other PCVs. These discussions will also help to mitigate some of the project peer pressure that Volunteers feel.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

In a forward to *Cultural Frontiers of the Peace Corps*, Margaret Mead wrote “It is true, of course, that any bureaucracy benefits from the systematic analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. Any organization benefits from ongoing analysis of its experience.” I hope that Peace Corps Mali Staff and Peace Corps Head Quarters embrace this study with the same attitude. The purpose of this study was to gather the perspectives of PCVs on Peace Corps Mali’s program in reference to Goal 3. The study resulted in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the training program, Goal 3 related frustrations, damages caused by a focus on Goal 1, and recommendations inspired by PCVs and their experiences. According to the objectives outlined for PST, the program is very successful with preparing PCVs for integration and technical project work. However, beyond the encouragement to participate in a correspondence exchange program, there are no technical trainings to guide PCVs in sharing their experiences. The question is what message does Peace Corps want to send to its Volunteers? Is Peace Corps equally in favor of all three goals like their mission statement implies, or are Volunteers interpreting the message as they should be? The age-old lesson of “actions speak louder than words” is applicable. If training were to equally promote each goal, Volunteers would better understand that every day is work; every interaction with their community promotes understanding and contributes to two thirds of their goals as a Volunteer. Additionally, if there were clear ways to measure and evaluate their cultural exchanges, PCVs would be able to see integration work as more than just a way to get a project done.

Despite the fact that all PCVs do not share my enthusiasm for recognizing and promoting the impacts of transcultural experiences, they still believe Goal 3 has a certain importance. Mr. A believed that the importance of Goal 3 lied in the idea that the more Volunteers share about

their experiences with Peace Corps and development, the more people Peace Corps can recruit. Mr. A and Ms. B agreed that the cultural exchange that Goal 3 promotes leads to more sustainable projects. Ms. C claims that the importance of Goal 3 is it shows “that you care about someone else’s culture, that alone makes it [aid] less patronizing... It shows that you’re not just there to give them a hand out and leave. It shows that you are interested in doing it in a culturally appropriate way that will make an actual difference... And taking that back to America shows them that their culture is important, it’s not nothing.”

The lack in promotion of the importance of Goal 3 does not start in Peace Corps training; it comes from the culture of “Development” and American values that are commonly driven by hard work that produces fast, structural outcomes. Without Peace Corps on our side, helping to educate our friends and family on the Peace Corps philosophy, Volunteers are left frustrated and at a loss for how to meet Goal 3 successfully. Margaret Mead also wrote, “It is repeatedly asserted... that the greatest benefit will accrue not to the countries to which the Volunteers go but to America which they will return.” PCVs in Mali agree. Consider what Return Peace Corps Volunteers have already contributed through their own initiatives. Now imagine what RPCVs and PCVs could accomplish in terms of fostering the spirit of world peace and civic mindedness if they were trained, from the beginning of their services, on how to share their enlightenment with Americans.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview outline

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Appendix C: Code of Ethics

Appendix D: The After Dinner Question

Appendix E: APCD Job Description

Appendix A

Interview Outline

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for your interest in the subject of my research and for agreeing to participate in the action research team! Please take the following list of questions to site with you, taking plenty of time to answer them. They are meant to be reflective and in depth, so do not rush your responses. I also ask that you take note of how your 'world view' is influencing your response (How is your background effecting your opinion? What assumptions are you making? What life experiences have led to that conclusion? What biases do you have on the subject? How formally/informally have you studied this? Etc.) Understanding *why* you believe in your response and being honest about your biases will be helpful when discussing your responses with the action team of different personalities and backgrounds.

After I have received your responses, I will ask to meet for a 45-60 minute one-on-one interview to ask any additional probing or clarifying questions. The themes of your responses will be used to facilitate discussion in the group. Remember that this is *our* action group and this survey is meant to facilitate discussion, not control it. My hope is that the conclusions of my research will come organically from the dialogue and passion of the group.

I will call you to schedule an interview and day to receive your written response by _____.

If you need any clarification on a question please beep me at 78455437 and I can give you a call.

Note: You do not need to give a written response for the Overview Questions, they will be addressed through your responses of the Sub-questions.

Overview Question A:

What do you perceive to be the role of Goal 3 in your Peace Corps service and international development efforts in general?

Sub-questions A:

- How do you define a 'successful service'? What do you perceive to be the role of Goal 3 in the overall success of your service?
- What do you perceive to be the role of Goal 3 in international development work?
- What influences do you perceive your personal history (or world view) has on your opinion of Goal 3?

Overview Question B:

What are your experiences working towards Goal 3 in Mali?

Sub-questions B:

- How have you approached Goal 3 so far?
- When it comes to working towards Goal 3, what conditions do you perceive to be problematic? How are they problematic?
- What experiences with Goal 3 do you perceive to be successful? How are they successful?
- Peace Corps tenth Core Expectation is “Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service.” What does “responsibly” in this statement mean to you?

Overview Question C:

What are your perceptions of the Goal 3 training and preparation you receive from Peace Corps in Mali?

Sub-questions C:

- Of the problematic conditions mentioned above, how have Peace Corps Mali training programs addressed them?
- What Goal 3 trainings or resources provided by Peace Corps Mali do you find useful? How are they useful towards Goal 3?
- What Goal 3 trainings or resources provided by Peace Corps Mali do you perceive to be lacking in significance? How can they be improved?
- What actions can you identify that could improve Goal 3 trainings or resources? How can these actions be implemented?

Questions, Comments, Additional Thoughts:

Appendix B

Survey

Peace Corps' Three Goals:

1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women. (i.e. information and technical exchange, development projects)
 2. Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served. (i.e. sharing American culture with Malians)
 3. Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. (i.e. sharing Malian culture with Americans back home)
-

1. What year into your service are you and what sector are you in?

2. Describe your APCD's attitude towards Goal 3, according to what you have heard, seen, and experienced while working with him/her?

3. During your service as a PCV, has your APCD encouraged you to prepare for Goal 1, or project related activities?

- Yes
 No
 Once or twice only

4. During your service as a PCV, has your APCD encouraged you to prepare for Goal 3 (sharing Malian culture with Americans) related activities?

- Yes
 No
 Once or twice only

5. When you are not working on a funded project, describe your feelings towards the success of your Peace Corps service? What factors are influencing this feeling?

6. Have you felt pressured into doing a funded project that you believed to be unsustainable?

- Yes
 No

7. If you answered "Yes" to question 6, what pressured you? (You can choose more than one)

- Hearing fellow PCVs talking about their projects
 - Friends and family in the U.S. are expecting to hear about your project work
 - A personal feeling that you should “do something to help”, especially since there is funding available
 - Peace Corps staff’s expectations
 - You are bored at site and want to be productive
 - Your personal expectations for your service
 - The villagers really wanted it
 - Other
- Other (please specify)

8. Peace Corps' 10th Core Expectation is: “Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service.” What does “responsibly” in this statement mean to you? As a PCV, how do you ensure responsibility in representing Mali?

9. In your opinion, how would Peace Corps staff describe a “star Volunteer”? Does your personal description of a “star Volunteer” differ from that of Peace Corps staffs' description? If yes, explain the differences.

10. If you have any ideas on how to promote the importance of, or activities for, Goal 3 during PST, IST and while at site, share them below. Write your email address if you wish to participate in the development/implementation of that idea.

Also, if you have any additional comments or specific experiences to share in reference to Goal 3 or the 10th Core Expectation, please write them below.

Appendix C

Code of Ethics

Although Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV) are not official ethnographers, the third Peace Corps Goal and the tenth Core Expectation does require PCVs to observe, interpret, and then share their host country culture with Americans. Friends and family take what PCVs share as first-hand facts, as if all PCVs are trained in observing, interpreting, and sharing foreign cultures. Individuals inevitably repeat what we, Peace Corps Volunteers, say about our host country. This is especially true for Volunteers serving in Africa, a continent of cultures misrepresented in mainstream media for decades.

If what PCVs are saying about host countries is being referenced like a cultural account written in a reputable ethnographic journal, what ethical responsibilities exist for PCVs representing a host country where the majorities do not have the resources or skills to represent themselves?

Rallis and Rossman's (2003) qualitative research ethics:

Ethic of Consequences:

“When determining the rightness or wrongness of an action, the Ethic of Consequences asks: What happens as a result of this action? What are the probable consequences to whom and under what circumstances?” (Rallis and Rossman 2003, pg 71).

- Are you re-reading your blogs to make sure the intended message/tone is posted?
- How does the image I am creating in my blog going to affect Malians?
- What are the consequences of me rushing through a project budget or planning?

Ethic of Rights and Responsibilities

“The Ethic of Rights and Responsibilities considers the fundamental rights of an individual and the corresponding obligations that individuals have to protect those rights. This ethic follows the doctrine that all people have fundamental rights that may not be denied, even for the greatest good for the greatest number... Examples of fundamental rights include the right of free consent, of privacy, of freedom of conscience, of free speech...” (Rallis and Rossman, 2003, pg 71).

- Do Volunteers ask for consent before we post/take pictures of Malians and their children on the internet?
- Do you explain what explain what the potential consequences of posting something on the internet are?
- Do you share the observations we record in blogs with Malians?
- Do you ever ask what Malians would like Americans to know about them?
- Am I giving Malians an opportunity to speak freely, without recording judgmental reactions to their views?
- Do Malians even want to be represented by me?
- Do they even want to share their culture with Americans?

Ethic of Social Justice

“The Ethic of Social Justice relies on the principles of fairness and equity to judge which actions are right or wrong... Differentiated treatment cannot be based on arbitrary characteristics... This perspective would encourage researchers to pay extra attention to previously silenced voices” (Rallis and Rossman, 2003, pg 72).

- Who am I surrounding myself with?- Who’s voice am I representing?
- Am I taking the time the time to understand and share the voices of the old, the young, the well-off, the extreme poor, the handicapped, etc.?
- How does falling into the most comfortable Malian culture for a Volunteer affect the rightness of their overall observation?
- How am I judging the rightness and wrongness of what I observe?

Ethic of Care

“The Ethic of Care addresses the effect any action is likely to have on human relationships in the specific context of a given dilemma” (Rallis and Rossman, 2003, pg 72). Here, “a decision for action considers what meaning the action would have for the individuals actually involved,” keeping in mind that “actions have multiple meanings grounded in the particular attachments we form” (Rallis and Rossman, 2003, pg 72).

- Are you looking at yourself making sense of how someone else makes sense of her world (reflexivity)?
- How does my worldview/paradigm influence my observations and opinions of Malian culture?
- How is what I am reporting perpetuating or balancing the America’s image of Africa?
- How does the image of Africa I bring home effect American’s actions towards Africa?
- What meaning does an American sharing Malian culture with Americans have on Mali as a country? How can I cut out some of the “middle man” here?

Appendix D

“The After Dinner Question”

or

How to get Malians to talk about Mali

by RPCV Abra Morawiec, Mali (2009 - 2011)

The Initial Hang-up

Since the beginning of my Peace Corps service, I wrote to my former high school monthly letters through the World Wise Schools Program about my experiences and day-to-day life as a Volunteer in Mali. At first, I thought I did a great job: my letters were lengthy, sometimes eight or ten pages, and I tried my best to include everything I possibly could that might pique the curiosity of teenagers. The writing of these letters was done in private--I'd get them done while spending time in my regional capital or banking town and I never talked to my friends and family back in the community I was served about these letters. I thought that it wouldn't interest them.

About a year into my service, I realized that everything I wrote about Mali and Malians was from my perspective. While this isn't necessarily a bad thing I knew that my letters and the facts, that I thought I was presenting to the students back home in an objective manner, were very much subjective. “Facts” about Mali were coming from a white, American woman...that didn't seem right.

I wanted to get Malians to talk to those students, but because of the cost of international phone calls and my lack of technological skills, I decided that the best way to go about getting the two parties talking was an on-going, old-fashioned interview. It wasn't going to be a typical interview, however: rather than sit down and ask one person a slew of questions, I'd present a single question, once a day, to a number of different Malians with whom I felt comfortable. I formed a question; I chose a person; I chose a time: after dinner.

The Process

“What would you like to tell Americans about Mali?”

A loaded question, isn't it? Attempting to describe an unfamiliar culture to friends and family back home is daunting, but by breaking down the large, initial question into smaller, more digestible pieces made the process much easier. I began “The After Dinner Question” one night, at my host family's compound, after dinner. I brought a notebook with me to record the answers to my question and made sure to have my own answer to the question I was about to ask as a reference to what my host father, host grandma, host sister and brother had to say in response. My first question was: “What is it that Malians do best?”

It was a question asked by one of the students of my former high school months before. My answer to this question was the following:

“Malians are very much in tune with the cycles of nature and their environment. This no doubt has to do with the fact that they live every day outside and depend upon the land for their

livelihood. They understand much better the cycles of the seasons and how and when to begin planting or harvesting their food than the average American. Malians are very good at utilizing the land they have and live well because of it.”

Here is what my host father, Ousmane Kassambara, had to say in response to my question:

“Malians are hospitable to strangers. If a visitor arrives, a Malian will not hesitate to put a stranger in their house, give them food, and give them water. When a visitor arrives, he is a member of the community...people will not steal from this new person or assume that they have money. We are good to strangers because God has taught us to be good to them. We chat, laugh, and play with our guests.”

My host sister, Hadi Kassambara, had this to say:

“Malians are good with their money. I mean, they are free with their money and possessions. A person’s stomach will always be full in Mali because we like to share what we have with others.”

Amadou Kassambara, Hadi’s husband and my host brother:

“Malians are good socially. We are good at seeing social cues presented by other people and we are good at sensing the truth or un-truth behind someone’s words.”

Well, that’s different from what I thought Malians were good at. But as my host family answered my first question, one - by - one, it dawned upon me that because of my cultural background and their cultural background we were going to draw different conclusions about the same question. I like it--I loved it! I had to ask more questions and compare their answers to mine!

The Questions

Gathering and formulating questions is difficult, but with practice and some help from friends and family in The United States, I was able to ask my host family a whole range of inquiries. And they got into it, too--especially Ousmane. Eventually, he began to pose questions to me, about America, and insisted that I ask my father, mother, and boyfriend back home the same questions. It became a mini cross-cultural exchange forum.

Here are a couple things to keep in mind when formulating your own questions:

- **Pick a time and a place:** I spent a good amount of time with my hose family after dinner, but you can ask questions any time of day that’s best for you.
- **Pick people you know and are comfortable with:** if you and the person you are questioning are comfortable with one another, this process if much more fun. Plus, they are much more likely to be candid and open when answering your question.
- **Keep the questions simple:** this will help you formulate more questions as time progresses.
- **Ask family and friends back home for help:** they have tons of questions that they’re constantly asking you, right? Put them to good use!

- **Turn a question around:** Malians ask a bunch of questions about America...as they should. Turn the curiosity around; next time your host dad asks if there are dogs in America, ask him how Malians feel about dogs as pets or pets in general.
- **Ask a range of host country nationals:** even in my host family, the answers varied from person to person even though they were all asked the same question.
- **Ask the same question more than once:** everyone's language skills are rudimentary at the beginning of service, so re-ask questions that you've already presented to Malians a couple months into your first year (or even at your first year mark). The nuances of the language and your better understanding of it could reveal whole new meanings to people's answers.

Example Questions:

- What are Malians good at?
- If a foreigner visits Mali, where should they go to greatest understand the country's culture and people? (break it down for three or four nights worth of questions)
- How do women dress (In rural areas/in urban areas)?
- What is the tastiest food in Mali?
- How do Malians wear that beautiful Bazin fabric even in cold season?
- How do Malians celebrate Tabaski?

Appendix E

APCD Job Description

The following job description is for the Education Sector APCD, but can be considered as a representative for all the other sectors.

Overview

The Associate Peace Corps Director (APCD) for Education (APCD-ED) is responsible for the design and implementation of Peace Corps/Mali's Education project. S/he, in conjunction with the Country Director (CD) and Programming and Training Officer (PTO) and host country government officials, develops a project plan for this new project. In addition to overall management of the project, the APCD is responsible for identifying and developing job placements for Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) that match the Volunteer's skills and related experience; overseeing training for Volunteers within the Education sector; evaluating Volunteer assignments, and for providing Volunteer support including guiding and counseling Volunteers in their cross-cultural adaptation and professional development. The APCD represents the Peace Corps to government official and non-governmental representatives in order to identify and develop the project, select sites for Volunteers, plan and conduct training of Volunteers and Malian counterparts, and assure support of Volunteers during their service. Once Volunteers are in the field, this position will require some travel time (roughly 20%). The APCD-ED should be able to provide guidance and counseling to Volunteers on a twenty-four hour basis.

In all programmatic and training activities the APCD reports to and is supervised by the PTO. The APCD formalizes his/her programming work by completing a project plan in accordance with standard Peace Corps philosophy and practices. Specific responsibilities include coordinating work plans with the PC Programming team; making site visits to Volunteers in the field; meeting with school/university administrators and district and local officials; maintaining a close working relationship with officials in the Ministry of Education; maintaining contacts with education officials and NGO's and volunteer agencies involved in education; developing new Volunteer sites which satisfy PC Mali site placement criteria; monitoring the progress of the project and evaluating the goals and objectives of the project; reporting to Peace Corps/Washington.

The support of the PCVs within the Education program sector is a major part of the APCD's role. Guidance, counseling and general professional and personal support to volunteers is a crucial responsibility of the APCD. The APCD will participate in PST and ISTs (including the design, management and, where appropriate, the delivery of regularly scheduled training interventions is required). The APCD is responsible for reporting on activities and planning future program directions employing procedures and formats developed by Peace Corps.