PARTICIPATION, POWER, POSITIONALITY AND THE POOR: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY FROM THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

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Within the Peace Corps framework it is expected that volunteers work in collaboration with village leadership as it is culturally appropriate for guests to work in cooperation with key stakeholders and people in power. It is difficult, however, for the practitioner to gain the participation of the poor when they are positioned closely with powerful figures of authority as the poor encompass feelings of shame and fear. How can community development workers create a balance that allows them to be culturally appropriate and effective in their work with all members of the community including the marginalized populations? As an outsider, how do one's relationships with community members affect the processes and outcomes of projects?

I used participant observation and semi-structured interviews with community members and Peace Corps volunteers to tell the story of our struggles and accomplishments. While the general conclusions are specific to my experience, the learning process I went through applies to others beginning to contemplate the processes they might go through to enter a community, assess its needs, and do work. While the work volunteers do is not transformative, many have positive impacts on their villages. Building close relationships with community members from different populations was essential to my experience. I needed to take time to be a part of the community, love it, and redefine my understanding of development before joining in and marching on.

For

Mama Anna, Paulo and Mama & Baba Flavy

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Introduction

I wanted to come here to have the world break my heart and I wanted to help make some kind of positive change. I don't know how and why but that's what I wanted and I didn't know I would find so much brokenness - I didn't expect so much corruption. I don't want to change the world, I don't think it's ever what I wanted. My favorite poet wrote "Show me how you offer to your people the stories and songs you want our children's children to remember and I will show you
how I struggle not to change the world, but to love it.[1] *"*
Now I'm stuck - because my original understanding of development is dead to me.
-Journal Entry, August 8th, 2009

Awakening.

1987. My family thinks I remember odd things. I have a memory from when I was three. I was with my mom and sister at the Burnsville Mall around holiday time. My sister spilled slushy on her purple winter boots while she was waiting for us at the table in the food court. She looked sad, like she wanted to cry. Her eyes were big and innocent. Even though I was so young, I think I remember wishing I could help her, but felt powerless. My mom and my sister claim this never happened. Memories and stories play an important part in who we are and who we become. I wanted to help, and I felt powerless.

2002. Growing up, my desire to travel was intricately intertwined with my desire to make the world a better place. I'll never forget the day Mr. Carlson introduced us to the discipline of Anthropology. I went to a magnet school located at the Minnesota Zoo. I sat with 99 other students in the open space where all our core courses were taught. Mr. Carlson was in front of us.

[1] In The Dance by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

He wore jeans with a tucked in flannel shirt and round glasses with gold rims. He wrote on the board 'ANTHROPOLOGY 101,' pointed to me and said, "if Brianna lived in Africa right now, she'd be barefoot and pregnant."

2003. The speech I gave at graduation was titled "Dancing Raspberries" - *Think of chaos as dancing raspberries*[2]*,* I advised my peers; things would be more manageable that way. My graduating class voted me "Most likely to make a difference in the world" -because they thought I was a nice person. At 18, I was excited to do this. I had no idea how humbled, insane, grateful, angry, jaded, gratified and confused I would become trying to do it.

2005. College was quite a culture shock for me. I went to Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. The town had a population of 6,000 and no one knew what I meant when I said I was vegan. When I studied abroad in India my junior year, I remember looking out over the city of Jaipur with my dad when my family came to visit. As we stared out into a sea of crumbling buildings, traffic jammed roads, holy cows and stray dogs, he asked me what it would take to 'clean' even one block of the 'mess' that had us mesmerized. I had no idea.

Present. In retrospect I have no idea why I decided to start my Masters right out of college, and why I chose to study international development. I didn't even know what international development was. I enjoyed my international experiences in high school and college, and wanted to make the world a better place, so I suppose it made sense. At the time, Peace Corps had recently started to partner with graduate schools to develop a program where students work on

[2] From Wage Peace, by Judith Hill

their degree and carry out their two years of Peace Corps service simultaneously. The idea was that students first get some extra training in school and then apply it in the field. Graduate school would make me a better volunteer and vice versa. Two years in the field as a volunteer would give me better perspectives on community development in an international setting.

I chose Michigan State University because at the time, the only interdisciplinary department that participated with Peace Corps Masters International was located there. I began my Master of Science degree in 2007 in the department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies.

Development Practice

> *There was always some eager foreign organization ready to say to Africans: this is what you do, this is how you should do things. The advice may be good, and it might work elsewhere, but Africa needed its own solution.*
>
> *-Alexander McCall Smith in Tears of the Giraffe*

There are all kinds of development and ways to understand it. Some examples of different kinds of development are: economic development, governance, education, aid, etc. The kind that I am referring to when I write about it is Peace Corps' approach to development: capacity building through education and a small component of aid.

In classes, I quickly became disenchanted. International development practices had taken some wrong turns in the past and in many instances encompassed imperial tendencies (Kovats-Bernat 2002). It has been dominated by the idea of modernization and a top-down approach that stemmed from the ethnocentric mindset that assumed that what 'worked' in economically

advanced countries was good and should be replicated elsewhere (Axinn & Axinn 1997). Advancement through modernization is more easily achievable by those already well off, which means those in urban areas and who possess some capital. Consequently, the poor, who are primarily rural dwellers, farmers and women are further disempowered (Brokensha 1980; Chambers 1985). Also, modernization disempowers because it denies the importance of rural peoples' knowledge and ability to improve their lives. Little merit has been placed in local institutions that traditionally supported important social cohesion (Wiarda 1985).

Naturally, I was drawn to authors like Robert Chambers who wrote about participatory methods of development. Participatory methods were desirable because they moved away from the top down approach and embraced local capacities, knowledges and ideas. It's difficult to find nonprofits and NGOs today that don't promote participation. Participation emerged as a key concept for development in the 1980's as an 'alternative' approach to development (Chambers 1984; Brokensha 1988; Hickey and Mohan 2005). Participation would purportedly address the shortcomings of the modernization paradigm and top down approach to development. By using participatory methods, development practitioners began including populations that had traditionally been excluded (Chambers 1989). Professionals listened to local populations and took indigenous knowledge into account as a method to do an improved form of development (Brokensha et al, 1980; Chambers 1989). It was also therefore expected to result in empowerment of local populations (Stokke & Mohan 2000; Green 2000).

As these methods became increasingly accepted, the term participatory development was coined. Participatory development (PD) sought to address the issue of uneven power dynamics

(Cornwall 1994). In PD, practitioners become labeled 'facilitators' rather than experts (Connell 1997). Community development is to take place through "an active and equitable partnership between rural people, researchers and extensionists" (Scoones & Thompson 1994, 61). Within this approach, development practice is re-fashioned to serve particular cultures and places (Escobar 1998). Participation would foster a process that would increase understanding of why people act the way they do and why importing a foreign method or product wouldn't solve their problems.

While these ideas remain very popular they also have many shortcomings. Some argue that it is nothing more than political posturing and simply a shift in vocabulary (Hildyard et al 2001; Thompson and Scoones 1994; Rocheleau 1994). Participatory methods were originally introduced as a way to shift more power into the hands of the community members. Many however, have observed that little has actually changed as development agencies continue to operate with their own agendas (Cornwall 1998; Chambers 1989; Shiva 1991; Guijt & Shah, 1998). Moreover, power inequities within the communities tend to be left out of the development equation (Cornwall 1998; Chambers 1989; Shiva 1991; Guijt & Shah 1998).

Outsiders involved in PD tend not take into consideration the heterogeneity of communities and internal politics (Cornwall 1998; Cleaver 2001; Guijt & Shah 1998). It is generally accepted that the outsider using participatory tools is gaining in-depth understandings about local situations. This is misleading. Often times, outsiders will only work with people in the community who hold more power. This may mean that certain groups are excluded, i.e. women, indigenous people, ethnic groups, children, the poor, etc. Therefore, participatory tools alone, can not solve the problems of unequal power dimensions. The individuals and organizations using them are

crucial elements. Participation has become a buzzword and largely exists as a way of thinking about things, rather than doing things (Mosse 2001; Thompson and Scoones 1994; Leal 2007; Cornwall 2006; Kelly 1995).

If PD is practiced without an understanding of power dynamics, it may end up simply reinforcing the already intact power dynamics, increasing or possibly creating more disparities in the community (Hildyard et al 2001; Kothari 2001; White 1996). This reinforcement happens by legitimizing the importance of the intervention or project (because it is considered participatory), but still approaching it the traditional way, where there is no actual change in the organization's strategy (Easterly 2006; Hildyard et al 2001; Kelly 2004).

In response to these criticisms there is a call for a radical change in the way we understand development practice (David and Porter 1997; Eversole 2003; Chambers 2008; Cook 2004). A shift in vocabulary isn't enough. It requires the practitioners to be open to emergence. This must involve being aware of the power dynamics in the communities where practitioners work (Craig and Porter 1997) which means it takes time. Because there is no easy formula (Connell, 1997), it makes sense to understand development as a process, rather than a goal (Sen 1999; Greenwood et al, 1993). Seeing development from a process perspective allows practitioners to acknowledge the existence of power relations and helps them reflect on how those relations affect the way that development occurs (White 1996; Chambers 1997).

As I read article after article about projects going awry I thought, *these people have it all wrong, if they only knew the language and spent time in the community where they were working - things would work out.* The things I was reading about participation were disheartening. I was confident though, that with the language training I would receive and the amount of time I would

get to spend living in a rural community, I would be able to handle it. How lucky was I? I had a free two-year ticket to failure-proof development work.

Science, Knowledge and Action.

It takes more than two hands to embrace a baobab tree
-African Proverb

I read Emily Martin's article *The Egg and the Sperm* (1991) the semester before I left for the Peace Corps. She writes how culture shapes science. Consequently it validates "truth." She writes that the major textbooks we use to understand human reproductive organs and the process of fertilization use a language that relies on our cultural understandings of what it means to be male and female. While females wastefully shed debris from their uterine lining, males can produce (victoriously!) hundreds of millions of sperm each day. While the egg is large and passive, sperm are streamlined and have great velocity. Later studies revealed that the egg has an intense pull and the thrust of the sperm is actually weak. Sperm may not be the forceful predators our textbooks continue to inform us they are.

Emily Martin's article was mind-opening and I wondered what other concepts my formal and informal educations had delivered to me as irrefutable facts? And why had I never questioned what 'I knew' before? I grew worried as I began to make the connection between traditional objectivist science and the top down approach to development that had the potential to do so much harm. The basic components of modernization that in large part have not been questioned are rooted in scientific knowledge (Escobar 1995). As I became aware of the link between power and knowledge, I wondered if I too would encompass the imperial tendencies that could be

oppressive. I wondered as Donna Haraway (1988) writes, "With whose blood were my eyes crafted?" (586).

How have we fooled ourselves into believing that it's possible to make observations and conclusions about the world we are embedded in, without passing judgment? Historically, both qualitative and quantitative research have existed as metaphors for colonial power and truth. They make science and give science the power to explain life. Research has objectified the dark-skinned other and represented it back to the modern world (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

The Toughest Job I'd Ever Love

Peace Corps began in the 1960's when Senator John F. Kennedy challenged the students at the University of Michigan to serve their country by promoting peace and understanding by living and working in developing countries. From there, a federal agency grew that would support volunteers through their 27 months of service. Today, more than 200,000 volunteers have served in 139 countries. Peace Corps' three universal goals are to 'help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women, help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, and to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.'[3]

After the arduous sixteen page application, two hour interview and comprehensive medical examination, I received an invitation from Peace Corps. If I accepted it, I would be leaving for Tanzania in June. I was disappointed.

[3] Obtained from www.peacecorps.gov

In college I went on a May Term trip to Tanzania. I spent my days with the Maasai. I had already seen how high they could jump and I had consumed platefuls of the chewy goat meat they roasted over the fire. I had already worked in an orphanage for children whose parents had been victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I already understood Tanzanian culture and wanted a challenge, I wanted to go somewhere unfamiliar. Peace Corps didn't usually send people to places they had already been, but my sister's recent diagnosis with melanoma meant that my fair skin needed to be closely examined every six months. Most other African countries didn't have dermatologists who understood white skin. Despite my misgivings, I accepted the invitation.

I would be part of the Environmental Education and Sustainable Agriculture in Rural Communities (EESARC) program. EESARC aims to "improve the quality of life of project stakeholders (women, youth, farmers and community leaders) by increasing their capacity to address priority land degradation problems, sustainable agriculture practices like permaculture, that integrates HIV/AIDS and permanent agriculture as well as makes sustainable use of renewable natural resources bases."[4] As a Village-Based Extension Facilitator my role would be to "act as a catalyst to enable village communities to help themselves and to better understand the situations around them as well as some of the possible solutions."

Prior to departure for Tanzania, we had what is referred to as 'staging.' All the volunteers met in Washington D.C. for a few days of initial orientation. During these days we discussed culture shock, safety and did a few team building activities. I don't remember much, not even the faces of the friends who would become my saving graces. The one thing that did remain with me as I

[4] From Peace Corps Volunteer description booklet

boarded the plane was the suggestion to *celebrate our minor victories* throughout the next two years.

Tanzania

While today more is known and understood about Africa through archeological studies, much of its history has been left undocumented. Colonial rule never acknowledged pre-colonial developments and considered Africa's history to begin at the arrival of the white man (Hyden 1980). Because Tanzania's early populations were hunters and gatherers, it was an area of extensive population movements, and therefore the traceable oral traditions and histories only go back a few hundred years (Svendsen 1969).

European exploration began in the area in the mid-nineteenth century (Svendsen 1969).
In the late 1880s, Anglo-German agreements were made that detailed the British and German occupancies in the interior of East Africa. Throughout the late 1800's and early 1900's the Germans met resistance (Okoth 2006). Between 1891 and 1894, the Wahehe (a tribe I would come to know as family) was led by Chief Mkwawa to resist German expansion (Illiffe 1979). While their resistance is considered to be the most famous, they were eventually defeated (Svendsen 1969).

During World War I the British defeated the Germans. A post war mandate by the League of Nations administered the area to the British and they changed the name of the colony to Tanganyika (Kopopen 1988). After that, Julius Kambarage Nyerere helped form the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1954 (Svendsen 1969, Jennings 2003). This became the

country's only political party. Their main concern was the sovereignty of Tanganyika. Nyerere (on behalf of TANU) appealed to the United Nations to be granted Independence. Tanganyika became an independent nation in 1961.

After independence Tanganyika went through a period of "re-Africaniz[ing]" (Schneider 2004). Nyerere writes that he noticed remnants of their exploitive past including capitalist tendencies that were beginning to break apart what should have been a cohesive nation. This confirmed that his vision of a socialist society was appropriate for the people and place (Nyerere 1974). The main premise behind his socialism was development of people rather than things (Nyerere 1974). During early post-independence time, it was hoped that cooperative production would be achieved voluntarily. In 1973, it became apparent that these hopes would not be realized and force was necessary (Rist 1997).

The politics of development in Tanzania during the 1960s and 1970s led several NGOs (Non-Governmental Organization) to become active in matters of the state. During the following decade power dynamics began to change in the Tanzanian state as well as in the NGO community. They came under considerable pressure from the donor community. The International Monitory Fund's era of structural adjustment began in the early 1980s and African governments were considered to be the main obstacles to development due to their universal and inherent bureaucracy, mismanagement and corruption. The state was no longer to be the lead director of development policy. Development policy was to be handled by the free markets and external NGO agencies. Nyerere voluntarily retired from his position as President in 1985.

Tanzanian socialism began to fade away when the country came to agreement with the World Bank in 1986 and accepted a structural adjustment program (Barrow & Jennings 2001).

Village Entry

After a tiring three months of Peace Corps Pre-Service Training I was ready to move on. The intensive language training was exhausting. It left us tired but well prepared. The technical skills training attempted to train kids from the suburbs to teach farmers who have been living off the land for generations, how to farm. This left us feeling uncertain about the work we were going to do. While I was sad to bid my four kind and encouraging host brothers farewell, I was ready to leave my impatient host mother who mocked me when I tried to practice my Kiswahili and the one *choo*[5] my family of eight shared. I was excited to travel to a new place where I would have more control over the amount of sugar in my tea.

Towards the end of training, my cohort was told that we had been chosen to pilot a project Peace Corps termed the Village Situation Analysis (VSA). The VSA is a tool that would allow volunteers to better understand the local context and current reality of their community. We were to create a lengthy document and present it when we would all be back together at our In Service Training (IST) three months later. In a sense the village entry process would never be complete so we were also encouraged to continue to add to it over the next two years.

In Tanzania (as in most countries Peace Corps serves) volunteers are placed in communities without job descriptions. *Wapo huru,* they are free. Hopefully, they'll find something productive to do with their time. The way I understood it, the VSA would help us figure out how our

[5] Latrine

strengths and capacities matched the community's capacities, needs and desires. Often times when volunteers arrive in their new homes the villages have already compiled very detailed and often unrealistic lists for their new volunteer to tackle: cure AIDS, build health dispensaries, bring water from the mountain, bring education for modern farming practices, start student sponsor programs, etc. The VSA therefore, is useful because it assists volunteers in the entrance process. It helps them understand the kind of work they will do, forces them to patient and hopefully prevents them from becoming overwhelmed.

I was excited that we were required to do the VSA and to learn that Peace Corps put so much emphasis on participation. As a Masters student of international development, I felt this was a necessary step. Volunteers needed a research period before they dove into work. Development practice should be an integrated process of inquiry making the practitioner also an action researcher. The Participatory Action for Community Analysis (PACA) manual we received was similar to what I had learned in the classroom. Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) include activities such as community mapping, seasonal calendars, daily activities charting and participatory needs assessment. Ideally, this would help us learn about the community and help the community understand their own assets (Rocheleau et al. 1995; Chambers 1989; PACA 2005).

We received a folder with several documents outlining specific directions. We were to conduct a house -to-house survey that would give us the basic demographics. We were to become familiar with the local environment through observation and interviews with local specialists, to document the work former Peace Corps Volunteers had already done, and meet with the village

leaders. We were also to meet with existing groups. During training we were equipped with tools to assist us, like the PACA manual, which included exercises to complete jointly with the villagers to give us a better understanding of pressing health and environmental issues.

With fingers crossed behind our backs, we took the oath and were sworn in as official Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs).

Chungumaziwa

The day I was to arrive in my village, Peace Corps dropped the volunteers that were to be placed 'near' me and myself at the district government office. It was our villages' responsibility to get us to our new homes. My village (*Chungumaziwa*) sent the head teacher from the primary school to pick me up. I was impressed at how well he spoke English. We gathered my voluminous and unnecessary belongings and convinced a *kondo*[6] to strap them to the top of the *coasta*[7] and got on. After about an hour ride, the *coasta* dropped us off in what appeared to be the middle of nowhere. Students who looked like strangers to me were waiting to receive us at the road.

Head teacher: *Hawa ni wanafunzi wangu.*
Me: *huh?*
Head teacher: *These are my pupils.*

I knew what that meant. I was just too nervous, ruffled, excited, tense and anxious to process anything. The students came to carry my stuff, I would come to know them so well over the next two years. They left me with nothing more than my purse and my pineapple-sized puppy named

[6] Conductor
[7] Bus

Edna to carry. We had a few kilometers to hike before reaching *Chungumaziwa.* It was on this walk, within the first two hours of my official service as a Peace Corps Volunteer, when the individual I was with presented me with my first major dilemma. It went something like this:

Head teacher: *There is this semina (seminar) that happens in a few months.*
Me: *Yes, it's called IST (in service training).*
Head teacher: *Volunteers are supposed to take counterparts. Yes, and I always go with the volunteer, we learn about OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children) and AIDS and the garden and projects.*
Me: *Oh...ya...hmmm...*

I wanted to have a clear mind, I wanted to choose my own counterpart - and it seemed that the head teacher was already bidding for it. It was September, so the village hadn't seen rain for around seven months. My dry feet were getting embarrassingly dirty from the sand of the dirt road. The equatorial sun was beating down on us, I was hot and remembering what the Midwest was like this time of year. Everything was dried out except for the pine trees that were oddly (I thought) mixed in with the mesquite throughout the windblown hills. Once we reached the sign indicating we were in my new home we turned right to enter the village. I saw a typical village scene. Houses made of an orangish-brown mud with thatched roofs, chickens crossing the road, fences made of bamboo, a few cows, running feet that supported the bodies of little gigglers. I saw a group of people congregated around a modern structure with a Peace Corps logo. I hoped it wasn't my house, but figured it was. That evening I found out it was the library Danielle (*Chungumaziwa's* first volunteer) built. The group of people were dancing and singing.

"*They're singing for you."* He told me.

I was embarrassed about my decision that morning to tie a piece of fabric around Edna's neck that matched my stylish Tanzanian outfit. My host mother prepared the outfit for me and gave me a scrap for Edna. I was embarrassed because I knew that in Tanzania dogs were not considered to be friends or pets. Rather, they were pests or perhaps, guardians of compounds. *They're going to think I'm crazy*, I thought. I stopped breathing as we approached. The women surrounded me stomping and twirling. They clapped and kicked up dirt that for a moment became magic dust. I don't remember what their faces looked like that day, but some of them became my best friends. They sat me in a chair in front of everyone. Children sang,

Karibu sana dada, karibu sana Brianna
Pole na safari
Karibu, upumzike sasa[8]

A man I would come to know as Mzee Mtuya (elder, planter of trees, builder of houses and my 2009 New Year's Eve date) jumped himself into a traditional Hehe dance. I was thankful to have my oversized sunglasses on - they hid my tears. This all seemed to be everything I ever wanted. I slept at the head teacher's house that night because I didn't yet have a bed, food, buckets for water or any of the basic material items needed to sustain oneself. The next day they escorted me to my new residence. It had three rooms, a tin roof, and courtyard with a bathroom and washroom. The volunteer before me had written inspirational quotes with charcoal all over the white walls. The sharp, black rigidness of the charcoal letters creating statements like 'diamonds are created under pressure' gave me the feeling I was in a horror film. I made a mental note to buy a few cans of red paint next time I was in town.

[8] Welcome sister, welcome Brianna. Sorry for the trip. You can relax now.

Over the next few weeks and months, the head teacher and his family were extremely hospitable. His children fetched my water and his wife, who everyone called Mama Bahati,[9] was becoming a great friend and took care of my every need. I spent part of most days at their house playing, chatting or helping to cook. In a way I don't know what I would have done without them. If I needed tomatoes, they would send their children to search for them (we had no market and as I was still a guest, I didn't know who had extra in their garden). If I needed charcoal or firewood, they knew whom to contact (because of forest depletion, charcoal production is an underground market in rural Tanzania and difficult to find). I became conditioned early on to depend on them instead of setting out in search of my own sustenance.

While I continued to spend a lot of time at their house, I started venturing out more. As I became familiar with my new home I found one teacher with whom I really connected. Mama Flavy was just like my sister; she taught first grade and was three years older than me. I was very conscious that only spending time with the teachers would limit my ability to work with the poor. Later, villagers told me that when volunteers arrive they should,

> *Try to be more with the villagers and not just with the teachers in order to get ideas from everyone* and *have close relationships with them so you can understand their problems.*

I was aware that teachers held more wealth than others. Most volunteers said that originally they spent the majority of time with the teachers. Many teachers speak English making the transition easier for volunteers when they're new. While I felt comfortable, I knew I needed to spend time

[9] In Tanzania, adults are referred to as being mother or father of their first-born child.

with other community members in order to understand their reality. I also had to start focusing on my VSA.

I remembered our Program Training Officer's (PTO) simple words of wisdom as she introduced the VSA to us. Years ago she had been a PCV in Mali. When she was a new volunteer at her site, she walked around her community and greeted everyone she saw. The greetings in Mali sound similar to those in Tanzania: 'Hello,' 'What news do you have?' "How did you wake?' 'How is the morning?' 'How are the children?' 'How is the work?' I remember quite vividly my Kiswahili teacher explaining to us very matter-of-factly how important it is to greet people; "*If you don't, people may not help you when you need it,"* she told us. One day an elderly man stopped this woman who was now my PTO and asked her what the village had done to make her so unfriendly. After a lengthy conversation, she learned that greeting was not enough; she had to take people up on their welcomes, enter their homes, hold their babies, and most importantly, eat their food. I began walking around the village and meeting and eating with more farmers. They didn't know what I meant when I said I didn't eat meat. So I just ate meat.[10]

> *Journal Entry - Sept 7th, 2008*
> *I basically spend everyday walking around trying to meet people. Edna comes too which makes for a great conversation piece. All of the teachers have been great, I really like them and feel comfortable with them but I am trying harder to hang out with the villagers more. I've hardly bought any food because everyone has been feeding me or not letting me leave without something from their garden or chicken coop.*

[10] And felt the strongest I had in seven years!

I began walking around and meeting some interesting characters everyday. A *babu*[11] named Paulo who seemed to be a pretty amazing farmer. A *bibi*[12] people call 'Mama Siamini' who spends her day cooking *pombe*[13] to sell at the club at night. Makers of natural remedies, herders and milkers of cows, raisers of chickens, keepers of bees and carriers of water. A small group of children followed me everywhere I went. I referred to them as my gaggle. I started to learn how they farmed and gardened. Since it was the dry season, people were only working in their gardens located at the river.

Mama Diana was the first friend who asked me to visit her garden. I couldn't believe she left every morning shortly after the rooster's call. She had to make her way over the rocky hills, through the paths lined by spiky trees and guarded by armies of ants that bite and don't let go, to a plot of land that she had inherited a few years ago. She told me it was for her daughter's education. She recently planted corn and beans and would have to water each plant by hand until the rains started. We dipped our buckets in the river and splashed bits of water over every seedling. It was exhausting.

When I was ready to start my house-to-house survey for the VSA, my new friend Mama Flavy helped me get connected with the sub-village chairman named Augustaulo. While the head teacher presented himself as the one to go to for help, I hadn't been able to get a hold of him for a few days. He seemed to leave before sunrise and return after dark. Assistance with the house-to-house survey would be helpful as I anticipated that the older populations would only speak

[11] Elder man

[12] Elder woman

[13] the local alcoholic beverage made out of corn and finger millet flours

Kihehe (the tribal language of the Wahehe people). I would need someone to translate it into Kiswahili. I knew I would not be able to make it to every single house, but wanted to try to get to as many as possible. Every afternoon we would visit four new households, Augustaulo would arrange it the night before so they would be sure to wait for us. Many volunteers went door to door with the questions Peace Corps provided us. Others printed out surveys in town and passed them out at village meetings (automatically limiting their sample to those who were literate). I thought some of the questions Peace Corps suggested weren't appropriate (other PCVs had similar thoughts). I decided to create my own. In hindsight my new questions were not very appropriate either.

I also made a conscious though uncomfortable effort to force my quiet and introverted self to fully participate in village activities. Early on, most volunteers walk a tightrope between fear and hope. Fear that they won't live up the to volunteers that proceeded them and hope that they will surpass everything the others have done. After bad days I made lists in my journals, recipes for a better tomorrow or at least a day of fewer failures.

> *Journal Entry - October 11th, 2008*
> *Here are some ideas for a better next week if plans go astray:*
> *Bid at the church auction, make banana bread and give it to a neighbor, ask one of the dada's who sells chipati at the school if they'll teach me how they make it, ask someone if I can go to their garden with them, buy sugar and salt at the duka even if I don't need it.*

I also tried to participate in other village-wide activities:

> *Journal Entry - October 18th, 2008*

> *Augustaulo invited me to something - I didn't really know what it was but I said I'd be there. From what I understood, they were going to dig graves, drink pombe and have a party...*
> *...We went to a part of the sub-village I hadn't yet found. We passed one of the teacher's houses and arrived in a shady patch with lots of women and barrels of pombe. As usual, everyone was pretty shangaa[14] to see me...I still didn't really know what was going on- the women were cooking and odds were that the men were somewhere building something - possibly graves. A group of bibis pulled me down to sit with them. They asked all about Edna- her health, what she had eaten today, etc. They were all drinking pombe and brought me togwa - which is essentially pombe before it ferments. Togwa is tamu and pombe is kali. After a few sips a Bibi invited me to go watch the men work. I sat with the women in the grass until they told me to simama and look. The men had built two tombs for a man's mother and father - both of whom had died more than fifteen years ago. So yes- this was in fact a day-long party of* tomb building *and pombe drinking. As I walked back to the shade I was bombarded by a hoard of men. Mostly babu's thrilled to see me. Mzee Mtuya told me this morning I should have waited at my house- he was under the impression he was bringing me to the party...after filling my stomach completely with ugali and beans I found myself in a little room of the house we were at- jumping, stamping, singing and dancing with the women while the men continued to rush in and out of the courtyard to retrieve more buckets of pombe. The ladies I walked back with were in no hurry to return home. It must have taken us at least an hour. We stopped at a woman's house to see her one day-old baby.*

I continued to enjoy my friendship with the head teacher and his family. I also appreciated their help in sustaining me. He organized village-wide meetings for me, communicated to the teachers and students about activities I was interested in helping with, and acted as my liaison with the village government. Every time I discussed future plans with him he gave me a reassuring and confident *"hamna shida, hamna shida,"* no problem.

[14] shocked or amazed

The teacher continued bringing up IST and it became more and more uncomfortable every time. There were a few reasons I wanted to consider bringing someone else. I had started to notice his frequent absences - if my counterpart wasn't around, how would we work together? Many of the nights I'd stay at his house pretty late to chat with his wife, I'd watch him stumble in, inebriated- how would I work with the students if my counterpart wasn't a good role model? He had been to IST with the volunteers who came before me and I was fairly certain that he was more interested in the generous per diem that Peace Corps gave our counterparts than the actual training. Most important was that it would be easier to work with the villagers if my counterpart was a villager.[15] Things I learned in the classroom about positionality led me to believe that situating myself close to him, would made me less available to those worse off. I sent text messages to and tried calling my APCD[16] for advice, but he never responded. My guess is that as a Tanzanian, he didn't know what I should do either.

Paulo, the amazing farmer I had come to know, was not privileged but well respected and I thought he would be a good candidate for my counterpart. When I suggested this to the head teacher he responded that I couldn't take him because he was illiterate. His persistence was wearing. I grew up in the Midwest and had a difficult time shedding my 'Minnesota nice.'[17] I was thinking about falling back on the easier option and just taking him.

[15] In Tanzania, teachers aren't considered villagers because of their level of education level and regular income.

[16] Area Programming Country Director, my boss.

[17] Stereotypical behavior of Minnesotans: courteous, friendly, reserved, un-confrontational

Participatory Needs Assessment

Our PACA tools manual focused on Peace Corps' approach to development. PACA is a tool that is supposed to help volunteers and community members conduct an analysis in order to design projects that will be environmentally, economically, socially and politically sustainable. For these activities, the manual suggests dividing the community into different groups, and having them analyze their situation. This division may be based on socio-economic status, location, age, gender, health, education level etc. They suggest facilitating the process of appreciative inquiry to find areas for growth. Facilitators are encouraged to note who is and who is not participating and encourage greater collaboration.

This approach seeks to address the short comings of participatory development. I quickly found, this process to be complicated by a few factors. Louise Fortmann (1996) found that women in a Zimbabwean village had different ways of participating that weren't understood by the facilitator who was encouraging more participants to speak up. They selected a representative to relay their collective views throughout the activity. Additionally, while it's easy to distinguish women from men, other groups are much more complicated to identify. The diverse nature of women's groups means that they may have just as many or more differences amongst themselves as from men (Cornwall 1998). It also appeared that simply knowing about all the community members and getting them to show up was the biggest challenge of all. I recall a story in school about an Indian researcher who published an article on her work in community development in a small Indian village. As an Indian, we presume she already had an insider's perspective. One day before she was to conclude her six month long research project, she learned about a poor community in the village she had previously been unaware of.

The morning of *Chungumaziwa's* Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA), I strapped my holy flip chart to the back of my bike and set out for the village office. A bumpy, four kilometer, down hill, bike ride. The meeting was set to start at 10 a.m. so I got there at 9:30. Around 12:30 p.m. people started showing up. I separated the women and men and asked them to prioritize the village's top five needs. I asked them all to participate and to listen to each other. Looking back, I don't know how I can even call it participatory. Nothing about simply asking large groups of people to take flip chart and markers and write down what they want me to do over the next two years is participatory. Sherry Arstein's *A Ladder of Participation* (1969) outlines a spectrum for the different levels of participation. It ranges from 'manipulation,' or division of labor, to full 'citizen control.' In this sense, anytime a practitioner is working with a group of people, they have reason to use the vocabulary of participation. I hadn't considered this ladder before. I thought participation was *participation.* Of course I wanted for the citizens to be fully in control, but I didn't know how to achieve that.

Something else that weakened my PNA was the location. I was seeing that with the geography of my village, it would be challenging to work with everyone. The village I lived in comprised about 1,500 people scattered throughout six sub villages. Four of them were clustered together and located 4 kilometers from where I lived. *Chungumaziwa B* where the village office was, had a larger population. *Chungumaziwa A* was my home and housed the school. To the outside observer these places would appear to be completely different villages. There were rumblings that in the past there had been conflict between the sub-villages over the kind of work volunteers did. I did my PNA in *Chungumaziwa B* which is what the village leaders planned, most likely

because it was near the office and nearer to them. The Peace Corps framework teaches that it is culturally appropriate and expected that volunteers work in collaboration with key stakeholders. Oftentimes these are figures of authority, people in power.

Participants wrote down things that were to be expected: water, a health dispensary, farming education, chicken-raising education and a preschool building. How was I supposed to respond to their needs when I lacked the resources required to do so? Why was I a sustainable agriculture volunteer? I had planted grass in kindergarten and that was the extent of my gardening experience. I collected cow paraphernalia growing up, but was afraid of the life-size ones. What did I have to give them? I also felt that throwing resources in the form of money and supplies at the situation probably wasn't the proper way to address such issues. Aid can increase dependency, it's not sustainable (Moyo 2009; Easterly 2006). Moreover, volunteers that had come before me built a school kitchen that wasn't used, and a school library that had books written in English by Plato, George Orwell and Barbara Kingsolver. I was beginning to remember my classes about development and how things don't usually work out. I would probably be no different.

I was having a difficult time balancing the things I had read about in the classroom with the reality of what I was experiencing. I was beginning to see that in theory, the 'what to do' is simple and straightforward. In practice it's complicated and messy. Later another PCV told me in his interview that,

> *In America we're so used to pointing and shooting, but here you can only point so much, eventually you have to shoot and see where it goes. If it's not where you want it, shoot again.*

A few other things that the women's group prioritized seemed more manageable: juice and batik making. I didn't know anything about juice, but I did have a fresh twenty-liter batch of pineapple wine sitting at my house. I mentioned I knew how to make *mvinyo*[18] and word quickly spread. A group of 40 men and women formed to learn how. I remembered from school that working specifically with marginalized groups, or with one gender group can create conflict. In his book *Shady Practices,* Richard Schroeder (1999) shows that the concentration of nongovernmental organization (NGO) efforts in program areas favoring women created resentment on the part of male residents from the communities that these agencies operated in. So at least for this particular project we welcomed all who desired to participate. The group picked leaders immediately. I was excited that Mama Bahati would be the secretary. She was becoming such a good friend. This project would be great; the only things you need to make wine are buckets, sugar, water, fruit and yeast. Everyone would work together, they'd make great profits and their livelihoods would be improved. Each group member pitched in a few thousand shillings[19] for our initial start-up costs.

I learned how to make batik when I studied abroad in India in 2005. Batik would require more time and preparation. I would need to obtain a grant. I talked to a few women I knew were interested and they thought it would be a good idea to have someone trained as soon as possible. They suggested that Mama Bahati go with me to another PCV's village to learn from the batik group there.

[18] wine

[19] $1 is about 1000Tsh (Tanzania Shillings)

Positionality and Reflection

I understood the reasons power and participation are important for development work, but there seemed to be something missing. I came to see early on and increasingly more over time that a missing link in development practice is often awareness on the practitioner's part of their position (White 1996; Chambers 1997; Eversole 2004). Positionality is a term most commonly used in anthropology, but is equally applicable to development practice as well. One way to understand positionality is how the presence of the outsider affects the process being observed. It refers to how an anthropologist describes their own social position in relation to the people they are working with. It can also affect their own subjectivity relative to how they interpret what they observe and experience (Eversole 2004; Carr 2010).

In development, positionality refers to how the practitioner affects the process of development. When practitioners are more aware of their position, in theory they are better able to understand the power dynamics and make their practices more participatory.

Some who write on power in development write that through reflection, power dynamics can be surfaced (White 1996; Chambers 1997). At the most basic level, reflection turns experience into learning (Klob 1984). Paulo Freire (1984) writes about the importance of reflection coupled with action, "within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed-even in part - the other immediately suffers" (87). The need to reflect can arise when the practitioner senses that something is off-balance:

> We do not pause to reflect in a vacuum. We pause to reflect because some issue arises which demands that we stop and take stock or consider before we act. We do so because the situation we are in requires consideration: how we act in it is a matter of some significance. We become aware of ourselves, in some small or large way, as agents of history; we become aware that how we act

> will influence the course of events, at least for ourselves and usually for others too (Boud et al. 2005, 141).

Awareness of one's social location is also considered first person research and is an essential part of Participatory Research (Reason and Bradbury 2008). Development practitioners from outside probably will never have sufficient understanding of communities in which they work. Reflecting on their position and experience will encourage a better understanding.

Methodology

> *Here's what I've decided: the very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof. What I want is simple I almost can't say it: elementary kindness. Enough to eat, enough to go around. The possibility that kids might one day grow up to be neither the destroyers nor the destroyed. That's about it. Right now I'm living inside that hope, running down its hallway and touching the walls on both sides.*
> *-Barbara Kingsolver, A letter from Hallie to Codi in Animal Dreams*

Personal Philosophy

My worldview has evolved overtime. The time I spent playing in the woods growing up, the way my parents raised me, my high school experience at the Zoo, a certain teacher and a certain pastor have all contributed to my understandings and beliefs about life. My research methodology is an extension of my world-view. My framework was informed by the work of scholars like Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985), Donna Haraway (1988) and Laurel Richardson (1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the social world is something that is interpreted, not something literal. Donna Haraway (1988) writes that knowledge is situated in a time and place, it is not a given, or a constant. Laurel Richardson (1994) writes about the postmodernist doubt that any theory or method can be universally 'right.' We must constantly remind ourselves about the political nature of research and learning and ask, "Who owns knowledge? Who defines reality?" (Reason 1994, 325). Donna Haraway (1988) argues "for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (589). As I

began to think about how my work as a Peace Corps Volunteer would manifest itself into a piece of writing that would be of some worth, I decided I would be most productive and objective, by being subjective. Donna Haraway (1988) writes that as human beings, we cannot see anything from nowhere. It is therefore impossible to have a truly objective point of view. When we are honest, we are more true and therefore objective. I wanted knowledge to be useful and empowering (Altheide and Johnson 1995), open and authentic.

Going into the Peace Corps, I didn't know what my research would be about, nor did I know how to conduct research that would honor the lives and knowledges of the people who would become my friends, neighbors and enemies. I didn't know what my work would entail or what problems there would be to explore. I had to embrace the emergent nature of my work and research.

I joined the Peace Corps believing that development and research must go hand in hand. I knew that the "professional expert model" (PEM) (Whyte 1991) or "normal professionalism" approach which are still the standard approaches to development, are not suitable for addressing actual 'real world' problems (Chambers 1993). In PEM, the researcher is engaged in studying a specific problem, recommending solutions and laying out courses of action. Postmodern thought invites us as learners to approach information through our own lived experiences that are situated in a space of dialogue (Freire 1984; Bhabha 1994). Dialogue is used to enable people, to share their perspectives and experiences about contested issues. It is necessary for groups to engage in dialogue in order to help them to build deeper understandings of and solutions to contentious issues. This process is cyclical and involves understanding, learning, action and reflection and

first person research (Freire 1984; Boud et al. 1985; Schon 1991; McTaggart 1991; Klob 1984; Reason & Bradbury 2008). Through this process the practitioner is able to become more effective.

Once it evolved, my research was intricately intertwined with my service as a volunteer. My research focus came about as a response to the common reflection that volunteers only start projects that fall apart. Returned volunteers had disheartening things to say about participatory development. They would say, "I hope you guys don't expect to actually really change anything- you'll learn a lot about yourself though." I wanted to know if this was true, or if we could also anticipate some kind of positive impact on the communities' part.

My questions emerged over time and became:

- How can community development workers create a balance that allows them to be culturally appropriate and effective in their work with all members of the community?
- As an outsider, how do one's relationships with community members affect the processes and outcomes of projects?

Quite simply, I wanted to know how we could make things work out - and how we could work with those who needed it the most.

Autoethnography

Within the qualitative research tradition, researchers study people and things in their natural settings in order to interpret phenomena and the meaning people attach to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Qualitative researchers "are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the

interpretive understanding of human experience" (Nelson et al. 1992, pg. 4). I wrote an autoethnograpahy. It is an interpretive form of narrative research (Andrews et al 2008) that puts into words the process of inquiry I went through as a participatory development practitioner.

Ellis and Bochner (2002) write that autoethnography makes "the researcher's own experience a topic of investigation in its own right" (p. 733). As an autoethnographer, I studied the culture of the community I lived in, but through the lens of my self. It is a form of self-narrative that locates the self within the social context (Reed-Danahay 1997). Personalized accounts are drawn from one's own experiences to broaden knowledge of a way of life, discipline, or phenomenon. (Reed-Danahay 1997). Laurel Richardson writes "Ethnographic life is not separable from the self" (2000, p. 253). As we write, the way we understand ourselves informs what we write, and how we construct meaning (Richardson, 1997; 2000). Narrations about experiences create understandings of who we are in relationship to the world.

Methods and Sample

I studied myself, and the friends and enemies I lived and worked with. I used participant observation which include my own observations, journals and semi-structured interviews (Dewalt & Dewalt 2002).

Data Collection

Observation. As a PCV, observations recorded in the form of retrospective field notes (Thorp 2006; Jackson 1990) first helped me become familiar with the social and ecological landscape. As a PCV, I was in a constant state of inquiry. I kept detailed journals about my work and life.

They later became a way to monitor and reflect on our challenges and areas of strength. I used activities[20] for my VSA using the PACA tools manual Peace Corps gave to us and recorded the observations and results in my journals. These were used to inform myself as the outsider what the villagers' perceived needs were. The original intention of these activities was not for the purposes of research, but to become better acquainted with my village in order to do work. My field notes were first a tool I used as a volunteer to do better work they later became data.

Personal Journal. My personal journals were a place I could put my critical reflections of myself and my actions. They also to helped me stay sane (a place I could put thoughts that didn't make sense or that would be offensive or inappropriate, thoughts that validated the departure of my normalness). My personal journal was a tool I used for the entire two years I served as a volunteer and with some exceptions consisted of daily reflections. Similar to my field notes, my journals were originally meant to make myself a better volunteer, and later became a form of first person research. My journals became data on the self-reflexive process I went through.

Semi-structured Interviews. Who better to give advice about development practice, than the people whom the projects are supposed to benefit? About a year and a half into my service I developed a set of questions to guide a semi-structured interview in the form of a conversation. With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer uses a tool to guide a conversation but is able to be flexible and probe in certain areas based on interactions that happen in the interview (Klandermans & Staggenborg 2002). I interviewed thirty-two of the villagers I lived with. These people consisted of: 1) villagers who participated in projects I was involved in as a PCV, 2)

[20] such as PRA and RRA

villagers who did not participate in projects, 3) villagers who initially participated in projects and eventually withdrew 4) village leaders and 5) village teachers. I found their insights to be enduring and invaluable. Interviewees chose the location of the interview. They were most commonly held at my home. Interviewees were read a description of the interview process that informed them what data and the research findings would be used for, and also that they had the option to discontinue their participation at any time. They gave oral consent. I asked them for their impressions of Peace Corps, and what things they understood to characterize a success and failure of PC programs and projects.

I used a guide that outlined seven basic questions. These questions[21] were to guide a discussion that would encourage villagers to think critically about local development as well as the four PCVs they had had experience with. Interviewees were not tape-recorded so as to create a comfortable and trusting environment. I took notes as we spoke and the notes were later transcribed.

I also conducted eighteen semi-structured interviews with PCVs in my cohort. These interviews were done during our Close of Service (COS) conference when we were all in one location. The opportunity to be interviewed was made available to all PCVs. Participants gave signed consent for their responses to be used in this research. Similar to interviews with villagers I used a guide

[21] Questions included: What is your impression of the Peace Corps? What are the goals of the Peace Corps? How many volunteers have you worked with? What is your impression of the programs they organize? What factors do you think lead to the success and failure of projects? What advice would you give to volunteers designing programs for a village? How can volunteers better work with the poor?

that outlined seven basic questions.[22] These questions were to guide a discussion that encouraged volunteers to think critically on their experience with Peace Corps. Similarly, I took notes as we spoke and the notes were later transcribed.

Analysis

The autoethnographer is inseparable from the context and culture they try to understand. They use their lived experiences reflexively as a way of looking in-depth at the interactions between self and others (Ellis 2004; Altheide and Johnson 1994). My vulnerability, personal feelings, and emotions (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) are all ways to illustrate my experience as well as construct and share knowledge. Bochner and Ellis describe that autoethnographies are narrative strategies that have the ability to "transport readers into experiences and make them feel as well as think" (18), much like parables in the Bible. Emotionality and sensitivity of the text should cause the reader to pause, reflect and feel (Lockford 2002). This brings to life the importance of personal narratives in scholarly writing; as they touch, hurt, heal and are informational about a phenomenon.

As a narrative researcher I have analyzed the stories provided in interviews as well as the stories lived, remembered and recorded in field notes. Analysis was an ongoing event that developed and crystallized over time. This involved the process of writing, reading and re-reading journals

[22] Questions included: Briefly describe your experience with village entry. Briefly describe your experience with the VSA (what challenges did you run into? How did it affect your village entry process?) What were your greatest challenges? What things surprised you the most? What characterized your biggest successes? What advice would you give to new PCVs about how to introduce new programs? Overall what impact do you think Peace Corps Tanzania has had on Tanzania?

and interview notes - then learning from emergent themes and connecting them to the literature (Erlandson et al. 1993). Throughout the reading and re-reading process I wrote memos in an additional journal and assigned colors to emerging themes.

According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), analysis involves the process of the researcher emotionally recalling events of the past. Emotional recall allowed me to look back on specific, memorable episodes and experiences. I then expressed them through my writing that included thoughts, events, dialogue, and the physical details of the particular event. This writing according to Laurel Richardson (2000) is a method of inquiry in and of itself. Through self-reflexive writing the self can be examined within a scholarly framework. We construct ourselves as we write. At the same time the way we understand ourselves informs what we write, as well as how we feel, interpret and construct meaning (Richardson, 1997; 2000).

Crystallization

To say that the findings of interpretive research are (or must be) valid is to argue that the findings are in fact (or must be) true and certain. So I would like to instead use the word crystallization (Richardson 2000; Ellingson 2009). Just as a crystal combines symmetry and substance, with an infinite variety of complex shapes and angles, an interpretive researcher combines field notes, observations, reflections and interviews to gain a deeper understanding. Crystals grow, change and alter overtime, as does knowledge. Crystallization provides us with a deepened and complex but thoroughly partial understanding of the topic.

I utilized the alternative criteria that several scholars advocate using for judging the merits of qualitative work. Here, we are looking for the 'goodness' of my entire package: my experience as a participatory development practitioner, as well as the way I have written about it and analyzed it. How will you know if what I'm saying is trustworthy - and useful? The criteria I chose to use in judging the merit and worth of my experience and this study are: catalytic validity (Lather 1986), understanding (Bochner 2000; Richardson 1999; Wolcott 1994), critical subjectivity (Denzin & Licoln 1994; Heron & Reason 1997; Carr & Kemmis 1986), and 'minor victories.'

Catalytic Validity. Patti Lather (1986) describes catalytic validity as "the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants" in knowing their reality in order to better transform it. We need to ask if the participants of the projects I was involved with were able to take charge? Did they learn something meaningful? And the story I am relaying to you - is it catalytic? Does it inspire new thoughts or ideas? Has it pulled you in some way?

Understanding. Several others suggest 'understanding' as a criterion (Bochner 2000; Richardson 1999). Harry Wolcott (1994) writes that we do not try to convince, we try to understand. Did the people I worked with in my village gain an understanding about their abilities and knowledge to do, create, change? With my text, have I demonstrated a grounded understanding and perspective? Are you able to get a sense of my lived experience? Can you feel and understand the partial truth of the narrative? Is it abundant in concrete detail?

Critical Subjectivity. Critical subjectivity is one of the criteria I have recently come to understand as possibly the most important when doing ethnographic work. We use this as opposed to naive subjectivity (Carr & Kemmis 1986). It involves self-reflexive attention "to the ground on which one is standing" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, 10). It means that we accept our subjective experience and understand that is how we make meaning but, if subjectivity is naively exercised, it is open to all sorts of distortions (Heron & Reason 1997) and possibilities for misdoings. Critical subjectivity is what might help a young practitioner fearful that she would unknowingly encompass imperial tendencies in her work to have a more sophisticated awareness of the process she is involved in. Quite simply, we ask, was I critical about myself and the work I was doing? Has action been coupled with reflection?

Minor Victories. Before we left Washington D.C. for Tanzania, one of the Peace Corps employees we spent time with told us to remember to, '*Celebrate your minor victories*.' We didn't realize the importance of this piece of advice until we were in the field. As young, idealistic volunteers, we had high expectations for ourselves and others. I think if we want to make the world a better place, we *need* to have high expectations. When we faced the heartbreaking challenges of corruption, jealousy and greed, minor victories marked small steps of progress that moved towards seemingly impossible goals. A minor victory is a gut feeling that happens instantaneously when the practitioner senses accomplishment, when things go right. These are occurrences that proved that learning and cultural exchanges happened. As I read and reread my journals, I found that I had written over and over again the words 'minor victory.' This has us asking, were small steps of progress made towards seemingly impossible goals? This

is in the work we did in my village, as well as the work I did with my narrative. There are worlds of unconstructed knowledge: have I made useful connections or contributions?

This narrative is the story of my life as a graduate student and PCV in Tanzania. Through the frustration, heartbreak and perseverance I was pushed to think critically about and reflect on the intersection of the issues of participation, power and positionality in development practice.

Life, Work, and Play: A Case Study

Anything's possible in Human Nature ...Love. Madness. Hope. Infinite joy.
-Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things

False love, false humility, and feeble faith in others cannot create trust.
-Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Work at the School

Journal Entry, January 28th, 2009
IST has come and gone. I went against the head teacher's requests and took Paulo and am so glad I did. The head teacher told me the regular villagers weren't smart enough - but Paulo learned marvelously!

After much deliberation and support from the other PCVs and some of my villagers, I decided to take Paulo to IST. Another PCV, my friend Laura was much more assertive than I was. *"JUST TAKE PAULO,"* she demanded one day. So I did. This was the best decision I made in my entire two years of service and I thank my lucky stars for the support I had. I am certain that if I had taken the head teacher, my entire service would have played out differently.

At IST Paulo and I wore cleaner clothes than we normally did, ate the five meals a day Peace Corps trainings were notorious for, and learned about how to start projects and work with community groups. We also had technical training where we learned how to create permaculture and bio-intensive gardens, how to teach life skills, and how to work with Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) and People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs). When we arrived back to the village, the rainy season was already well under way and we wanted to get the garden

started at the primary school. I fractured a bone in my foot during IST, so activities I could do in the garden were limited. It didn't matter though; Paulo was so excited about bio-intensive gardening that he could hardly talk about anything else. In fact, early on in my service he developed a habit of visiting me regularly every evening once he returned from his farms, gardens and tree nurseries. He'd come inside to sit for a few minutes. The lit candle I usually had on the table illuminated the space between us just enough to remind me that he never stopped smiling. He would spend a few moments checking in on Edna and then our conversations would manifest themselves in more of a monologue about his obsession and fascination with the magic of these new gardening techniques.

A few days after returning home I was sitting immobile in my house when I heard a *hodi*[23] at my door. It was a woman named Mama Anna, the mother of one of the children in my gaggle. In Tanzania it was common for people to visit neighbors when they were sick or injured. At this point in my service - roughly three and a half months in, I hadn't managed to lure many people to my house unless it was for a meeting. Mama Anna was in the wine group, so I was familiar with her though we hadn't really talked. I was excited to finally have a guest at my house who wasn't just there for the crayons, American magazines and bubbles. She seemed nice and had a little attitude. I noticed in the wine group how she wasn't afraid to say what was on her mind. She came to give me a *pole.*[24] We sat in an awkward silence for a few moments and I commented on how pretty their dresses were. When they took off I thought it was weird that they

[23] In Tanzania where there are no doorbells, visitors say 'hodi' upon arrival at neighbors' homes to indicate they have arrived and would like to be welcomed into the home or courtyard.
[24] A word used to express 'my sympathies'

went through the corn, instead of taking the path. I remember thinking at one point early in my service that I hoped she and I would become friends.

Within the next week I hobbled over to the school to ask the head teacher if we could bring the student garden back to life. He very charismatically agreed and said that I could start whenever I was ready.

We started with compost. The head teacher sent the six graders[25] students to meet me in the garden. Whenever I tried to do garden activities the students were usually just handed over to me at their twenty-minute tea break. Their break was the only chance they had all day to run to the river and get a drink of water. Instead, they had to work in the garden. Some classes were easier to work with than others. The six graders worked quickly and competently. While we piled and mixed they demanded *tufundishe!* - teach us something! We went on a lion hunt using lyrics to the popular call and repeat a bear hunt camp song that I had translated into Kiswahili. I also continued to teach them the English slang I had started teaching them a few weeks earlier: '*What's up?' 'Nothing. How's it hanging?'* We put a stick in the middle of our compost pile to help us monitor its well-being. If it was warm, hot or steamy it meant it was doing its job. The next morning before school started I pulled them out of the classroom to check it.

> *Journal Entry, January 23, 2009*
> *Last week was an amazing week for one reason - t**he smiles on the faces of the sixth graders when we pulled our stick out of the compost pile**. It was hot - the way it was supposed to be. Nature did its job and **we felt good**! Minor victory!*

[25] In primary school in Tanzania the grade levels are referred to as standards, in this narrative I use 'grade.'

The other classes were more than twice the size and much more difficult to work with. As Paulo and I worked, the teachers sat apathetically in the office. I was confused why none of the teachers were helping us; I had good relationships with them and even visited their houses regularly. Twenty minutes wasn't long enough to do things. By the end of the week we had completed one compost pile and started several others that would never be finished. I could tell that the sixth graders enjoyed learning outside of the classroom and with their hands.

> *Journal Entry, March 11, 2009-*
> *I went to Darasa la sita[26] today to say I wanted two boys and two girls to help me flip the compost. They said* ***no, they all wanted to go****. I took them all out of the classroom with hoes in hand. I didn't ask the teachers today - they weren't teaching anyways. The students started clearing land right away so we could flip the pile. I suggested using hoes,* ***but they wanted to use their hands****. We flipped it and it looked good.*

In February it was finally time to start planting. We started onion, green pepper, Chinese cabbage and Swiss chard seedlings and double dug a few garden beds for corn and carrots. The sixth graders, Paulo and I spent four hours under the hot sun. During the rainy season, the weather is nice when there is cloud cover, but when the sun is out people bake. The boys had sweat dripping off their chins. I felt bad that they would all have to go home and wash their uniforms that night, which meant probably wearing them to school wet the next day.

[26] the sixth grade

Paulo was a great help. Help isn't the right word, he did most of the work and I tried not to mess anything up. He is a great teacher. I could tell the students enjoyed being taught by him, that they respected him, but were not afraid of him.

Literature I had read about development and anthropological research told me that finding key stakeholders was one of the most important things one could do in the field (Axinn & Axinn 1997; Dewalt & Dewalt 2002). It's truly a challenge to identify these people. I was always wondering if people were simply telling me things because of the benefits they anticipated to derive from me. I remembered a couple in my department who had both done research in the same village in Kenya. He studied trees and she studied water. In the morning when he did his interviews, the interviewees said their main concern was trees. In the afternoon with her, it was water. I was lucky to have chosen a counterpart who was pure at heart. Near the end of my service a friend said in her interview that:

> *Something that led to your success was that you chose a good counterpart who was a regular villager and could relate well to the villagers. I know that he will continue to teach whoever will want to learn after you leave.*

After we were done in the garden, the students explained to me that they would like to see the fruits of their labor when harvest time came. I asked what they thought usually happened to the veggies in the garden, *"Walimu wanachukua tu,"* they replied - the teachers just take them.

When I went to ask the teachers if the students who did the garden work would be able to take some of the vegetables home at harvest time, they just laughed and explained that they didn't know themselves where the vegetables usually went. Four months later a different class was

ordered to the garden to dig up our carrots. Each teacher got to take home a healthy bundle that evening.

I wanted to continue working with the students but wasn't getting the time I needed at the school. I also found little value in having the students spend their day in the garden if it was only for the benefit of the teachers. I tried to start an art club with some of the students, but my schedule was irregular because of the community groups I was involved with and it was difficult to schedule. By 4 p.m. the students were usually quite hungry - most of them wouldn't have eaten even one meal - plus they wanted to beat the rain home.

I asked the sixth graders, the students who were quickly becoming my new best friends, what they thought of a *mboji mashindano,* a compost competition. I explained that since making compost was a lot of work they could form groups with other classmates. The students in the groups could help each other to make compost at each of the group members' houses. When they were done they would take me to their houses to show me. I would take a picture and bake the group a cake. Change is difficult for [hu]mankind, but cake was a good incentive for the students to try something new. I thought this would be helpful for me because it would help me get out to some of the houses on the countryside that I had not yet discovered and I would be able to meet their parents. The students were excited and started forming groups immediately. They gave their groups names like: Peace Corps, Edna, Obama, USA, *Maua*[27] and Supa Stas.[28]

[27] Flower
[28] Super Stars!

Barefoot and Pregnant

What is obvious is that I am white, female, American and young. I am also single, a student, a daughter and a painter. I grew up building forts in the woods, playing accountant with my sister, and pretending to hunt platypus with my best friend. I spent my summers road tripping through the United States with my family when I was in 5th grade my family had to put our dog to sleep on Christmas eve, my appendix ruptured in college and the doctors ignored it for a week because they thought it was food poisoning. All of these things contribute to who I am and why I react to and interpret things the way I do. I feel it's also important to expand on an additional experience so that you can see how it tied me to another character in the story we were living.

We continued to make wine. We had problems getting all 42 members to show up at the right time or at all, but some version of the group continued to participate every time we planned a meeting. The actual process of making wine was fairly easy and most of the supplies we needed were available right in our village. We usually made it at my house, leaving my floors sticky and my main room smelling like yeast. The group members started strolling in one to two hours after the scheduled time and grated ginger, mangos or tomatoes depending on what kind of wine we wanted to make. It was mixing, chatting and waiting. The real work was in finding venues to sell our product. We bought our bottling supplies from an organization in the region's capital that sought to eradicate poverty through income generation.[29] We wanted to sell at supermarkets in bigger towns because that's where we would be able to get the highest profit. Selling in town would require certain approvals and labels though, which meant we first had to appeal to the District Medical Officer (DMO).

[29] SIDO (Small Industries Development Organization). For more information see http://www.sido.go.tz/Web/Index.aspx

Mama Bahati, Mama Anna and I were the ones chosen to make several trips to town for our meetings with the DMO. These trips ended up being frustrating and unproductive as we were of little importance in his schedule and he always found something more important to do on the days we scheduled appointments with him.

It's hard to say our time was fruitless though. One of these trips was where I found out Mama Anna's life and mine were intricately intertwined. While we were sitting on a bench outside the DMO's office Mama Bahati got up to walk around for a bit. Mama Anna and I started talking.

Even though I had been out in the community, greeting, eating and building tombs with my neighbors, this day with Mama Anna was the first day I felt a strong connection to someone. To de-romanticize the beauty of my new friendship I could say this was what participatory researchers and ethnographers call building rapport and gaining trust. Mama Anna and I opened up to each other. *Minor victory.* I had read that self-disclosure would enhance my ability to participate and gain trust (Cooke 2004; McKay 2002).

We began discussing the topics Peace Corps originally put in our house-to-house survey, the questions I felt were inappropriate for myself, as an outsider to bring up: adultery, rape, domestic abuse. She showed me scars she had received from her husband. This put my life into perspective; I had told her how much I missed my boyfriend in Nepal. I felt honored and started to understand how important and enriching Peace Corps' second and third goals are.

This particular day, we waited six hours for the DMO and had nothing to show for it. We decided go home but to make a side trip along the way. We were near the village Mama Anna grew up in and decided to visit. While she had three children, only the daughter of her current husband lived with us in *Chungumaziwa*. Her son lived with her father in a village farther north and her first born, Anna, lived in the village Mama Anna grew up in. Something special happened during this visit that reminded me of Mr. Carlson and his session on anthropology at the Zoo School. It inspired an email I later wrote him:

> *Hi Mr. Carlson,*
> *I'm writing this on my laptop at a guest house. I'm not sure when I'll be able to get it sent - maybe in a few days or weeks.*
>
> *I remember senior year at SES, gold house, afternoon - your lesson "ANTHROPOLOGY 101." At some point in this lesson, most likely when you were trying to explain what basic cultural differences are you pointed to me and said something pretty simple: "If Brianna were in Africa right now, she would probably be barefoot and pregnant." You know what it's like- you used me in an example - and then it was about being pregnant… so it threw me off guard and made me blush a little. I guess it was just a little memory that accompanied me to Tanzania.*
>
> *I have this friend in my village. Her name is Jeni, but I know her as Mama Anna. She is about my age and I have come to adore her. She has three children, all from different fathers and only her youngest lives in Chungumaziwa with us. She is in our wine cooperative and a few months ago we had to go to Kidolechangu to deliver some wine. When we were done we happened to only be a 50-cent daladala[30] ride away from the village she grew up in. We decided to make a little detour on the way back so I could meet her daughter Anna. When we got to there we couldn't find her, she was somewhere between school, her grandparents' house and her tutor's house. As I followed her around this place that she knew like the back of her hand I started to compare our lives. She is my age and has three children. Earlier that day while we were in town*

[30] A small van, public transportation

> *she showed me the scars on her leg, chin and the back of her head she had received from her husband, the father of her youngest that she 'lives with' in Chungumaziwa ('lives with' because he has two other wives and many lovers - this is also the reason she explained to me that she must frequently test herself for HIV). She farms a two-acre farm of corn and beans for her and her daughter, helps her husband run one of the two shops in our village, is in every group I have started in my village and takes every opportunity she can to do "biashara" (like small business - buying fish or fabrics in town and then selling them in the village). She is an amazingly strong woman, and while I have turned out decently, my life has been as easy as it gets - I have had very few obstacles to overcome (ok- so none). While I was walking circles in the jungle behind my forehead comparing our lives I imagined myself walking down these paths at 16 or 17 – pregnant - then I remembered you. I don't really know how to explain but I imagine you might be able to understand the kind of connection I began to feel at this moment to Mama Anna. Seven years ago when you were introducing us to the wonderful discipline of anthropology and embarrassing me slightly while doing it she was here - pregnant, living her own life.*

I wanted to help Mama Anna, I wished her life wasn't so difficult and complicated. There was no logical reason that she was born into her life of hardship and I was born into my life of privilege. I felt so helpless.

Batik

The wine group had been open to everyone who wanted to participate and I wasn't dissatisfied but I wanted to see something else with batik. I came to Africa to work with the poor and I wanted to start doing it. Many of the people in the wine group appeared to be better off. When we had our wine meetings, teachers' wives would stroll in with their brightly colored *vitenge*[31] wrapped around their waist and head. The men who participated were the ones who also engaged in income generation activities at the household level such as charcoal or brick making.

[31] African fabric

Everyone's skin was freshly polished from the oils they rubbed on their skin after they bathe. It smelled like *Johnson & Johnson* lotion. I was worried that by opening the group to everyone, we were actually excluding a large population of the village. I sensed that there were many who would like to be part of an income generation project, but didn't feel comfortable showing up to meetings, or lived so far out on their farms that they didn't even hear about them. It turned out that the books were right, finding the poor and working with them is really difficult. I wanted to try something different with batik.

Mama Bahati and I set out to the village's Health Officer's house to discuss this. I had never been in that area before. Her compound faced first her family's expansive farm that hosted an army of thriving teenage sunflowers, followed by the view of the harsh-looking ridge that boldly supported the land on the other side of our distant Ruaha River. The three of us sat around the fire in her courtyard and made a list of women whom we knew to be poor. We discussed possibilities for the project well into the dark hours of the early night. On our walk back to the school we used the dim light of our cell phones to light the path. The darkness, the bush and the expansive star-filled sky made it feel like I was in what I thought everyone might expect the real Afrika to be like. Our cell phones added a hint of contradiction, the 21st Century and uneven development.

The big dipper was upside down. Right side up.

As Mama Bahati and I passed the club, we paused to eavesdrop on the conversation unfolding inside. Someone had run away from the village because they were caught sleeping with someone else's wife. In the village, there are no secrets.

I had mixed feelings about just picking out the poor and working with them. The best example I knew of dealing with these issues is an NGO in India called MYRADA. They realized that before they could start with resource conservation, they would need to address the economic concerns of their project participants. Their approach to development deals with acknowledging the heterogeneity of a community up front and working from there. They began by working with credit in smaller homogenous groups (Fernandez 1999). This project has operated as a source of empowerment and given confidence to people traditionally left out. I was worried it would increase negative stereotypes or increase the sense of shame that people feel due to their socio-economic or health status. The majority of my interviews with community members, including the poor, told me that if I wanted to work with the poor I needed to work with them independent of the better off populations. One woman who hadn't been involved in any of the projects I worked with told me,

> *People like me have shame because we are so poor. Maybe our clothes our dirty. I wouldn't have felt free to come to a meeting with everyone else.*

This group we created included many PLWHAs, women elders who fostered OVCs and a few others who were known to lack the ability to provide themselves with some of life's most basic necessities (buckets to get water, soap, salt, sugar, etc.). The group mostly consisted of those in the two sub-villages near the school because it was the area we were familiar with. We did

however include a few women from *Chungumaziwa B.* Mama Bahati and the Health Officer included themselves in the group (a definite perk of being friends with the village's token *mzungu*[32]). We also included a few others who were not necessarily worse off. The art of batik requires a basic knowledge of multiplication and division that many of the older members did not have. It also requires a lot of water and the labor to haul it that would have been difficult for those who were ill. Moreover, part of our mission with this group was to reduce stigma and encourage acceptance. We thought mixing these different groups of people together in one project would promote dialogue and inclusion.

Our initial meeting was held at the library, *a building that was never used*. When I asked the teachers why I never saw the library open, they told me that if the students were allowed in, they would steal books. The volunteer who built it had no way of knowing whether or not the school would actually organize itself to use it. It was nice that we could use it for meetings though. I got nervous having the wine meetings at my house. It made me feel like I was a bigger part of the project than I should have been. I thought they should have and use their own space. On the other hand, my house was a neutral space that worked for the time being. Everything has its trade-offs.

When we began the meeting the women's eyes were filled with curiosity. I told them we had received funds for a batik project and that if they would like to participate we could start training the next week. They all were interested, and in what I was coming to understand as true Tanzanian fashion, we chose group leaders. Mama Bahati would be the group's chairman,

[32] white person

Mama Anna would be the secretary and the Health Officer would be the treasurer. We began training, three days a week for three weeks. One day was for waxing, one for dying and one for washing. We were 26 people. We did this at Mama Bahati and the head teacher's house because he had a courtyard big enough to fit us all. The teaching process was easy because Mama Bahati had already learned. The hard part was convincing the women to just *try*, that they *could* do it.

We started work and continued through the morning hours before the sun got hot. By the third week, we were still in our training period, but producing fabric that was sellable.

UWEZO

Around mid-summer I received a letter from a women's group in a neighboring village. They wanted to work with me and wanted to know if I would be able to attend their next meeting. Their village was our ward center and located on the main road, two things that indicated that the reality these villagers face is quite different from what my villagers live with. I followed the directions they gave me and arrived at a bar, where the meeting was held. I entered the big, empty space. There was a green shelf holding a few Pepsis, a few Cokes and two of Tanzania's favorite beers, Safari and Kilimanjaro. The 14 women had already arrived and sat on worn out couches that lined the walls. Immediately I noted their thicker bodies and concluded they were much wealthier than '*Chungumaziwans.'*

I was a little shocked by my observation, noting that in America I would have never jumped to such a conclusion so quickly.

They welcomed me and introduced themselves. They created the group to better their lives, and had done so with hopes that I would help them get started. They called their group *UWEZO,* which means ability or talent. They expressed that they would like to learn to make wine, but could sell it locally. They also wanted to learn how to make cake and bread. We planned the next three Mondays out: wine, cake, then bread.

For the rest of the summer I continued to attend their meetings on Mondays when I could. They progressed wonderfully even when I didn't show. The *Bwana Mifugo*[33] explained to me that in his experience with PCVs he found that volunteers who spread themselves out amongst a few different places tend to motivate all the people they work with,

> *Journal Entry, June 14th, 2009*
> *He suggested I go to other villages like I have already started doing - then it becomes sort of like a competition between the villages. They like competition. And the competition will still be here after I leave.*

Compost Competition

Towards the end of June, the Peace Corps was going to put on a community theater workshop for volunteers and their counterparts. For most volunteers it made sense to bring a different person than the one they took to IST so as to let a different person experience the training and learn at the workshop.

I was excited about this workshop because I had recently learned about the young men and women's choir in *Chungumaziwa B.* This group had existed for about four years. It was shocking

[33] Ward animal extension officer

to me that no one said anything to me about them during my VSA. I started to think that maybe I hadn't actually learned much about the realities of my village during my VSA. It confused me during my interviews with villagers when I asked how they thought volunteers should get ideas for their projects that many replied,

You should visit the groups that already exist

I asked the village leaders about existing community groups during my VSA and they said there were none. During my house-to-house survey I asked the same question. People who were in some of the existing groups told me there were none. What did they think I meant? Or, had my Kiswahili just not been good enough? Maybe they didn't trust me?

The choir sang to educate villagers about health. I thought community theater would be a great way for them to continue their outreach. Theater is a form of folk media used in rural development (Compton 1980). Here, the product and process of the education is rooted in the local culture. I thought Mama Anna would be the perfect candidate for a counterpart this time around. She was young, strong and again, a regular villager.

She said she'd love to come and brought up the idea that maybe we could bring some of the batik fabric to sell to other volunteers. Many of the volunteers who start income generation projects sell to the PCV community. It's nice because we can ask for the *wazungu* price and volunteers are happy to support each other's projects. It would not be logical to expect this to be sustainable,

but it doesn't hurt while groups are getting off the ground. As our batik group progressed we would have to find a more local market.

In the days I was preparing to leave I was at my house trying to repair the ever expanding-hole in the ground of my sitting room when I heard the school bell ring and then a few minutes later a sweet little *hodi* at my door. It was a few of the orphan girls I had tried to start an art club with earlier in the year. They were in the sixth grade. Their group had finished making compost at all their houses and they wanted to know if I could come look. *Minor victory,* I thought.

> *Journal Entry, June 9th, 2009*
> *Yesterday I finally got to go see some of the girls in darasa la sita houses and their compost piles. When we arrived at Happy's house I didn't see the compost they were trying to show me and instead saw a pile of trash and asked why they hadn't done it the way we did it in school. Then we realized I was looking at the pile of trash and not the compost. We all giggled. They did good - it had shrunk a lot because it had been made a while ago. They hadn't flipped it yet, so we flipped it together. Happy is an orphan who lives with her aunt. Her aunt was involved as well and asking lots of questions. We continued on to one of the furthest homes in Chungumaziwa B - the walk was long and beautiful. This is one of the good things about being a Peace Corps Volunteer - it's rare that a development worker would have time to make house visits - but that's essentially what I'm here for. The second house's compost pile looked really good. It was a month old and she had remembered to flip it. The third house was past the road to Njiapanda but closer towards Mbalimaziwa. It was only two weeks old. The stick was cold but it was looking good. The mother of the household came out to look with us and was asking questions. 39 households was the goal and now we have three down. I'm going to Ima's this afternoon to see his.*

In grassroots development there are a variety of ways practitioners can monitor projects. These range from surveys to house-to-house visits (Axinn & Axinn 1997). House-to-house visits are

considered to be the most effective, but incredibly time consuming (Kidder 2003; Axinn & Axinn 1997). I was lucky that as a Peace Corps Volunteer I was without an air-conditioned Land Rover and Blackberry that indicated my day was booked. I had time.

As the community theater workshop drew near, the head teacher made a few more trips than usual to my house. He kept telling me I should talk to Mama Anna's husband about the workshop. He said that Mama Anna probably hadn't told him and he would probably be so upset that she was leaving the village for an entire week that he would beat her. He said if she couldn't go, he'd help me find someone else. I asked Mama Anna if she had told her husband, yes she had. Was he okay with it? Sure.

The night before we got on the bus to head towards Morogoro I went to the head teacher's house to say bye to Mama Bahati. As we were chatting in her dimly lit sitting room the teacher came in. He informed me that the village leaders were upset that I hadn't consulted them before choosing Mama Anna as my counterpart. I realized I probably hadn't tuned the village leadership into my plans as much as I should have. Peace Corps advised us to keep the village leadership involved in all our important decisions and the ongoings of our lives and work. It had just been difficult being so far from the office and then there was never anyone there when I did make the journey. It surprised me though that they were upset. They had done little to try to work with me or orient me to a way of doing things that suited them. The village leaders have monthly meetings to discuss the business of *Chungumaziwa.* They invited me in the first few months I was there, but hadn't again.

Either way, I should apologize.

I remembered our *Culture Matters*[34] book from training. It outlined high and low distance power relationships and how our work may be complicated by them. Within the Peace Corps framework I was supposed to be working with these people, not against them. I told the head teacher that before I left for Morogoro I would find them and let them know that I'll make more of an effort to work with them in the future. *"Usijali, nimeshawaambia"* he said, "Don't worry, I've already told them. Mama Bahati and I continued chatting. *"Mama Anna atapata hela nyngi kama Paulo?"* she asked, will Mama Anna get a lot of money like Paulo? I don't remember what I said to dance around that question. It was dark, so she told two of her kids to grab a lantern and walk me back to my house.

Community Theater Workshop

The workshop was really fun. The free-spirited-ness of it all was what I originally expected Africa to be like. With community theater, you use drama to address a specific issue in the community. You are first to identify possible root causes and then make the drama interactive to activate minds and encourage critical reflection.

"If we were able to identify the root causes of our problems, we wouldn't be here," I thought.

[34] Can be obtained at http://www.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/T0087_culturematters.pdf

Mama Anna was a star in our practice dramas. Again, another great counterpart decision. On our last morning in Morogoro, Mama Anna and I took our *chai*[35] alone and had a talk that made me feel like I was a part of the amazing history she was creating for herself. She was ready to leave. She had her money saved up and planned on leaving in February. *Minor victory.* She told me there was a private secondary school in our region's capital that catered to older students. She told me not to tell anyone, not even Mama Bahati.

I told her I felt like Mama Bahati wasn't thrilled that the two of us were friends. Mama Anna laughed and began to explain some things that I had already begun to suspect. The head teacher and his family don't like when PCVs make friends with the villagers. They actually tell villagers that they are not allowed to go to the PCVs house and that PCVs are not allowed to eat food cooked by anyone but his wife because they will get sick. People didn't feel they were allowed to ask me questions, or to become friends with me. While I had been trying to be such a mindful volunteer, I forgot about the myth of the community, that individuals have their own agendas (Guijt 1998; Agrawal & Gibson 1999).

This is why Mama Anna had been running through the corn to get to my house, rather than just taking the path, I thought. It was also probably the reason several people in their interviews said that volunteers should associate less with the head teacher and avoid being taken in by just one person or household. They said things like, "If you arrive at the school, try to be more with the villagers and not just with the teachers in order to get ideas from everyone."

[35] chai means tea, but also refers to the first meal of the day.

> *They should not be taken in by one person/group/family. It is very bad. They should have two weeks to learn about the environment, meet with the head master and chairmen to know the plans and programs of the village. Then, one by one, they should be by themselves and get space to chat with the villagers (go to their farms and homes)*

Returning

My village felt more like home every time I returned from a trip. I always had to run to Mama Flavy's house to pick up Edna and get the latest news. By this time, even though Mama Flavy was a teacher, I felt comfortable being friends with her. When her husband returned to college, it was just her, her son Flavy, Edna and me. We kept each other company and shared stories, food and lazy Sundays. I had to remind myself that as long as I was aware of my positionality it was certainly okay for me to spend time with a person I trusted and enjoyed laughing with.

This time however, when Mama Anna and I returned from our workshop the village felt different though. It was similar to a feeling I remembered having in college. I lost a few friendships of some former roommates and couldn't really handle being around them or their friends anymore. There were no actions or words, but something felt wrong. In their presence the air was so thick that it impeded my chest's ability to fully expand to take a full satisfying breath. Things my yoga teacher had taught me about our energy fields made me understand these feelings to be more rational than many would think. Our actual bodies are much more expansive than our physical bodies. In this sense, our bodies overlap. This is why we can sometimes feel what others are feeling.

There was tension in the village, and it was heavy. Our first morning back I woke up early and headed to Mama Bahati's house for batik. I always jumped right back into work immediately after returning from trips. The volunteers I interviewed had felt the same as I did: we always had a certain amount of guilt when we traveled outside the village, even when it was work related. It was a clear indicator of our privilege. While my village was located only a few kilometers from a road that would get us to a main town in either direction within an hour, very few of my villagers had ever taken the trip. I also wanted my villagers to know that I liked them - and I thought leaving appeared as if I were running away from them and their lifestyle.

I met up with some of the other batik Mamas outside the house. It was a little cold and felt fresh outside. Everyone looked tired. We usually made batiks before anyone had *chai.* Mama Bahati hadn't awoken yet. I went to Mama Anna's house to see if she was coming. Mama Anna didn't live far. Her house was just outside the concentration of the teachers' fancy houses that were made of brick and had tin roofs and glass windows. Mama Anna lived in a house that had belonged to her grandmother before she passed away. It was a traditional mud hut, roomier than mine, but emptier. It had a thatched roof in need of repair. In her sitting room, she had three stones for cooking, a few wooden stools and a small wooden shelf her husband had made. One of the bedrooms was for sleeping and the other was for the chickens. I sat down on a stool and she began to boil our *chai*. The sun was up by this time and as it streamed through gaps in her ceiling it made ash that flew up from the fire sparkle. She said she had begun to hear rumors. Jealousy is an evil thing.

We drank our *chai* and headed back to our batik headquarters. As we approached we could hear words powerfully pouring out of Mama Bahati's mouth. She didn't acknowledge us as we entered the circle. To avoid conflict we simply agreed that we had all misunderstood exactly what had been planned and decided on another date to continue.

Later that day, I noticed all the teachers were wearing outfits that were sewn out of the same material. I went to talk to Mama Flavy.

> *Journal Entry, July 9th, 2009*
> *I asked her why all the teachers were wearing the same thing. She said, "Oh, a car picked them all up this morning and brought them to see the freedom torch. Other Peace Corps Volunteers were there. Everyone knows I wasn't invited because the head teacher is upset about me not choosing him or his wife to be my counterpart for either of the workshops." She even went on to say that when I was ready to do the demo garden at the school the head teacher sat with the other teachers and said he didn't want me to do work there because Paulo was my counterpart. When I got back from the trip the garden was finished and the head teacher said it was double dug. When I asked the students they informed me that he was a liar. This certainly presents me with an obstacle in my work for the next year.*

Over the next week my friends continued to tell me truths about this man. Using words that danced around the issue they also began to tell me about his bad habits and the inappropriate relationships he had with young girls from the primary school.

I began to ask why no one had told me these things. Villagers replied that they were afraid. They were used to the volunteer working with the head teacher and even in his absence didn't feel they could overstep his authority. I was beginning to think maybe this was a reason I got such vague

answers during my VSA. I went to the village office to apologize for not informing them about the workshop and my choice to take Mama Anna as my counterpart. They simply nodded and said they had heard that we went. They thought Mama Anna would make a great counterpart. They had not been upset.

Reflection is important in development practice.

Practitioners face dilemmas everyday that cannot be fully addressed through technical and rational approaches alone (Schon 1991). A more holistic process of learning can be facilitated through reflection (Schon 1991). When practitioners reflect, they are led to new understandings, appreciations and perspectives (Boud et al. 1985). To understand the power of reflection, it helps to consider its hierarchy on a ladder. At the bottom we have awareness of thoughts and feelings. As we move towards the middle we reach criticism and the challenging of underlying assumptions. At the top of the ladder we have a changed perception and/or action (Mezirow 1981 & Schon 1991).

It worried me to think where I would have been without the critical reflection I had been doing. I also wondered with its cyclical and enduring nature, what I hadn't yet discovered. Mama Anna told me *it's really difficult to truly know a person's heart, sometimes it takes years to build trust, and even then your friends might steal from you.* Later, frustrated and confused, I wrote in my journal,

> *Journal Entry, July 19th, 2009*
> *I have been in my village for a year and it took me that long to figure out a huge problem - a huge barrier to change. I also don't*

know what more I would discover about my village if I were to stay longer in my village - 2,3 10 years - what would I find?

I was in a sort of limbo, tired, shocked and truly heartbroken over the news of the head teacher. I felt sad for Tanzania and angry towards men. I tried to keep tabs on things I already had going on, began doing community theater with the young men and women's choir, hung out with the sixth graders, ate ugali and began to think about chickens and eggs. My plate was starting to overflow.

I visited a few more compost piles. At least the students' company gave me endless pleasure. They continued to be my little saving graces. On days I didn't have anything planned I would take up my markers and crayons and spend the day with the students in the classroom. The teachers usually didn't teach, so I figured a few English lessons wouldn't hurt. We did other activities too: made origami boxes, tried out the human knot (it was difficult), sang (the lion hunt song became a daily activity) and most importantly: we colored. It was really interesting to me because in my village if you were to ask students to draw a picture they would draw one of four things: a house, a person, a flower or a car. This happened during my VSA period when I asked them to create books that demonstrate their lives. They drew cars. Ask them to draw something else and their response, without a doubt is, *siwezi,* I can't. We played games where I would tell them each to draw something: God, President Obama, Edna, me, the head teacher, a mountain. I would first battle their *I can'ts* and then draw what they assigned me. They enjoyed it.

I noticed that while it was the norm for families to have four or more children, they were not valued. In fact, during my interviews when I asked community members what their impressions

were of my work, only one of them mentioned that I worked with the students. The students eventually told me they are fearful in school and in life of doing things wrong. They are scared of being beaten. I think it took them a long time to realize that with me, they were free.

Mama Anna and I started doing community theater work with the young men and women's group. Just as I felt insignificant working with Paulo, I felt useless working with Mama Anna. She too was a natural leader and intended to continue with the group in my absence. *Minor victory.*

Income Generation Projects

> *And the air was full of Thoughts and Things to Say. But at times like these, only the Small Things are ever said. The Big Things lurk unsaid inside.*
> *-The God of Small Things*

The wine and batik groups hit a few rough patches. The lack of support from the DMO was disheartening. The group was large and meetings happened irregularly. News of meetings was spread by word of mouth which tended to be less dependable (Axinn & Axinn 1997). Usually we would make the wine, let it sit for three weeks, strain it, and let it sit for at least another three. Paulo was in the group and he had guided them through the creation of a constitution that created fines for tardiness and absence. But the rules were no good if they were not enforced.

The batik group had similar attendance problems. Moreover, some were upset that we had made many batiks but hadn't seen any profit. We continued to move forward even though it wasn't enjoyable. We lacked organization and group cohesiveness.

I spent three days a week with this group and we went through many transformations. Throughout these months (June, July and August) gossip and rumors were flying so freely that the group was pretty much paralyzed. People were jealous that Mama Anna came to the community theater workshop with me. I heard that someone was telling others at the club that Mama Anna was putting drugs in my food to get me to listen to no one but her. Some community members commented in their interviews that they'd like to be involved with the groups but were afraid of gossip:

> *The projects are good. I wanted to be in the groups but I couldn't because of their mouths and words. I hear what they say and it's not worth being in the group.*

A PCV I interviewed acknowledged that working with groups has the potential to reach more people, but that working with groups was so difficult that it wasn't worth it.

> *Tanzania isn't a place where activities with groups happen easily. I organize with the individual farmers who want to work with me.*

We kept trying to continue here and there, but we were ignoring the metaphorical elephants in the small courtyard we worked in. There were a few prominent figures in the group who seemed to make others feel insignificant. Many of the group members approached me throughout these months to suggest we move the location. They didn't feel like they had any power or ownership of the project. They'd say, "*Tupo chini ya mtu moja",* We're all below one person. All the group's supplies were kept in a room at one person's house that the group members were not allowed in. There was distrust. Some thought others were stealing supplies and some of our

funds that we had gained from initial sales. We continued to move forward even though it was wasn't enjoyable. Eventually we planned a meeting to discuss these issues.

> *Journal Entry, August 17th, 2009*
> *Had a very fruitful, tense, loud, uncomfortable and long batik meeting yesterday. We need to revamp things.*

Almost everyone showed. Rather than reviewing the budget an argument erupted. It ultimately ended in the election of new group leaders. Mama Bahati would no longer carry on as the leader and the Health Officer would take her place. People mentioned moving locations. Mama Bahati said that was fine but that she knew others wouldn't be able to handle carrying water from the river. Her house was located by the well. We decided to stay, at least for the time being.

I continued to visit *UWEZO* on the Mondays I was free. At one point I noticed they opened a bank account and was pretty impressed. *Minor victory.* I hadn't even known until a few weeks after the fact, but they always said they owed their success to me. They'd say that without me they wouldn't be anything. It was always puzzling to me when they said this. I just sat on the couch every week. They'd bring me a Pepsi, which always tasted good because it was made out of real cane sugar, instead of high fructose corn syrup. In a conversation with one group member, I asked her why their group worked so well, why they didn't fight, like the other groups? She replied,

Sisi tuna upendo. We have love.

At first I thought she simply said this because it was an easy standard response. Later on I began to think that maybe love really does have a role in development practice. Bell Hooks (2000) writes that "love acts to transform domination" (103). Paulo Freire (1984) writes about the importance of dialogue and therefore love in creating a better world,

> *If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity.*
>
> *Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause - the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love (90).*

As I reflected more on my time working in *Chungumaziwa* I understood this.

> *Journal Entry, August 8th, 2009*
> *I have become convinced that love is really the most important thing and only good change comes from love - hmmm so maybe we just live - and love and through living we continue to change things and improve things if we're healthy, happy and strong enough to do so.*

Not only did development seem impossible to me without love, if it were to work, in the absence of love I didn't understand the point of it. Freire helps us understand that love is more than something that is touchy-feely. Love is about survival. This connection was a *minor victory.* Other scholars have written about the importance of love too. It seems to be that the moral inquirer or practitioner must be embedded in a politics of love and caring, hope and forgiveness (Denzin et al. 2006; Hill 2000; Pelias 2004). Darder (2006) writes, "love is a political principle through which we struggle to create mutually life-enhancing opportunities for all (150).

WATER

Something to add to the problems our groups were having was our water situation. The development practice that Peace Corps supports focuses on capacity building and education rather than construction; however sometimes volunteers engage themselves in things like digging wells or building a library. In an interview with one woman, when I asked her what factors led to the success of a project her response was,

*Maji.*Water.

This was obvious in the two income generation projects I had been involved with. To boil off the wax on a batik and wash it required several buckets of water. Our wine group made water into wine. Gardens need to be watered. Our bodies are 75% water. Water is important.

The volunteer before me had secured funds for and facilitated the construction of two wells at the primary school. They were both beautiful, shiny and blue. One worked occasionally. It ran out of water often and other times it was just broken. The other one had never pushed one drop of water through its spout. We had a few *mabomba* throughout the village. These were pipes that brought water from the storage tank in the village on the main road. The man who controlled the valve that directed where water would go held a lot of power. I saw a little water dribble out of these spigots in my first few months and hadn't again since. We had to go to the creek to gather our sustenance. We had a river, but it was far. Our creek was too shallow to even submerge our buckets. I could manage on a 20-liter bucket a day. I would need more if I bathed Edna. Washing

clothes happened at the river so we didn't have to haul the water first to our houses. Tanzanians shower at least twice a day. Many households mop even their dirt floors once a day. Most households need four to seven 20-liter buckets a day. People don't boil their water because they require extra buckets to hold the clean water in, and more significantly more firewood. Without a clean source of water, we were getting sick and work was getting harder. The general morale of the village was pretty low.

The volunteer before me didn't have an easy time learning Kiswahili. It was therefore difficult for her to work with anyone other than the head teacher. When she saw that one of the village's main needs was water, most can see how it made perfect sense to her to plan to have a well dug at the school. This would allow the students to water the garden and also provide them clean drinking water while they were at school. After seeing the well's failure and talking to my villagers about it, I thought it made much more sense when this same interviewee suggested that well projects are more productive when strategically placed throughout the sub-villages. The villagers have more ownership and learn the skills required to repair wells. To have a well under the umbrella of an institution that is run by one prominent person may mean that it won't be fixed as quickly when it breaks. Serendipitously, a neighboring village I eventually worked with decided to dig wells in the sub-villages as my friend had suggested.

People grew angry when the head teacher removed the hand crank from the well that worked. His family hauled water at night so they didn't have to share. When I visited my friends at their houses and we sat around coals to stay warm and they raise their voices and even fists like

radicals. They would raise their fists like the radicals they *weren't*. In daylight, they returned to their submissive and robotic farm-life selves.

In interviews, people repeatedly told me projects and programs didn't work out because of *watu wabaya,* bad people. Every time I asked why they didn't say something about it, they replied they were scared. One interviewee suggested they start taking advantage of the region's radio station. Villagers were always calling their leaders out over the airwaves; in fact, the village executive officer in a neighboring village had been banished after a broadcast a few years prior.

> *Journal Entry, October 25th, 2009*
> *Julie brought me a bucket of bomba water from their house - I've never been so grateful for something in my life. Of course, if the head teacher's family liked me they'd be calling me every night to get the clean stuff - but I'm glad they don't. In a way, it's better for me to suffer with dirty river water like the rest. I had great appreciation for the green 20-liter bucket of clean water.*

Mid Service Conference (MSC)

MSC was held in Tanzania's largest city, Dar es Salam. Peace Corps gave each PCV a stipend and we were to arrange our own lodging. My friends and I found a beach to stay at that was just a five-minute ferry ride from downtown. As I understood it, the point of MSC was to reenergize PCVs, get tabs on their health, and have a few additional trainings.

One of my friends had some interesting insights on chicken projects. I went to a session she presented at because during my PNA both the women's and the men's groups expressed interest in learning how to better keep chickens.

Another one of my friends taught us how to teach girls to sew menstrual pads and make cycle beads. In many parts of rural Tanzania, girls are not taught about their bodies as they change. I can't imagine how frightening that would be. They are eventually told how to manage their menstrual cycle and this involves creating a sort of diaper out of bulky fabric scraps. Many PCVs plan girls' conferences. The volunteers in a district will work together to plan a few day event where a few girls from each volunteer's village will go to town and to participate in a variety of life skills sessions, sometimes self defense workshops, play, sing, and do yoga and art projects. These sounded great and the volunteers in my district were interested, but we lacked the organization to meet and plan and the motivation to write what would need to be a sizeable grant to be able to fund only a few girls to go to the workshop. My friend Ashleigh and I began to dream up smaller scale girls' nights that we could do in our villages. We were thinking of more intimate lock-ins right in our houses with ten girls at a time. This way would be fairly cheap and would have the possibility of reaching more girls. Also, I had been able to use a lot of my art supplies people from home had sent, but my art club hadn't happened and I hoped this would be another venue to encourage creativity and thinking outside of the box.

MSC was a nice break for us. Most volunteers at this point had long passed the honeymoon phase. I think we were all developing a love-hate relationship with this peaceful, enchanting and corrupt country. Most volunteers were between stressed out and furious about things that shouldn't be tolerated by [hu]mankind: domestic abuse, corporal punishment, rape in the school, polygamy, etc. We didn't want to respect cultural differences anymore. I mentioned wanting to report my head teacher to the District Commissioner. *"Don't do that,"* my friend Catherine

replied, *"Peace Corps didn't give us the full story - that volunteer in Benin was murdered for doing that."*

We liked staying at the beach. Our huts sat right on the water and we did things to reenergize, cleanse and free ourselves. Things that you would expect PCVs to do: we built fires, we skinny dipped under the full moon, we played guitar and communed over a few Safaris, Kilimanjaros and Serengettis. While I greatly missed my village friends, I felt tired and helpless and was dreading my return to the village this time around.

Revampage

> *What does it take to fly? It takes knowing we have our work cut out for us. Flying brings more challenges every day. But if you ask any of the pilots who work here, they'll say one of the first things they learned in flight school is that if you run before the wind, you can't take off. You've got to turn into it — face it. The thing you push against is the thing that lifts you up.*
> *-Delta Airlines commercial*

As usual I arrived home, dropped my bags off at my house and raced to see Edna. She usually stopped eating when I left and would get pretty thin. She loved Mama and Baba Flavy though. I felt lucky that I had friends who were willing to dog sit for me. Edna would stay in one of their vacant rooms that bordered their courtyard area. She would stay with their dog whom they named Obama. They would even make Edna a bed of sunflower cakes and plastic storage bags.

Even though their house was yelling distance away, the walk to and from their house takes at least an hour after I've been gone. Everyone wants me to sit with them in the shade. They remark

that I have become fatter in the week I was gone and want to know what I ate. They want to know how Laura, Ashleigh and Catherine are.

Mama Anna told me that the batik group had come to a consensus that the entire operation needed to be moved. They wanted me to tell Mama Bahati though. I had come to know my villagers as quiet angry people. Highly dissatisfied but powerless and fearful. The following journal entries best explain the transformation the group went through over the next few months:

> *Journal Entry, September 14th, 2009*
> *Mama Anna said the group is trying to figure out what to do about Batik. The consensus seems to simply tell Mama Bahati we are moving. I went there - told her and she just looked at me and said "hamn shida.*[36]*" So we moved yesterday. It went pretty well. I kept having to remind her about some things that were inside her house - for the most part alikaa kimya.*[37] *It's too bad I lost a friend, I feel like I should never go to her house again unless it's work related. I'm really glad we moved though. Wanakikundi wanafikiri wataweza kuwa huru bila ya kujisikia kama wapo chini ya mtu. (The group members feel free without feeling like they are working under one person).*
>
> *September 17th*
> *Today I woke up early to wash. A lot of people were gone so it was just me, Mama Nimroid, Cristina and Bibi Kiwe. I'd say we are doing just fine on our own. They actually had to teach me how to do it - I had put a kitenge in the water incorrectly.*
>
> *So Batik is going really well. I think we have a ways to go as far as ordering and getting the materials goes...but the fact that everyone likes the products we make and that they have the actual making of it down, is hopeful.*
>
> *Sept 24th, 2009*

[36] No problem

[37] She sat quietly

> *Today at 8:30, I showed up at Mama Diana's house - kumbe walishamaliza kazi![38] All they had left to do was osha vyombo.[39] All but two had showed up and they had already toa-ed tarifa.[40] They had arranged among themselves to arrive at 6 and get down to business - not that they had thought of telling me, but I don't care, I'm THRILLED.*

I saw formerly quiet group members begin to bring their ideas forward. *Walijisikia huru,* They felt free. They began to do work creatively and independently. The mood had lifted and we did our work more cheerfully. *Minor victories.*

The group had been having problems with the budget. We were making a kind of batik that required wax, a lot of chemicals and math skills. A few members had heard of another method. We didn't know exactly how to do it - but we tried it out. And then we tried it again and again in different ways.

When I asked how volunteers could better work with the poor, one of my interviewees reflected back ten years ago when an NGO came in and did a garden project. They divided interested villagers into groups depending on their socio-economic status. They accessed these people through the sub-village chairmen, the village leaders who are elected based on their understanding of the people in their small sub-village. She said this worked well for them because *walijusikia huru*, they felt free.

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[38] They already finished their work!

[39] Wash the dishes/basins

[40] Given notice

At this point in my service I saw merit in this idea. While I worked with several groups, the two that showed the most perseverance and willingness to change and experiment were *UWEZO,* consisting of some of the wealthiest people I knew and this batik group, consisting of some of the poorest people I knew. Additionally, it was ratifying to hear during my semi-structured interviews to hear that so many community members made a reference to my [lack of] relationship with the head teacher. It turned out- they liked it. People said it was crucial for me to do if I wanted to reach out to the poorer populations.

Kabuli

When September came around it was time once again to build some tombs. This year I understood much more about what was going on. I understood now that people plan them during the September and October months because those are the least busy times of the year, right before the clouds open and release the rains. I had learned that building a tomb was hard work and therefore it took the work of an entire village. The men did the building while the women either stayed back at the house to cook or hauled water necessary to make the cement from the river. Because it requires the work of an entire village, it requires filling the bellies of an entire village. Tomb building usually happens years after the burial so that the family will have time to save up enough funds to feed everyone who contributes. When we were in Morogoro, Mama Anna asked me if I'd help build her Grandma's tomb. I was excited this year because not only did I understand what was going on, I was a part of the family that was building it.

Journal Entry, September 18th, 2009

Kesho kutwa tutajenga kabuli kwa Bibi wa Mama Anna aliyekufa mwaka juzi. The day after tomorrow we will build a grave for Mama Anna's Bibi who died two years ago. There have been preparations for Saturday going on all week. Mama Anna and her cousins have been making whole day trips to another village to collect firewood. We have firewood in our village, but to boil the large vats of pombe, we essentially needed entire trees. Today the guests started arriving. Tomorrow her sister gets here. It got late and we all sat in her mud house on mats, stools and on her more fancy wooden chairs. It had the feeling of a family reunion. It had a lot of ugali. It had the women reserving their spots on the floor to sleep. It has Mama Anna whispering in my ear asking me to take all her husband's money and keep it at my house because her relatives will be sleeping at her house and she doesn't want them stealing it.

September 19th, 2009
More and more guests keep arriving. I met her Dad - didn't care much for him. I thought he would be different, but there he sat ordering his grown daughter around while she scrambled around trying to please everyone else as well. Sometimes I wonder - had I had less luck - had I been born somewhere else other than America or even Minnesota, to parents or a sister other than mine - I don't think I would have been as strong as the women I spend my days with.
It was eventually time to hike to the main road to get her sister and niece. The traveling market at the main road reminded me of my anxiety in large groups. At the traveling market everyone is usually drunk. As you can imagine it's a little worse when you're a white girl with a puppy in an African village - everyone is always asking to marry me and eat my dog (It's a Wahehe thing). I saw Mama Anna's husband and tried to talk to him. I'm trying to get on his good side so that maybe the anger he has towards me in January won't be so great, when he thinks I had everything do to with her leaving, when in actuality I have had nothing to do with it. God I'm dreading January. We started to walk home as the sun was setting. When we arrived at her house there were even more people preparing the pombe and food for tomorrow. I shared some Togwa with Paulo. I started helping and talking and eating and before I knew it, it was 11:00 (3 hours past my village bedtime). Mama Anna asks "Brianna unalala hapa?"Are you sleeping here? I felt bad making someone walk me back to my house, so I said if it was easier I would. "Haiya, sawa.[41]*" Some women started arranging places for the men to sleep (in the*

[41] ok

chicken coops and at neighbor's houses), others sat around the coals sharing stories, others were still going strong preparing for tomorrow. Paulo's son went to get Edna's milk for me. We thought it would be best to boil it right away. We went outside and found a fire still going. Some Bibis were sitting around it telling stories. We put the milk on and I just sat with them - filled with contentedness staring at their glowing wrinkled faces, toothless mouths and old eyes. It's a new moon so the sky is black and star-filled. I feel like I'm in some sort of ancient heaven. When the milk is ready I go back to the house. Mats now line the walls and there are about forty women spooning each other (it's the only way to fit). They gave me a spot on the end, which was nice since it meant I wouldn't be sandwiched in between two people. The down side was that throughout the night people kept inserting themselves into the line of bodies, me and Edna (yes, Edna was there too, she shared the blanket, pillow and ten inches of space that Mama Anna and I had) slowly got pushed off the mat onto the cold dirt floor. At three from my spot on the floor I started to see bare cold feet running in and out of the house. I finally got up at four (F! it's freezing!). I go sit for a few minutes by the fire that will boil the massive amount of beans. Bibi Mtyuta comes up to me and says "Brianna, mbona huchuji?" Why aren't you straining the pombe? I get up and go over to the pombe bins and they start arguing over whether or not I'll be able to do it. Bibi Kiwe says "ajaribu tu," just let her try. I start. "Kumbe anaweza!" Whoa, she can! Tanzanians know that white people have machines to do everything for them so they are always impressed when we can accomplish simple tasks.

We built the tomb and then ate, drank and danced for the next few days. *Minor victories.* Guests can stay as long as they please. It was a good time, but after a while we wanted the festivities to be over, we wanted to return to our normal daily work. We wanted to talk. The last of the guests lingered around eating our food for about another week.

Selling Locally

After a few months of not progressing, the wine group decided to plan another meeting to reenergize.

Journal Entry, October 19th, 2009
...half of the group came - most were late. The chairman didn't even come. It went decent though. Mama Bahati and Paulo helped me explain the current situation with the doctors from town. Rather than sending our bottles of wine to be checked for quality and safety, they drank it. They told us our group would not be further considered until we had a structure specifically for beverage production. This structure needed to have its own reliable water source. These things may never be in our reach. We discussed more about filling soda bottles and selling it here. We need to start doing it rather than talking about it. I suggested we start doing this weekly - preparing a bucket every week - having a crate to sell every week. It would definitely solve the communication problem and make this seem like a real project and it would sell.

Our village had a club. Sometimes people sell their extra produce there. The club is a venue to drink at. You can find most villagers there after 4 o'clock every day of the week. It's a mud structure with several rooms and a thatched roof. I always considered it to be my village's version of a strip mall. The walls of each room are lined with narrow wooden benches. Most rooms had a fire pit. The women who sold their *pombe* and *ulanzi*[42] there would heat it up over the fire. Villagers would drink communally out of one or two-liter pails. One of the rooms had a radio - so if the *pombe* was really flowing, things had the potential to get crazy. People from the village had tried the wine and they loved it because it was both *tamu*[43] and *kali*[44]. We thought we could sell it there.

[42] Fermented bamboo juice
[43] Sweet
[44] Strong

We were able to borrow a few crates of empty soda bottles from Mama Anna's husband's *duka.*[45] We would sell our wine for more than the *pombe,* but it would be much cheaper than beer. We prepared our first crate and it sold within a week. *Minor victory.* The profit wasn't nearly as high as if we had sold it in town, but it was significant. We continued to try to work with the people from the district but my villagers thought the only reason they gave us the little attention they did was because of my white presence. They were pretty sure that when I left the district would stop working with them. They were probably right.

Before coming to Tanzania, I was interested in local and indigenous knowledge. Even though I knew I shouldn't, I romanticized the idea and thought that villagers naturally knew how to use leaves and twigs and stones to cure and fix everything. I knew that lemon juice and warm water couldn't cure *everything* as my villagers suggested. Robert Chambers (1984) writes how experimentation is an indigenous technique. It manifests itself in the form of problem-solving and troubleshooting: *this didn't work so let's try that.* Over time I began to realize that we were incorporating a lot more indigenous and local knowledge into the projects than I originally thought. After our initial failures, we continued to shoot to see where we landed. We used everyone's ideas to see what worked best.

I entered *Chungumaziwa* as a top-downist against my will. It was frustrating that everyone thought I had all the answers. Agency in the form of decision-making shifted naturally over time as we began experimenting, troubleshooting and problem-solving. Our projects ran on their ideas.

[45] Shop

Girls Nights

I had my first girls' night on a Saturday in November. Early in the week I spoke with the oldest girls at the primary school. They were to go home and tell their parents to come to school with them the next day. The parents came and I explained to them that Saturday the girls would come to my house at midday. They'd eat lunch and dinner at my house on Saturday and have tea on Sunday morning. It was an educational event since there wasn't time or space for me to teach in at the school. The girls were to bring a blanket, a sewing needle and clothes for sleeping. All the parents agreed; it was as simple as that! Edna had just had seven puppies. I was excited that there were going to be so many little bodies in my house!

The head teacher and I had maintained a relationship that I would describe as shallow and cold, but professional. He said we could take some extra mattresses from his house so that the girls would have something to sleep on. I was excited because most of these girls had never had a sleepover before, and most didn't have mattresses to sleep on. We would also be able to use the school's pots to cook the rice in. Rice, another luxury.

I knew I wanted to teach them how to sew menstrual pads and make cycle beads. I had a few life skills lessons in mind. Mama Flavy said she'd help me cook the rice and teach the health portion.

The girls were about three hours late but they all came. I got a little nervous as they marched down the path towards my house like a line of ants. Clearly they had met up at the school first so no one would have to arrive alone early. Paulo obviously wasn't able to help us with the girls'

stuff, but he did stop in to make sure everything was going okay and drop off some leafy greens for us to cook. We did some ice-breakers and I had them color until Mama Flavy arrived.

> *Journal Entry, November 22nd, 2009*
> *As soon as the rain let up I asked Mama Flavy to give her talk. The other PVCs that came to help were kinda blown away by how beautiful and cool she was. She approached the topic differently than we may have. "Who has their period? Show your hands - Semeni, why aren't you raising your hand, I know you have yours - remember that day? I saw it on your skirt."*
>
> *I explained that we would be sewing pads. We ate. Most of the girls said they had already eaten - but this certainly did not prevent them from stuffing their faces. They started sewing their pads and were champions at it. Due to our late start we had to get candles lit while they were finishing up. When we finshed, the dance party started. They asked me if Edna could sleep with them.*

I was satisfied with how it went, I wrote in my journal that

> *the day went well and I was satisfied- at the end I wasn't even like "that wasn't so bad," I was like "that was really good."*

Later that week I went to the school to get the names and the ages of all the girls in standards six and seven. Two weeks later I had ten more girls come over as well. Every time was different but they were always exhaustingly satisfying.

My Friends

By this time Paulo was basically family. It was rare that I would go a week without working in one of his gardens and consuming one of his new concoctions. He simply liked to try new things and that's why I liked him. My favorite of his inventions was a juice he made from pineapple,

beet and lemongrass. He and I ran a green pepper business. Two garden beds the length of school buses. Everyone loved green peppers and no one grew them.

He became a guardian for me, protector of my physical well-being and emotional health. While I was well liked and respected in the community, many continued to be jealous of my friendship with Mama Anna. The jealousy created stress.

My days were filled with the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. My netball sessions with the sixth graders in the pouring rain brought me ecstatic joy and sore muscles. But on bad days, hearing rumors Mama Bahati spread about me made me want to take a few Benadryl so I could fall asleep before 6 PM.

Paulo started teaching permaculture more independently. Many times I didn't even know what he had planned. One night when he visited, he suggested I stop by his house the next day. When I did, I saw that he had double dug the entire farm around his house. It was in a central area that everyone could see. He was pulling people off the street to help him. He was having people commit to creating just one or two double dug garden beds at their houses. He told them that he and I would come to help. We had come to the conclusion that different things work in different places, and what would probably work best in *Chungumaziwa* would be a house-to-house approach that focused on the individual rather than dealing with group dynamics. Mama Tuli asked us to come to her house and help her.

Edna gained a friend too. Max was the handsome black and gold dog that belonged to the family who provided me with Edna's milk every day. When Max ran away for a few months and then returned, the family wasn't interested in taking him in again. He started sleeping at my house. Eventually I started bathing and feeding him. He quickly became family and adopted the habits of a white [wo]man's dog. I think the transformation he went through was interesting for my villagers to see.

Mama Anna and I had now grown accustomed to not going a day without seeing each other. On days there was work we would do it together. We farmed together, cooked together and ran projects together. On days where there was no work we would wander into the farthest hillsides of the village. We'd fill our baskets with the red and orange mushrooms we would later cook, and mikusu, my favorite indigenous fruit that was a chalky yellow and had a seed in the middle that resembled a corn kernel. Sometimes we would talk until 10 PM. Mama Anna seemed to expose me to a whole other world. She wasn't the worst off, but she did face the same daily hardships as everyone else. She was well intentioned and well connected. She was a regular villager who others trusted. If people didn't feel comfortable coming to me with problems or ideas, they would go to her first. They came to know us as a package deal. Through spending all my days with her I was exposed to a raw understanding of the mundane cruelty of the unprivileged life. Part of me wants to say my relationship with her was strategic, but that certainly de-romanticizes the beauty of what became one of the most incredible friendships I have ever been a part of.

One night we were running her husband's *duka* by lantern light and she told me she was afraid to tell her husband about leaving for school. She decided to have her father write him a letter to express his desire for his daughter to get an education. She said she was scared he would poison her water but, "*Nikifa, nife,"* she said - If I die, I die.

Chickens

I had learned in the classroom that when outsiders enter a village and begin to examine possibilities for change, they often ask the wrong questions (Tomich et al. 2004). Misunderstandings result because people have different understandings and qualifications for livelihoods (Chambers 2000). I was beginning to see this in practice, I had asked all the wrong questions in my VSA. I had assumed I understood their livelihoods - or, I assumed I knew the questions that would help me understand their livelihoods. Education on chicken keeping was one thing that was requested during my VSA. Over time I began to see that chickens were important and education on how to keep them, clean their homes, feed them and keep them healthy could go a long way.

Most households raised at least a few chickens. The chickens roamed the village freely during the day. They'd kick up dirt, scavenge for worms and sprawl out in the sun - just as my dog sprawled out in the sun spots on the porch we had growing up. At night they would return to sleep at their owner's compound. They usually slept in the mud structures that were used as kitchens, warmed from the cooking fire. My friends spoke proudly about the bright, almost florescent yellow of a local chicken. The eggs were small, but filled with flavor. Eggs were an

obvious source of nutrition as well as income. One egg sold for 200Tsh.[46] Seven eggs were equivalent to one bag of sugar.

One reason I had shied away from doing work that involved animals was because I didn't know how a project or workshop would be carried out. Where and with whom? And how? I didn't know anything about them. I also didn't know if they simply suggested it because they wanted free chickens. Originally I didn't know anything about chickens, but over the first year I collected a few of my own. They weren't very disciplined and spent more time on my couch than in their coop, but I grew accustomed to them. I saw merit in projects that combined education about chickens with practice. A Peace Corps trainer explained to me that chicken projects have the highest rate of failure because of theft and disease. I saw it. At one point, nearly all the chickens in a neighboring village were wiped out by the New Castle Disease. And one day, when one of my most handsome roosters left the courtyard as usual in his authoritative grace, proudly displaying the dark red and gold feathers, he never returned.

Most chicken projects that NGOs bring in today consist of *kuku wa kisasa*[47] or *kuku wa kizungu.*[48] These eggs are hatched under a light bulb and the chickens grow incredibly fast. At three months they have the potential to lay two eggs a day. These chickens are raised in an intensive system where they are kept inside and fed a lot of hormones. These were the eggs I would try to avoid in America, but I understood why Tanzanians would find them appealing. For now though, in *Chungumaziwa,* no one had any experience *kisasa* and we lacked the

[46] Tanzanian Shillings, approximately 20 cents
[47] Chickens 'of today'
[48] White mans' chicken

resources to keep a project like that running. Chris Reij (1993) writes that often times "techniques introduced by outsiders did not become familiar to the beneficiaries."

I was noticing a theme throughout my work: Start with what's there. Most of the literature that discusses methods of participatory development suggests this in some way. Start with what's already there, be it a group, an idea, a technique, a resource. Interviews with community members reinforced this as well,

> *The volunteer should use the leadership and expertise from ward animal and development specialists. They should collect all the existing groups and talk to them about the kind of work they want to do.*

I spoke with our Ward's *Bwana Mifugo* about the project. He had worked with quite a few PCVs and had even been involved with a few trainings. He thought it would be good for us to start with a project at the school. We would construct a coop that would be what one of our Peace Corps manuals termed a semi-intensive system. The coop would have three rooms: a stow, a room for sleeping and a room for laying. They would then have an expansive but enclosed area to roam around in. The area would be locked to prevent theft. We created a coop that should have been able to comfortably fit 150 hens and our goal was to have 50. I was glad that they would have so much space to play.

At the school, OVCs would be in charge of the up-keep. They would get in-depth training and then subsequent experience in raising chickens in the way the *Bwana Mifugo* understood to be the most humane and productive. The operation was primarily for eggs. Our profits were to go

towards buying school supplies and uniforms for the OCVs. Planning a chicken project at the school meant working with the head teacher. I was worried about this but had no other option.

I worked with the *Bwana Mifugo* and the head teacher to write the grant. The village's contribution would be all the bricks, some labor, and collection of grasses and minerals that would be mixed with the chicken food. We measured a piece of land and construction began. The head teacher said he had a friend in a village 18km away that could cut us a deal on nearly-grown hens. I gave him 150,000Tsh[49] to buy 50. Eventually, the coop was built and it was time to move the chickens in. Where were they?

The project sat immobile for months while I started a few others - one with the *UWEZO* group, one at the primary school in another neighboring village and one with the young men and women's' choir in *Chungumaziwa B.* The *Bwana Mifugo* was thrilled because, as he had mentioned months before, a certain amount of competition would be healthy. Initially, these projects gained a lot more momentum compared to our school project. When the students would sleep at my house they would inquire about it. They were excited to learn more about chickens and wondered when we were going to start.

The next time I visited *UWEZO,* I was surprised to see that they had already had two seminars with the *Bwana Mifugo* about how to feed and medicate the chickens. Initially I'd had reservations about working with a group that already appeared to be so well off, but their progress and dedication always re-energized me.

[49] About $150

We continued to wait for our chickens and I only communicated with the head teacher by text message. He usually didn't respond. When he did he would reply that the chickens were ready he was just waiting for me. When I would reply that I was ready, he would respond that he would just have to wait for his friend to come back to town. When I would make an effort to get to the school early the teachers would tell me, *"Kama kawaida - ameshaondoka,"* just like normal, he's already left, they told me. I was starting to worry that he would drag this out until it was time for me to leave and then he would just pocket the money.

While the young men and women's choir initially gained decent momentum, I started to see conflict arise in their group as well. I went to their practices every Tuesday and Thursday. We practiced in our village's version of an office. The bright orange mud floor was always dusty and holey. It had one small window that we usually kept closed. I'd clap and march off-beat to the songs they wrote. As they sang they threw in what sounded to me like bird calls whenever they felt like it.

After practice we'd discuss the chickens. Meetings became tense and they didn't understand the extent to which I understood their Kiswahili. One week when only a few members were present, I brought up the budget. I told them what we had left.

Looks of puzzlement.

They quickly helped me to understand that when Mama Tumaini (the group's leader) approached me the week before to say the group had arranged for a carpenter to put the roof on the coop, she meant that she hired her husband, by herself, without the group's consent, and decided to pay him twice as much as was normally expected.

Chicken Fight

Things became stressful in February. Mama Anna left. While I had other great friends, it was sad being in the village without her and it was hard doing work without such a dedicated counterpart.

And people were talking. Everyone thought that I sent her to school, that I gave her the idea and the money to leave.

The first time I went to visit Mama Anna at her school, Max, the new addition to my family, followed me to the main road. When the car that still haunts me hit and killed him, I wailed while everyone else laughed. I cried so hard on the three-hour bus ride that my eyes became dry and scratchy, my throat throbbed and my head rang.

Usilie, mbwa ni nyama tu, they yelled. Don't cry, dogs are just meat. So I cried harder.

The timing wasn't right, not that it ever would have been for something so disrespectful of life. My glass had been nearly overflowing. Today anywhere you go in the region, people will know about the white girl from *Chungumaziwa* who went ballistic when her dog was hit by a car.

I lost twenty pounds.

In late February, for some reason beyond my understanding, the teachers in *Chungumaziwa* began to show interest in the chicken project at the school. Though sick and small, the head teacher managed to get a hold of the chickens and they were being kept at his house. Now we needed to learn how to properly care for them. We planned a day to have an introduction seminar with the *Bwana Mifugo.* It would be helpful to have us all on the same page.

The morning of our planned meeting I woke up to one too many *hodis*. The sun was not yet showing through the 'sky windows' I had put in my roof. I looked at the clock, 6:20. I wasn't going to answer, but it didn't stop. The head teacher's son had a note for me. It said that the chicken meeting wouldn't be able to happen because the *Bwana Mifugo* had another meeting. I didn't understand why the *Bwana Mifugo* hadn't called me.

When I called the *Bwana Mifugo* and he said he would be a little late, but would come when he was done.

Good.

I went to the school and told the teachers. They said the head teacher went to the region's capital and we couldn't continue without him.

> *February 21, 2010-*
> *I said fine - that I'll tell the Bwana Mifugo not to come but then I'm not continuing with the project. The teachers looked shocked,*

> *as if they were thinking, 'but Brianna is usually so nice.' They discussed this among themselves and said, "We'll have the meeting today and relay the information to the head teacher when he comes back."*

A series of visions from training flashed through the projector in my mind: our Culture Matters book, the head teacher of the primary school in the village I trained in, Peace Corps' framework that expects volunteers to work in collaboration with key stakeholders, blackbirds and rubble. As a Peace Corps Volunteer I was told not to do these things. As a human being though, I didn't want to see any more grant money lost from a project that was supposed to help the OVCs of our village. I also didn't want to see the chickens continue to get sick and eat the less-than-desirable quality food of the poorly managed project.

The meeting went well. The teachers had a good discussion about how to move forward but we were limited by the fact that none of us had any power at the school and no one was willing to take a stand. When I asked why we don't involve the village government the other teachers replied, *wapo kitu kimoja,* they are all just one thing.

The following day we learned that after we had the meeting, the head teacher received word that we had essentially gone against rank and planned a meeting without him. He was so upset he threatened to report a few of the teachers.

It was my fault. What options did the teachers have? I felt like we were on a roll though. We were making progress and people were starting to care. *Minor victory*. Somewhere along the

way, the teachers were *moved into action.* We planned another meeting for the next day where the head teacher would be present along with the Village Executive Officer.

> *Journal Entry, February 25th, 2010*
> *When I arrived at the office, the door was shut. I walked in - good timing - the teachers had been meeting over school matters and they had just moved onto chicken stuff. It was perfect - everyone was in one place and we got everything taken care of. Baba Flavy always has to further my points with more explanation, which is a huge help.*
>
> *We were informed that the chickens had been at the head teacher's house for a while now and we wanted to know how much we should pay Mama Bahati for taking care of them. We gave them far more money than we should have, but we did so that everyone could see, that way there could be no more complaining, no more bad words: In theory there would be no resentment.*
> *So now everything is taken care of and we don't need him for this project. It's normal for schools to have projects where the teachers in charge are not the head teacher. Mama Flavy and Mwalimu Mtengele are the teachers of the project now. They'll even keep the keys for the coop - so only they and the 8 students that take care of it will be allowed to enter it.*

Minor victory. *Mwalimu*[50] *Mtengela* and I planned a day to go to town to buy ingredients for the chicken feed in bulk. A few members of the choir tagged along as well. Shortly after our return, we mixed the feed. The students who would take care of the coop, the choir, a few interested community members and all the teachers except the head teacher were there. The morning we walked into the coop some of the chickens couldn't even walk. Most of us had suspected that they were bought for far less than 3,000Tsh[51] each and the rest of the money was pocketed. The chickens were sick and the coop was a mess. We mixed the food (corn husks, bone powder,

[50] Teacher
[51] About $3

dried blood, dried sardines, salt and vitamins) and the second we put it out the chickens swarmed around it. Instantly, they became strong. *Minor victory.* Baba Flavy spoon fed one and it started walking.

Before the day was done Paulo marched up to us authoritatively and said he wanted to sit down with the choir members. He wanted all of us to be in agreement: I would not leave the country without seeing chickens in their coop. He told them that there was a traveling market the following week only ten kilometers away and he knew some people that would be selling full grown hens. They agreed to meet him there.

Experimenting

The batik group had been working hard figuring out a way to conserve resources so that we could make more profit. We continued experimenting with different ways to make batik.

> *Journal Entry, March 27th, 2010*
> *Today two Bibis (Grandmothers) taught me how to make their new style of batiks. It was especially great since the Bibi's use to just man the fire and do sidelines work. Now they're making stuff. They are the experts!*

Minor victory. Bibi Kifwe had recently become a widow. She never missed a batik meeting except when her husband was ill. She also never showed up without a bundle of firewood to add the fire that would heat the water that would create our dye. Her eyes were kind and wise and her body was little but embodied a kind of strength and resilience I have only seen in Afrika. She tied old, faded pieces of fabric around her to keep her better clothes from becoming stained by our greens and blues. She had another piece around her head, which she had shaved for her

husband's funeral. I helped her and Bibi Mlongalie remove the fabrics we had folded into triangles from a basin that contained dye. Together, we unfolded one of their six foot pieces of art and draped it over the clothes line to dry. They stared at the colors and shapes their folds and dyes created.

oooooo...eeeee
clap.
stomp.
Nauza batiki! Napiga debe![52]

Minor victory. Because we were not using wax, we were able to use a cheaper fabric, half the chemicals and about a fourth as much water. Furthermore, we were able to finish all the work in one day. The batiks became a hit in the village. One of the group members would take them to the club in the evening. Our villagers liked them and we were now able to sell them cheaper than any other fabrics found in the area. Whenever anyone went to town they would bring a few batiks with them to sell at a shop that showed interest in our project. That shop would order our fabric, dyes and chemicals so we no longer had to deal with their transport from Dar es Salaam. At this point the group of 26 had shrunk to 8. They didn't need me, there wasn't a thing they couldn't do. Somewhere along the way, these group members became re-energized. They gained skills and confidence.

KUVUMILIA to persevere, to endure

As the income generation groups *kuvumilia*, the other PCVs in my district and I planned a business seminar. We all had been involved in income generation projects of some kind and it

[52] I'm selling Batik!

was clear that we and the groups we worked with lacked some of the basic skills it took to run income generation projects. We all agreed that we had started too quickly. Furthermore, many of my interviewees stated that education should be one of the first things PCVs do:

> *They also need to have better education on how income generation works - that you can't just divide up the money. If they know they'll get money they'll continue. What we need is a business seminar like the ones we're doing now.*
>
> *In the beginning what we need is more education on how to continue when you leave - then projects will lead themselves.*

We worked with instructors from the district government to plan a nine-day seminar in each of our villages. They gave lessons on starting and planning a business, budgeting and bookkeeping, savings and loans, and leadership. Members of groups from all the villages I worked in attended. It generated a lot of discussion throughout the village over the next weeks. Three people came up to me to show me business plans they were creating in their notebooks.

> *Journal Entry, June 19th, 2010-*
> *I walked in on Mtengela, Mama Diana and Mama Elvisi talking about Mama Bahati's role in the wine group and how they need to choose new leaders. I said ok, but asked them if, when the time came, they would actually do it. They said yeah, they think that after this seminar they think they will be able to.*

In an interview with a group member I worked with she spoke highly about the seminar:

> *We have been educated now and we want this. Even if we are a few we can continue. We already have groups. We already have strength. We've already seen results.*

At the end of one of the last seminars a teacher from a neighboring village approached me about *Chungumaziwa's* water problem. He wanted to let me know that he found out that the reason we didn't have water running from our *mabomba* was because our village's valve wasn't working properly. He told me all we needed was a new valve. The new valve wouldn't cost more than the funds I had leftover from the business seminar. I didn't want to discuss this with my village government, they would make it more complicated. I just wanted water. I gave him the money.

After the seminar Paulo told me we needed to talk. He went to the traveling market to help the choir buy chickens and none of them showed up. He wanted to figure out what we could do. I wanted to give up.

Wine

At a wine meeting that was planned shortly after the business seminar we began discussing some issues that had been brought up at the seminar. We had discussed having group members take out loans but were unaware of how much money the group had. We learned a lot about bookkeeping in the seminar and needed to start taking it into account.

> *Journal Entry, June 21st, 2010-*
> *I had never seen Mama Nimroid and Mama Mtengela so mad before. Mama Diana made the comment that I'm counting down days before I left and asked that I could see peace in the group before I left. Mtengela said we could have peace when we saw the money. Mama Bahati said the money is there and she has been keeping good records. She would bring both the money and records next time.*

The next week we waited two hours for her. She didn't show. This time, the group members didn't want to let it go. *Minor victory.* They drafted up a letter: if she didn't bring the money on July 2nd, we would take her to the village government.

> *July 2nd, 2010*
> *Our wine meeting lasted about two hours. Mama Bahati gave us the money. It came out a little short but could have been worse, everyone in the group took about loans of 10-20 Tsh![53]*
>
> *Bwana Mifugo came towards the end of the meeting and I stepped outside with him. We're throwing in the towel on the Vijana group's chicken project. He's writing a letter to let them know our decision and we'll divide the supplies amongst the other projects.*

No time to relax

June was the first time I ran a girls' night without the help of Mama Flavy. She was in town giving birth to her baby girl. She did however, text me things to tell the girls, *"waambie wasifanye mapenzi na mavulana!"* Tell the girls not to mess around with any boys! They asked questions that showed me they wanted to learn and were trying to understand. They told me about the sexual relationships forced on them by teachers and other older men. *Minor victory.* I considered this a minor victory for two reasons. One, because they opened up to me (me- the crazy white girl who slept with her dog) and two, because while these 12 year old girls acknowledged being raped as a given, they were critical and thought it was wrong. From my perspective, given the cultural context, they were thinking radical thoughts. So *minor victory* - but what kind of victory leaves you helpless and heartbroken? That's why they're only minor.

[53] $10-$15 which is enough to buy fruit or fish in town and sell it in the village for a small profit.

When I told my sister in an e-mail about the situation she asked, "What are you going to do about it?" I had no idea.

Mama Anna was on break the months of June and July. I would be able to spend my last months in the country with her. While the batik group was making substantial progress, things were getting heated in the village; there had been a lot of drama surrounding the chicken and wine projects and our village's water situation. After getting the chickens from the head teacher and essentially cutting him out of the project, my relationship turned sour with him and his wife. Probably irreconcilable. My neighbors told me not to catch drinking water off my roof anymore, "*Wataweka sumu,"* they'd say, they might poison it. With all this stress, Mama Anna and I took a trip to town to pick up her mid-term tests.

My best friend was at the top of her class! We bought meat, potatoes and canned Pepsi. We slept on the thin bug-infested mattress that sat in her damp, cold, windowless, bathroom-sized home. She rented it for 5,000Tsh[54] a month where she went to school. We talked and cooked. She studied and I wrote.

The day we arrived back I had a lot of cleaning and organizing to do. I didn't see Mama Anna for the rest of the night. At midnight I received a text from her. Her husband had beaten her because 200 Tsh[55] was missing from his shop. She wrote that he threw her to the ground and

[54] About $5
[55] About $.20

stomped on her head and she was sleeping outside. I asked her to come sleep at my house, she replied,

siwezi kutembea, I can't walk.

Water War

As I counted down my days, I began sleeping at Mama Anna's house. She hadn't forgiven her husband, so he slept at his other wives' houses. We stayed up so late talking, I didn't want to have her walk me home in the dark. So, Mama Anna, Jasmine, Edna and I thanked *Mungu*[56] for our days, blew out the candle and felt comforted by the warmth four bodies in one bed brings.

One morning I woke up to Mama Anna's aunt in the courtyard. Mama Yese was another strong woman with a bit of an attitude. I was hoping she would be voted sub-village chairman because of her fearlessness, but change is difficult and they re-elected Agaustoulo, because he was a nice person. Mama Yese and a few others had been looking for me. They had organized themselves to head to the village office to demand water. *Minor victory.* They knew that I gave leftover grant money to the teacher to buy a new valve. It had been a few weeks and we still didn't have water.

> *Journal Entry, June 26th, 2010-*
> *Normally I would have been mad that they didn't give me more warning but I was so happy that they decided to stand up for themselves that I was nothing but thrilled. We went there and waited for the VEO - who basically responded irritatedly that no one ever told him about the money. I responded that it was difficult*

[56] The Lord

> *for me to find time to tell him since he doesn't invite me to the village meetings or return my phone calls. Easy out: He told me he sent messages with the head teacher. I asked him why he would do that? He said he'll invite me himself from now on. I'm leaving in less than a month.*

It was a *minor victory* in the sense that the villagers were beginning to understand their reality "in order to better transform it" as Lather (1986) puts it; however, it did not yet bring us water. The leaders were upset that I had not included them in my quest for water. Eventually we found that the teacher I gave the money to handed it off to the man in charge of the water tank who simply 'ate it' as the Tanzanians would say. It would be returned prior to my departure.

The Village Meeting

> *I wish to emphasize a further fact that even the morally best and the idealists find it difficult out here to be what they wish to be. We all get exhausted...*
> *-Dr. Albert Schweitzer, The Primeval Forest*

> *Journal Entry, July 7th, 2010*
> *So the serikali kikao*[57] *yesterday did nothing more than make me think the 18th*[58] *couldn't come fast enough.*

The morning of the meeting I walked to the village office with Mama Diana. We talked about the same old village gossip and politics. I told her I was nervous for the meeting considering the water issues, the choir's chicken project and my sour relationship with the head teacher. Mama Diana assured me I hadn't done anything wrong. She told me,

[57] Government meeting
[58] the day I would be leaving the village

I was born here and I have lived here my whole life. Teachers and teacher's wives shouldn't be leaders of groups because they can leave any day, you are here for ***us****.*

We got there and the meeting started at 10:30. We sat in the same office the choir practiced in. The window was shut which made it dark and seem cold. I was sweating and nervous which made it seem colder. Benches lined the walls of the dark, square room and bodies of people that I had grown so familiar with sat upon them. Mama Diana, two other women and me were the only females present. There were eighteen men.

The meeting was long and drawn out. I was pretty uninterested and bored until we got to the part where the head teacher read aloud the *Bwana Mifugo's* letter to the choir members.[59] It had been a few days since the letter was sent and I assumed it had already been delivered. As he carefully read I could see the choir's secretary in my peripheral vision. He looked restless, like he was starting to boil. He started yelling. I tried to have a discussion about it. I wanted to outline the process the group had been through and [lack of] progress they had made. But when I tried to speak, my voice was weak and it shook. The leaders made the joint decision that they could have one more chance and I didn't have the energy to say I thought they had had enough chances.

When the head teacher gave the report of the school chicken project, they *pasha*-ed[60] me. I sat there, drained. Blank-faced and jaded. I tried staring at the scraps of metal that made up the roof to keep my tears from pouring over the rim of my bottom eyelid. Tanzanians get so uncomfortable when anyone cries outside of a funeral.

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[59] Many of the group members had been elected to be sub-village chairmen that year.

[60] A common Tanzanian practice in which groups creatively clap to honor a person present.

The End

And all the beautiful things that make you weep, don't have to make you weep...
-Rilo Kiley

As my days wound down I felt off balance. I was sad that I had to leave my village in this state. Was it possible for me to hate a place so much that I loved so dearly? Usually villages threw volunteers farewell parties. My friends didn't understand when or where the party would be. The village leaders and the head teacher said they had everything planned.

As I sunk into an unhealthy mental state my body became so weak and vulnerable that I got malaria, strep throat and giardia in the same week. My friends did what they could to keep me and Edna healthy. They hauled my water and cooked us porridge. They assured me that I hadn't done anything wrong. That I had done good work.

One of our last great feats happened three days before my departure from the village. We called the community bank from our district capital and asked them to come our way with the paper-work; we had two bank accounts to open: one for the batik group and one for the wine group. *Minor victory.*

The village government party never happened and it's probably better that way. Two nights before I was to take off, my villagers threw me a party I will never forget. It wasn't as fancy as the other PCVs' parties but it felt true. There was no meat or beer, there wasn't even soda. We had mountainous plates of rice, beans and leafy greens. Some of the groups I worked with and certain individuals gave me modest gifts: the batik group gave my a batik they had made, some people wove me baskets, Paulo had someone carve me a mobile out of wood, Mama Flavy and

Mama Anna went in together on some cloth they thought I would like. *Mzee Mtuya* didn't have a material item to give me, he had his performance. Just as he danced me into the village, he danced me out. We retreated to Mama Diana's house for an after party of drumming, *pombe* and *togwa*. Some of my students were there too. They drummed the songs they knew I'd like. My villagers wrote me a song and sang it by candlelight.

This was all I ever wanted.

I planned to spend my very last day and night with my best people: Paulo, Mama Flavy and Mama Anna and their families. Mama Anna and I planned to catch the chickens that would make up our dinner early in the morning. The chickens I hatched and raised with love in my courtyard. I couldn't find her.

A little later, I received a text from her. Her husband's parents had called her to their house to discuss her recent beating. Mama Anna said she would forgive him if he tested himself for HIV. She always wanted him to get tested and he said he never had time. They agreed and Mama Anna and Baba Jasmine left for the nearest dispensary. *Minor victory.* On their return trip Mama Anna said that she would be home soon to help me with the chickens. She tested negative and he tested positive.

My friends prepared us a feast. They cooked all the typical things you'd find at any Tanzanian celebration throughout the year: pilau,[61] beans, greens, chicken and beef. We had soda and for

[61] Rice with potatoes and spices: cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, clove, and garlic

me, Mama Flavy made *kande. Kande* is a stew made out of corn and beans. It's considered the poor man's food, and I loved it.

The night was perfect, for what it was. The hours I spent with my friends that night were bittersweet. For the most part I felt like I was crumbling. The highs and lows of the last two years were exhausting. I didn't know how I was going to say goodbye. The same poet who reminded me to love the world wrote, "Tell me how you crumble when you hit the wall, the place you cannot go beyond by the strength of your own will. What carries you to the other side of that wall, to the fragile beauty of your own humanness?" And I couldn't wait to find out what was going to carry me to the other side.

As I sat in my last moments with my friends, my phone went off. I was surprised because I saw it was a text from Mama Flavy and she was sitting in the corner. I could hardly read it, tears were fogging my vision. It said:

> *Brianna, you have been like family to us. I have not had a friend like you. I cannot even look at you because I will cry.*

Peace Corps prepared us for how difficult it would be to adjust back to America. They also explained that villagers may fight over the stuff we leave behind. From what I remember though, they never told us how heart wrenchingly painful it would be to leave the children, women and men who made us sane and whole for two years. As I began to feel like I was suffocating I started to think Peace Corps was evil, putting us here for two years and then just taking us away.

We stayed up late and eventually returned to our own houses to a get few hours of sleep before the final goodbye.

In the morning I packed up and the taxi arrived. Catherine and I decided to take a taxi to Dar es Salaam because we were taking our dogs with us and it would be too difficult to get them on buses. I went through the teary line of hugs. The women began to wail, like a funeral. *Something* was dying. When I was finished with Mama Flavy and Mama Anna I turned around and walked right into Paulo's arms.

"Pole," he said.

Edna was hesitant to get in the car but with a little push it happened. I shut the door and they waved as we drove away. It hurt so much that I thought *if I had known how painful this was going to be, I may not have signed up*. I quickly took it back. My time spent with these people had been invaluable and life changing and something told me they felt the same way.

After the Fact

> *What keeps you going isn't some fine destination but just the road you're on, and the fact that you know how to drive. You keep your eyes open and you see this damned-to-hell world you got born into and you ask yourself "what life can I live that will let me breathe in and out and love somebody or something and not run off screaming into the woods?"*
> *-Barbara Kingsolver, A letter from Hallie to Codi in Animal Dreams*

After Geertz's years of experience as an anthropologist in the field, he informs us we cannot draw concrete conclusions - that what we can do is offer up our stories and understandings about the way things are. He writes,

> It is not history one is faced with, nor biography, but a confusion of histories, a swarm of biographies. There is order in it all of some sort, but it is the order of a squall or a street market: nothing metrical. It is necessary, then to be satisfied with swirls, confluxions, and inconstant connections; clouds collecting, clouds dispersing . . . What we can construct, if we keep notes and survive, are hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced together patternings, after the fact. (Geertz 1995, 2)

My story isn't meant to be offered up as an answer to the difficulties one faces in the field. I only claim that some of the work I did was good based on the criteria I outlined for myself**.** I hope it is apparent that there were plenty of failures. In fact, about six months after I left my village, I received a letter in the mail from one of the batik group members. They wrote that *'the group is continuing well and we have taken out a loan.' Minor victory,* right? I thought we had been able to actually make something work. A phone call from Mama Flavy a week prior to finishing this thesis, however, informed me that the group has begun to fight. One of the members owes the group quite a bit of money and is refusing to pay. Humans are imperfect and there are always

problems when groups of them try to work together. I can at least be comforted in the memories of my conversations and interviews with a few of the group members who told me that even if the group splits up, they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to continue on their own. As my experience deepened me, it has made me more realistic. A realistic optimist.

As I continue to reflect on my time in Tanzania, I ask myself what I have learned. What information would have been helpful for me to know before I began my Peace Corps service? Or, if I were going to do Peace Corps again, but in a different village or country, what would I do differently?

I learned a lot about development from the villagers I lived with. They taught me basic and straight-forward things like: work with homogenous community groups because people will be more free, have the group come first and then the project, don't develop a project for a newly formed group, and consider water before you consider anything else. They taught me more complicated things about life and love too. There are many other little and big lessons spread throughout the narrative. Working with the students was most satisfying. Teaching girls how to sew menstrual pads was an easy way to feel like I accomplished something and made a positive impact. Based on what I learned, I offer a few inconcrete suggestions to myself for next time around. My partial knowledge understands them to be important and yours may too, I have broken them up into the categories of *reflection* and *love*.

Reflect

One of the biggest lessons I took away from my experience was the importance of reflection. Reflection has played an important role throughout the time I spent in the field as well as the time I spent making sense of my experience. Over time as we reflect, we understand more creating room to grow and change (Schon 1991; Mezirow 1981). We need to reflect to become more effective practitioners. Reflection is as strategic as it is personal. Specifically I learned that we need to reflect on the *historical context*, as well as on the *power dynamics* of the places we work.

Historical Context

> *"There is also a broader and equally important concern, that we need to take a historical perspective to be able to put the role and function of participatory development into perspective and context"*
>
> *-Bill Cooke, Rules of Thumb for Participatory Change Agents*

As mindful practitioners it is important to take the historical context of the place we work into account, as well as the context of the greater picture of development. As a PCV in Tanzania, I wish I'd had a better understanding of the country's historical context and its implications for development practice. During training, Peace Corps gave volunteers a pretty comprehensive overview of Tanzania's rich history. It wasn't until I returned to America, however, that I began to reflect on the vocabulary we use in participatory development and how detrimental it might be to our supposed goals.

After Tanzania gained independence it became a socialist nation under Julius Nyerere. Nyerere's idealistic vision of a self-reliant Tanzania where everyone would live and work together in rural villages did not come to life. Rather, his plan was manifested in an authoritative and paternalistic way (Schneider 2004). This shift to socialism embraced the same vocabulary of participation and collaboration that we promote today with our nonprofits and NGOs.

Where practitioners enter communities using vocabulary which they intend to mean something that is emancipatory, democratic or empowering, Tanzanians understand it to be the type of participation that is embedded in their past. It is important for practitioners to be aware that "there is no blank slate on which participation can be drawn" (Marshland 2006, 77) and that "Tanzania-style participation comes with conditions" (77).

As practitioners, not only do we need to reflect on the specific contexts we are working in, but also on the greater practice of development. In Bill Cooke's chapter in *Participation, from Tyranny to Transformation* (2004) he discusses some of the basic barriers to participatory development. To put outside practitioners on the same level with local people, thus increasing participation and empowerment, he suggests that outsiders work for local wages, or for free. It makes sense, right? But would our Peace Corps staff be willing to do that? Would our USAID employees? It makes us consider what our goals within participatory development really are. Cooke (2004) writes,

> The unfairness of this will be evident to all involved in an intervention as will the hypocrisy of change agents who claim to be working to end poverty but whose weekly per-diem expenses, never mind their fees, often amount to more than average annual per capita incomes; likewise, facilitators conducting participatory public sector effectiveness or anti-corruption workshops often earn more in their daily rate than the monthly salary of a permanent secretary.

> Moreover, do participatory development practitioners seriously believe that those whom they are working on do not know the cost of the hotels in which they stay? ...Are the privileges of their existence - education, healthcare status - really invisible to those with whom they are working? Certainly it is rarely talked or written about. Again, in the process of groupthink, there is collusion in not mentioning the glaringly obvious (50).

Power Dynamics

Reflection helps us understand power (Cornwall 1994), and it helps us to acknowledge victories and failures. Participatory development is ideal, but is likely to fail if power dynamics of the community are left unaddressed (Cleaver 2001; Connell 1997). While these may never be fully understood by the outsider, understanding reflexivity and positionality can put the outsider on the track to a better understanding. Reflection can foster this process.

I have tried to illustrate how my relationships with certain members of the communities impacted my work. In the beginning my work was complicated by my closeness to a powerful and wealthy figure, the head teacher. Distancing myself from him allowed me to build closer and more personal relationships with students and marginalized community groups. Students trusted and opened up to me. People who normally wouldn't have been comfortable working with me were involved in the batik group. Overall, my choices of counterparts positively impacted my work, even if they did create a certain amount of jealousy, which over time I understood to be inevitable.

Through reflection and self-awareness I was able to work through a few obstacles. This took time though. With more time and reflection what other things I would have realized? The VSA was a useful exercise, but I didn't gain very accurate information about my village. As time went on, I understood more. As a graduate student, I was a participant observer and an interviewer. I

learned things from my villagers over time that would have been helpful for me to know when I arrived. It took time though. It took time to build a certain amount of trust so that people felt comfortable to open their lives up to me. It took time for me to understand the things they were telling me.

The importance of reflection isn't emphasized enough in development practice. While it would be difficult to make reflection a requirement of Peace Corps volunteers I think its importance needs to be integrated into all development work across the globe. For some this may require reflecting first on their original intentions of their work. Do they want to make the world a better place? *Are they willing to work for nothing?* It's important to note that reflection does not necessarily mean writing in journals; it means a critical self examination.

This self awareness and subsequent action may require making hard decisions and sacrifices and accepting that they have the potential to breed conflict. It would have been helpful if someone had told me in the beginning: not to trust easily, to be more assertive, to worry less than I thought I had to about being culturally sensitive, and to be patient and persistent. If I were to become a PCV again, or continue to work in grassroots development, I may not always have a Laura around to tell me to *JUST TAKE PAULO.* I didn't change, but I did become stronger and believe this happened as a result of reflection. This strength is necessary if actions that we must take after our reflection are difficult and conflicting.

Love

While this last one is more personal, I feel that it is still of great importance. As I have tried to demonstrate throughout the narrative, positive change - change that is not oppressive - cannot

unfold in the absence of love (Freire 1984). Before I left Tanzania, I was asked to writes some pieces of advance for the incoming volunteers. I decided to write to them, *Love your village first and work will come naturally.* As we saw from one interview love seems to be something that we shouldn't ignore. This realization and understanding came out of reflection and in large part happened after the fact. I understood it as themes emerged and I began to connect what I observed, heard and felt to the literature. The works of a handful of respected scholars reinforce the importance of love in chance. Patricia Collins Hill (2000) writes that sources of "power as energy…can flow from love" (150). Ronald Pelias (2004) ask that we employ a methodology that listens to the heart in order to forgive, heal and move forward. And Bell Hooks (2000) writes that love is one of the most powerful tools we have to transform domination (103).

Volunteers almost always have some sort of lasting impact on their community. Of course they are not transformational, but they are not meant to be. Empowerment cannot be bestowed upon individuals or groups; it is something that must grow from within. Positive things come from daily interactions; they come from relationships and *minor victories* - and who is to say this isn't development?

Somewhere along the way, amidst the corruption, the rape, the domestic violence and the lies, I fell head over heels for some of the rich and most of the poor - and for the sixth graders, and for Mama Anna and Paulo - and for the gaggle of children that accompanied me through my every motion of every day. We were loving the world AND changing it.

I thought I was 'done' with development when I wrote in my journal that I essentially didn't believe in it anymore, that all I believed in was love. I'm glad that I have had the opportunity to

come back to school and think and research more on my experience. It was satisfying to find others who also thought love was important and an essential aspect of change. I think the doubt I see in my journals reflect the moments where I used critical subjectivity to work through emotional, intellectual and practical dilemmas.

As I therefore continue to construct a definition of development that is suitable to me, I would add the words love and friendship. We can see through my story that building close relationships with community members from different populations in order to live more fully and understand the local power dynamics was essential to my work. It required reflection on these relationships and naturally shifting agency in their direction regardless of the political implications.

Most of all I needed to take time to be a part of the community love it and redefine my understanding of development practice before joining in and marching on.

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