

Gender: Hinder or helper? Unpacking gender-identity's impacts on long-term fellowships in West Africa

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Introduction

- AgriCorps Fellowship for Americans in Ghana and Liberia
- Focused on Agricultural Education
- Long-term fellowship; 10+ months in-country
- Analyzed via Constant Comparative Method
- Cultural differences between West Africa and U.S.; gender norms

“There were certain things that people expected me to do or expected of me because I am female.”



Theoretical Framework

- Feminist Theory
- Interactions between women and men exist through a power hierarchy lens
- Sexism integrates itself into many cultures, remaining a present force in Africa



Methods

- Semi-structured Interviews
- 18 individuals, 5 male, 13 female, and 21 to 29 years old (during fellowship)
- Conducted and recorded over Zoom
- Audio transcribed and coded
- Analyzed via Constant Comparative Method



Results

- Four Themes:
- Female gender disparity
 - Male gender advancement
 - Perceived gender roles
 - Female solidarity



Conclusions

- Fellows witness or received gender identity-based changes in behavior from locals in their host-countries.
- This supports knowledge on sexism in this region and feminist theory
- Effects fellow experience based on gender; negative and positive ways



Recommendations

- Implementing and/or increasing gender-training for all fellows
- Training should aim to prepare both male and female fellows, volunteers, and like participants for the gender-based difference in treatment among them
- Further research be conducted on programs in other regions and countries to better understand possible differences and similarities between them
- Research be conducted with in-country stakeholders
- Better understand ways to prevent, mitigate, and/or handle these issues from the perspective of a native of the regions being entered by these fellows

“I was probably blessed because I was in an easier position than my female colleagues.”

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