

A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development:
An Ethnographic Case Study from Chiapas, Mexico

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Abstract

Participatory approaches to international and community development have gained significant popularity, and are commonly held to be intrinsically empowering processes. In the context of development, both participation and empowerment were borne of radical claims and democratizing goals, but over time, both concepts have been confused and misappropriated. The popularity of the terms *participation* and *empowerment*, coupled with the ambiguity of their meanings, illustrates a symptom of their co-optation away from their radical and political roots. This ethnographic case study explored the mechanics of the participatory approach and claims of empowerment within the experience of a non-governmental organization based in Chiapas, Mexico. This study aimed to investigate the linkages between participation and empowerment, in their original radical and theoretical forms, as well as in practice—addressing questions of whether and how participation may lead to empowerment. The organization's endeavors to create space for participatory learning for critical consciousness and self-sufficiency, as understood through 30 semi-structured interviews and three months of participant observation, provided insight into these questions and their conceptual underpinnings. I analyzed data by drawing upon Freirean critical pedagogy, critical theory, and theories of participation and participatory learning. Findings examine the influence of clientelism, Catholic liberation theology, and the Zapatista uprising on the ways rural *campesinos* develop critical consciousness and organize to dismantle systems of oppression. Findings illustrate examples of interactive participation and self-mobilization. The study serves to demonstrate the importance of cultural and historical contexts, and of solidarity and downward accountability within the praxis of participation and empowerment.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the people who opened their hearts and minds to me as participants in this research, and to those who have committed their lives to cultivating justice and dismantling systems of oppression;

And, also, to Ollie, whose love and support made this work possible.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Background	1
Problem Statement	2
Research Purpose and Questions	7
Theoretical Framework	7
Methodology	8
Significance	9
Definition of Terms	13
Chapter Two: Literature Review	17
Introduction	17
International Development and Community Development	17
The role of non-governmental organizations in development.	19
Accountability in development practice.	21
Participation	22
Sustainable agriculture as participatory learning.	26
Agroecology and the creation of sustainable futures.	31
Participation in governance, democracy-building and social justice.	32
Clientelism, state corporatism, and implications for participation.	33
Praxis of Participation	35

Critical pedagogy.....	35
Action research.....	38
Participatory rural appraisal.....	40
Participation and Empowerment.....	42
Measuring participation and empowerment.....	49
Theoretical Framework.....	52
Participatory learning.....	52
Empowerment.....	54
Critical theory.....	54
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	61
Introduction.....	61
Philosophical Stance.....	61
Questions of Trustworthiness.....	64
Researcher Reflexivity.....	67
Study Design.....	68
Case study.....	70
Ethnography.....	70
Ethnographic context.....	73
Socio-historic context of Chiapas.....	75
The unique context of Tojolabal identity.....	80
Participant selection.....	81
Gaining entrée.....	82
In-depth interviews and conversations.....	84
Participant observation and after-action conversations.....	86
Content analysis of primary sources.....	89
Analysis.....	90

Analysis of interviews.	91
The Role of Translation and Language	93
Limitations	94
Chapter Four: Findings	96
Introduction	96
Cultural and Socio-Historical Context of Participation	98
The role of religion and liberation theology in the region.	99
The lens of gender and gender equality.	103
The experience of Neozapatismo.	106
Illiteracy and lack of access to education.	107
Participation and a Participatory Approach	109
Interactive participation.	110
Leadership and decision-making.	113
Partnership and solidarity.	116
Participatory learning.	120
Recognizing and Naming Systems of Oppression	122
Critical practitioners and a neoliberal reality.	123
Community division and violence as a symptom of oppression.	127
Migration as a symptom of oppression.	131
Implications of clientelism for participation and the development of critical consciousness.	132
Conceptualizations of Empowerment	142
Descriptions of critical consciousness.	143
Economic empowerment and gender equality.	146
Linking Participation and Empowerment: Self-Mobilization and Critical Consciousness	149
Summary of Findings	153

Chapter Five: Discussion	156
Introduction	156
The Mediating Effects of Cultural and Historical Context	159
The Diverse Role of NGOs in Development	161
Development of Critical Consciousness.....	164
Linking Participation and Empowerment	166
Recommendations for Future Research and Practice	170
Recommendations for future research.	171
Recommendations for future practice.....	172
Final Remarks	173
References	175
Appendices	185
Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter	185
Appendix B: NGO Recruitment Script	186
Appendix C: Verbal Recruitment Script for Semi-Structured Interviews.....	187
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form for NGO Staff.....	188
Appendix E: Verbal Consent Script for Semi-Structured Interviews with NGO Participants ...	190
Appendix F: Semi Structured Interview Guide for NGO Staff	191
Appendix G: Semi Structured Interview Guide for NGO Participants.....	193
Appendix H: Verbal Consent Script for Participant Observation	195
Appendix I: Participant Observation Guide	196
Appendix J: A <i>Priori</i> Propositions and Research Questions	198
Appendix K: Logic	200
Appendix L: Master List of Codes and Themes.....	204
Appendix M: Original (Untranslated) Quotes	206

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Participatory approaches have long been held as a more effective and efficient form of development than prescriptive approaches to development. They are seen as intrinsically leading to democracy and empowerment (Kesby, 2007; e.g., Chambers, 1994; Chambers, 1997). However, a deeper analysis of the literature reveals diverging claims and outcomes of the participatory approach. Many have noted that participation was often been co-opted into surreptitiously promoting neoliberal agendas (intentionally or unintentionally; e.g., Kapoor & Jordan, 2009), rather than being employed in its original radical form as a mechanism for development that holds the potential to escape the neoliberalist and neocolonialist trap (Bartlett, 2008; Hellin et al., 2008; Lilja & Bellon, 2008; Neef & Neubert, 2011; Pretty, 1995). The former is referred to as the efficiency argument for (or instrumental approach to) participation, and the latter as the equity and empowerment argument for participation (Cleaver, 1999; Pretty, 1995).

Cleaver successfully problematized the participatory approach in 1999 and 2000 by uncovering many of the unquestioned assumptions upon which the approach is based. She pointed to the lack of sufficient evidence to support the lofty claims (from both camps of participation) of empowerment and democratization. Her 1999 paper serves to illustrate “the need for a more complex understanding of issues of efficiency and empowerment in participatory approaches” (p. 597). In 2005, Hickey and Mohan echoed Cleaver’s claim by implicating participation’s lack of an undergirding theoretical framework, and the associated dearth of appropriate tools to analyze participation, in its co-optation and depoliticization. Many others have called into question and problematized the underlying assumptions of the participatory approach and participatory development’s theory of change (e.g., Cooke & Kothari

(Eds.), 2001; Cornwall & Coelho (Eds.), 2007; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2007). Despite fifteen years of vigorous discussion of participatory theories of change and the challenges of participatory development, little progress has been made to explore the original claim of participatory development: that it serves to promote the empowerment of participants (Clever, 1999). Further, the vivid articulation of the flaws, pitfalls and shortcomings of the participatory approach has done little to curb its adoption and application.

Additionally, the notion of empowerment has been problematized in its own right (e.g., Archibald & Wilson, 2011; Bartlett, 2008; Cleaver, 1999; Ellsworth, 1989; Lankshear, 1995). Similar to participation, empowerment has been recognized as having (arguably mutually exclusive) instrumental value or intrinsic value (Bartlett, 2008). Commonly, goals of empowerment may be better described as capacity building (e.g., Barzman & Desilles, 2002, pp. 208-209) because no substantial change in power dynamics was ever intended to occur. Cleaver (1999) has implicated development's buzzwordification of empowerment in its depoliticization and in the loss of its "radical, challenging and transformatory edge" (p. 599), as have Cornwall and Brock (2005, p. 1046). The continued pervasiveness of the 'heroic' claims of the participatory approach, despite the domestication of both participation and empowerment away from their radical roots, provided the motivation for this study.

Problem Statement

Funding organizations have increasingly mandated the use of participatory approaches in agricultural development projects. This is due, in part, to the perception of their increased effectiveness in improving rural livelihoods due to increased buy-in and minimized dissension from community members. Participatory methods are also perceived to be better suited to education and development programs within the more complex agricultural systems common in

marginalized areas of the globe, such as diversified, low-input and rain-fed production systems. However, there is a dearth of empirical evidence that serves to demonstrate the “long-term effectiveness of participation in materially improving the conditions of the most vulnerable people or as a strategy for social change” (Cleaver, 2001, p. 36). In fact, Cooke (2001) suggested that participatory approaches have the potential to significantly impede community development efforts due to inevitable negative processes of group dynamics and social psychology. In using participatory approaches, there exists the danger of “reifying local knowledge and treating it as singular,” (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008, p. 180) which ignores the diverse perspectives of stakeholders. If proper care is not taken, participatory methods can easily propagate the beliefs and assumptions of those who already hold power within a community, while further marginalizing those who hold the lowest standing within a society (Mosse, 2001).

Participatory approaches to research, education and development have broad ranging implications for power. One of the major claims for the participatory approach is that “participatory knowledge strategies can challenge deep-rooted power inequalities” by “remedying the power inequalities through processes of knowledge production, which [strengthen] voice, organization and action” (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008, pp. 172-173). In their expository text, Cooke & Kothari (Eds., 2001) successfully challenged these notions through their identification and thorough critique of long-held assumptions of participation, highlighting the potentially negative or insidious role of power in participation. Additionally, Friis-Hansen (2008) identified a significant gap in the understanding of how participatory approaches may be linked with societal transformation through empowerment: “while participatory technology development has without doubt proved a sound way of enhancing the relevance of agricultural technology for the participating farmers, its wider impact on reducing rural poverty is less clearly

documented” (p. 507). While it is clear that participatory approaches have the potential to facilitate stakeholders’ empowerment, and are occasionally successful in doing so; the actual facilitation of empowerment has been haphazard.

Engaging in the process of participation does not necessarily bring about a shift in power dynamics, i.e. participation is not inherently empowering for farmers in promoting sustained societal change that would allow farmers to take control of their own development. Intrinsic empowerment occurs when there is a genuine shift in power, where the formerly disempowered have built the capacity to harness and exercise their latent power and agency. Intrinsic empowerment occurs when farmers take control of a project from design to dissemination with the outcome of a “profound and lasting change in the way people live their lives” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 527). The concept of intrinsic empowerment is offered in contrast to the concept of empowerment for instrumental ends. Instrumental empowerment stems from a more recent discussion of gains in efficiency and cost-savings associated with the ‘empowerment’ of workers (Bartlett, 2008, p. 526). Empowerment for instrumental benefits may be attractive for certain initiatives and funders. Achieving these instrumental ends is likely the extent of the empowerment goal for the majority of participatory development projects, as it is not threatening to the overall distribution of power and is readily measurable through evaluation of increased efficiency. In contrast, intrinsic empowerment is evidenced primarily by the *subjects* of development setting goals for their development outcomes, as well as designing and managing their own processes of development. Intrinsic empowerment must also be self-assessed using indicators designed and measured by the stakeholders (Bartlett, 2008, p. 529). It seems plausible that the level of difficulty inherent in this type of self-evaluation, and its foundation in a constructivist and participatory paradigm may have undermined the pursuit of intrinsic

empowerment when, alternatively, goals of instrumental empowerment may be applied and measured with relative ease.

The co-optation of participation for instrumental ends rather than intrinsic empowerment has been facilitated, at least in part, by a lack of emphasis on the significance of power, knowledge and action in the participatory process. Kapoor and Jordan (2009) have described this co-optation, in the context of participatory action research (PAR), as “the attempted political dismemberment and disengagement of PAR (especially in relation to anti/critical colonial variations) in professional and academic spaces” (p. 3). They asserted that the process of co-optation is at the same time predictable and ironic:

[It is] predictable (given the politics of co-optation and its role in helping to reproduce a global capitalist hegemony and Euro-American knowledge hegemony) and ironic, given the real extent of marginalization, dispossession, and colonization in the contemporary era and more significantly, the growing and vocal resistance to attempted subjugations. (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009, p. 3)

According to Kapoor and Jordan (2009), evidence of the co-optation of the participatory approach is readily apparent and is evidenced in the pervasive allegiance to Euro-American ontologies and epistemologies (with subsequent homogenization and assimilationist tendencies of education and research practice). They also cited adherence to neoliberal values as a manifestation of co-optation: “selecting and addressing research issues that are primarily of significance to the market and to corporatized-states, or conversely, research that is of little political threat to these interests” (p. 2). Kapoor and Jordan implicated the increasing influence of positivist-leaning methodology, with goals of ‘objectivity,’ that simultaneously caters to funders and serves to reproduce sociopolitical asymmetries of inequality and injustice, all while avoiding the issues of power and politics that are intrinsic to the approach. Lastly they point to the co-optation of participation into its antithesis: “processes of control and discipline, benign or

exploitative, by international institutions allegedly addressing progressive concerns around Third World development, debt, impoverishment, and inequality or by civil society groups (e.g., international NGOs) peddling empowerment, justice, and human rights” (p. 2).

To mitigate what Kapoor and Jordan (2009) have referred to as “the neutering of the political intent and definition of PAR processes,” (p. 3) the authors identified the “pressing political and epistemic necessity to redraw the lines distinguishing various PAR engagements” (p. 3). They also observed the need to reunite participatory processes with their original commitment to serve the interests of marginalized and dispossessed social groups using a “for, with, by” approach (p. 3). Although PAR necessarily represents a particular paradigm of participatory approaches, Kapoor and Jordan’s claims readily extend to the genre as a whole. For example, Wallace, Bornstein, and Chapman (2007) found that “while there are many radical alternative approaches being used in practice, for example around participatory and gender methodologies, these all too often become tamed and institutionalized to fit into current bureaucratic forms of thinking and procedures” (p. 109). Empowerment, a concept that involves similarly complex dynamics of power, may also be identified as having been ‘neutered’ or ‘tamed.’

Empowerment, it may be argued, has been co-opted to the point that the construct of power has been effectively removed from the discourse on empowerment. This has occurred to such a degree that some “warn of the facile, unreflective use of empowerment as a hollow buzzword by leftist educators” (Archibald & Wilson, 2011, p. 22). In effect, the term ‘empowerment’ has been tamed to such a degree that it has become malleable enough to be claimed as a goal and achievement of nearly any participatory project.

Research Purpose and Questions

Assuming development organizations' commitment to the participatory approach is generally well intentioned, Cleaver's (2001) question of whether and how the participatory approach of community development serves the interests of its participants is vital (p. 54). In the context of this study, Cleaver's question is intimately linked with the question of whether the participatory approach is linked with intrinsic empowerment (Bartlett, 2008). Building from this assumption and these questions, I employed a case study design with a non-governmental community development organization that uses a participatory approach as the case of interest, to address the following questions:

- Whether and how the participatory approach, as used by a small, local non-governmental organization serves the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve; and,
- Which components of a participatory approach are directly tied to either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants' intrinsic empowerment.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is comprised of participatory learning (Pretty, 1995, 1998, 2002; Pretty & Uphoff, 2002), the concept of empowerment (Bartlett, 2008; Freire, 1970/2010, 1974/2013; Hickey & Mohan, 2005; Mohan & Stokke, 2000) and critical theory (Brookfield, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, as cited in Carspecken, 1996). Participatory learning is rooted in social learning and the cogeneration of knowledge. Participatory learning is significant as a contributor to the theoretical underpinnings of this research and as a major focal point of interest of the study. In the context of this study, true participation and participatory learning is operationalized as a mechanism for self-mobilization that challenges the status quo of power, wealth and opportunity. Participatory learning is closely linked to critical pedagogy

(Freire, 1970/2010, 1974/2013) in that it is dialogic, reciprocal, reflexive and oriented toward social change through a process of conscientization. Pretty (1995) referred to this type of participation as interactive participation and self-mobilization (p. 1252).

Generally, empowerment does not have a cohesive theoretical underpinning across bodies of literature. In this study, I use the concept of intrinsic empowerment to refer to the goal of processes of critical pedagogy, conscientization, interactive participation and self-mobilization. This concept of empowerment does not refer to an individual's psychological experience. Rather, it refers to a self-directed process of community development by which people are able develop a critical consciousness, recognize and begin to dismantle hegemonic forces, take control of their lives, self-determine and pursue social change and structural transformation (Bartlett, 2008; Freire, 1970/2010, 1974/2013; Hickey and Mohan, 2005; Mohan & Stokke, 2000).

Critical pedagogy and critical theory provide a way to link knowledge generation through participatory processes with emancipatory learning and empowerment. Like participative theories, critical theory allows me, as a researcher, to acknowledge the value-laden nature of knowledge generation and the political processes by which knowledge is created. Critical theory also provides space for activist aspects of this project, because undoing oppressive conditions and pursuing social justice are at the center of the theory.

Methodology

The methodology guiding this study is carefully aligned with its epistemological, ontological and axiological positioning. The epistemological foundation rests on the assumption that knowledge is contextual and cogenerated. The ontology is based on the presence of multiple realities and the notion that diverse stakeholders experience different realities. The axiology,

founded on principles of critical theory, recognizes the value-laden nature of knowledge and the role of power in knowledge construction. Guided by this positioning, this study used a qualitative case study design that drew heavily on components of critical ethnography (Boglio Martínez, 2011; Carspecken, 1994) and traditional ethnography (O'Reilly, 2009) to guide data collection and analysis. The principal methods of data collection included in-depth interviewing, participant observation, informal after-action review, and content analysis of primary sources. Given the guiding epistemology, the validity of this study must be assessed by the research participants themselves and is evidenced by the ability of the research findings to be transformed into and reflected in action.

Significance

The contribution of this study is rooted in its capacity to provide commentary on the ways in which participatory methods may either contribute to or hinder empowerment of participants in order to begin to address the question of whether empowerment is a legitimate and/or viable goal of participatory processes in community development. The commentary and findings of this study related to linkages between participation and empowerment have implications for research and practice. The significance of this study is threefold: this study contributes to the growing body of literature that offers critical analysis of the transformative nature of participatory approach; it serves to inform the praxis of participatory approaches to development; and provides valuable insight into the use of ethnography as a methodological tool for the study of community development.

This research contributes to the body of literature that questions the assumptions of the participatory approach and offers avenues for improvement (e.g., Cleaver, 1999; Cooke & Kothari (Eds.), 2001; Cornwall & Coelho (Eds.), 2007; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2007; Kapoor &

Jordan, 2009; Hickey and Mohan, 2005). This body of literature identifies and distinguishes between radical participatory approaches and co-opted forms of participation, aiming to reunite participation with its radical democratic roots. My findings contribute to the field because they identify which strategies within the approach are effective in fostering a significant and sustained change in people's livelihoods, which may be referred to as intrinsic empowerment (Bartlett, 2008, p. 527).

The findings of this study demonstrate that a participatory approach that is downwardly accountable, critical, context-driven, and solidary, with a strategic vision oriented toward self-mobilization and the development of critical consciousness is an approach that may be justifiably linked, in theory and in praxis, with the goal of intrinsic empowerment. My study shows that empowerment is a legitimate goal of a participatory practice that is more closely related to its radical and democratic roots and further removed from conventional donor-driven development. Because of these findings, this study holds implications for both literature on participatory community development and the applied praxis of participation for community development.

This critical analysis of the participatory approach, as presented through the lens of an ethnographic case study, offers insights and areas for critical reflection and reform for, not only the NGO represented in the case, but any individual or organization seeking to improve their development practice. My hope is that this study can contribute to the promotion of participatory development practices that repudiate overemphasis on upward accountability that results in manipulation and token participation, and rather, embrace a downwardly accountable and critical practice oriented toward the self-mobilization of participants. Similar to the areas of academic significance, development organizations that use or are interested in using a participatory approach can use the findings and conclusions drawn from this study to evaluate whether their

goals are appropriate to their approach and critically analyze whether empowerment is an appropriate goal for their work. This study also demonstrates and reiterates the importance of downward accountability to goals of emancipatory social change. Development professionals may use the findings and conclusions of this study to critically examine their priorities for accountability to determine that they, as practitioners, are logically and strategically driving toward the development goals of either their donors or their development constituents, and to make a conscious choice regarding whose aims or interests take priority.

In designing and carrying out this study, I also intended for findings and conclusions to have direct usefulness for the non-governmental organization that served as the case. I hope the findings of our joint inquiry offer guidance in further developing programs and have direct relevance to the participants of this study by assisting these practitioners in critically questioning the approach and the assumptions they hold in their work so that they may better serve their program participants. Additionally, the practitioners at the organization that served as the case for this study may use the findings of this study to revise their strategic goals, evaluate the logic of their approach, and to inform their vision for their work and their organization moving forward.

The application of qualitative ethnographic methods in this study also carry significance. In her 2001 article, Markowitz reflected on the dearth of anthropological studies on NGOs noting,

it does indeed seem that studying NGOs ought to be our bailiwick, particularly since anthropological holism provides us with a ‘comparative advantage’ when it comes to analyzing how organizations connect with other aspects of the society—the state, municipalities, families, production and exchange systems, and cultural institutions. (p. 40)

She went on to discuss the alignment between ethnographic methods and the study of NGOs:

Ethnographic methods are well suited for assessing these interrelations and the real or potential coincidence of interests that motivate individual involvement. In this respect, the study of NGOs also offers a way to respond to critiques of hegemonic development discourses (Escobar 1995; Sachs 1992) by presenting the points of view of actors with different relations to the goals and activities nested within programs and projects. (p. 40)

Complementing these claims, in his 2001 literature review of ethnographic research on development, Watts noted that these emerging studies had opened a discussion of development in what he described as “a much more grounded, institutional and ethnographic way, posing hard questions about how development ideas are institutionalized and how particular development interventions may generate conflict as much as consent” (p. 286). Watts added that an ethnographic approach to studying development

takes the *social construction* of knowledge (by whom, with what materials, with what authority, with what effects), and the relations between knowledge and practice very seriously, and in doing so can identify struggles and spaces in which important changes can be and are made. (p. 286)

In applying ethnographic methodology in this study, I found that both Markowitz’s and Watts’s points were valid. In designing this study as an ethnography, I joined a small cohort of academics studying the complexities of development practice and development stakeholders in a way that recognizes the importance of the social construction of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and practice. As an ethnographic study on development, this study may serve as an example for those interested in using this approach to examine community and international development processes.

Beyond the significance of this study as an example of an ethnographic method, several aspects of my research design make it a unique example of an application of ethnographic methods. I ‘embedded’ myself for three months of data collection. The short duration of my study allows it to serve as an example of how ethnographic data collection may be carried out in a shorter-than-typical timeframe.

The use of language and translation in this study is also of methodological significance. For this thesis, I collected and analyzed data in Spanish, but presented the findings derived from the data in English. The design of this study can serve as an example of a cross-cultural and bilingual study where the role of interpretation and translation is described in detail and as transparently as was possible.

Definition of Terms

A number of key terms represent the themes around which I oriented this thesis. Here I provide definitions of important terms as I have employed them in my work, as their definitions are used and presented in variable ways in relevant academic literature. Throughout my work, I have formed working definitions of terms as a basis for the questions I ask.

Community development provides the umbrella conceptual grounding for my thesis research. Community development is generally considered a process designed to foster the creation of stable and secure communities, with emphasis most often placed on capacity building and self-reliance. Within this broad definition, community development can be undertaken as a means to fulfill a number of diverse goals. At one end of the spectrum, community development can be viewed as a mechanism to quell would-be political unrest and sociopolitical uprisings (Hickey & Mohan, 2005). At the other end, community development is used as a mechanism to foster agency, self-determination, citizenship, full exercise of rights, and may in fact intentionally foster political unrest and spur sociopolitical uprisings (Hickey & Mohan, 2005). I have adopted the latter end of the spectrum as the definition of community development for the purposes of my research. Throughout this document, I use the terms, community development, international development, and international community development. Community development, as I have described above, is a process aimed at developing stable and secure communities, it

may be used by large, international development institutions, although, in my conceptualization, it is more readily associated with small local institutions. **International development**, as I have used it in my thesis, is a general term that refers to the work of a development organization or institution that is based in one country, but applies its development projects, such as offering financial or technical assistance, to other countries. Most commonly an organization from a wealthy country that serves other governments, organizations, communities, or individuals in poorer countries; examples of international development, as I have used the term in this thesis, include the development work of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, Oxfam and Save the Children (Schaaf, 2013). I have used the term **international community development** to describe the process of community development as used by an international development institution or organization. Heifer International is an example of an organization that engages in international community development (Aaker, 2007).

Within community development, **non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** are also principal actors. Any organization that operates within a sector distinct from both the for profit and public sectors may be considered to be an NGO (Boglio Martínez, 2011). For the purposes of this thesis, an NGO has the following characteristics: NGOs are self-directed, generally driven by the guidance of their staff and board of directors, and occasionally by their membership; they are not for-profit, community oriented, and are driven by affective values. The role of NGOs is largely viewed as providing services that have not previously been provided by either the private or public sectors (Boglio Martínez, 2011). In this thesis, I use the term **local** to describe an NGO that is both based in and operates within a single geographically- or culturally-defined region. Here, the descriptor 'local' may also indicate that the staff of the NGO are 'locals,' or, committed stakeholders within the region the NGO serves.

Many NGOs apply a participatory approach in their pursuit of community development. **Participation**, I will argue, is a term that has suffered co-optation and as a result, may be broadly defined. To define participation for the purposes of this thesis, I drew on Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation that outlined the range of definitions and characteristics attributed to participation. Pretty (1995), whose conceptualization and explanations of participation for sustainable agriculture have been essential to the development of this thesis, reminded the reader of the variable definitions that may be attributed to participation as a result of this co-optation: "great care must, therefore, be taken over both using and interpreting the term" (p. 1253). To aid in the process of defining and interpreting the variable definitions of participation, Pretty presented a ladder with seven rungs each representing a location on the spectrum of potential uses of the term participation.

For the purposes of this thesis, the rungs of the ladder comprised of manipulative participation, where "participation is simply a pretense" (p. 1252) to functional participation where "people may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project" (p. 1252) are not included in the definition of participation. In this thesis, only the rungs of the ladder that represent interactive participation and self-mobilization are considered to be participation, following Pretty's suggestion that true forms of participation involve the active engagement of citizens in political and social processes that affect their lives.

Within participation, the term **participatory learning** figures largely in this thesis. Here, participatory learning is defined as a process of social learning that emphasizes capacity building for adaptability through continued innovation (Pretty, 1995). Participatory learning is inherently a social form of learning and is characterized by a peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge. It has an

epistemological basis in constructivism, as participatory learning theory holds that knowledge is cogenerated, value-laden, and contextually bound (Pretty, 1995).

Relatedly, central to this thesis is the term ‘**conscientization**,’ a term employed by Paulo Freire to describe a ‘coming-to-consciousness’ derived through popular education in which people become “aware of the political, socioeconomic and cultural contradictions that interact in a hegemonic way to diminish their lives” (Ledwith, 2005, p. 97) and “where the poor were to become agents of social and political transformation aimed at creating just, peaceful, and democratic societies” (Jordan, 2009, p. 16). In this work, I use Freire’s (1970/2010; 1974/2013) notion of conscientization to describe and provide theoretical grounding to the term empowerment.

Empowerment is a concept with two divergent and arguably mutually exclusive definitions. Intrinsic empowerment is rooted in social justice and a shift of power away from those who currently hold power to those who do not, allowing all the opportunity to take control of their situations and their futures: to self-determine. Instrumental empowerment operates within the current status quo of power, and has goals of improving worker-efficiency and subsequent cost-savings for the employer. According to Mohan and Stokke (2000), instrumental empowerment represents a neoliberal strategy for institutional reform. For the purposes of this work, I understand the ability of the disempowered to learn (through a process of conscientization) to recognize, name and dismantle systems of oppression, to be a central element of intrinsic empowerment in which the poor and disenfranchised ‘take control of their lives’ and their destinies (Bartlett, 2008).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

I explored scholarly literature relevant to my interests in community development, participation and empowerment for this study. Through a review that literature, I sought to gain an understanding of topics related to international and community development, and in relation to theories and praxis of participation and empowerment. This literature review led me to the question that animated this research, and developed and refined my research questions. The literature also provided focal points to help locate and orient important findings from the data I collected, and points of discussion linked to larger scholarly conversations.

International Development and Community Development

In framing this study, it was helpful to reference theories of development and to question assumptions about what development entails. First, how and by whom is development defined? Youngman (2000) suggested, “the term ‘development’ refers to the idea that a deliberate action can be taken to change society in chosen directions which are considered desirable” (p. 5). This definition begs the question of who has responsibility to choose directions and deem them ‘desirable.’ Clearly, development is a value-laden concept.

The fields of adult education and participatory development argue that the recipients of development (who, these fields also argue, are the key actors in that enterprise) are responsible for determining the course and outcomes of their own development. Researchers have developed many different theories to describe and explain processes of development. I examine theories relevant to my research questions in the following paragraphs.

The dependency theory of development gained widespread support in the 1950s and 1960s (Schaaf, 2013, p. 21). This theory attributed the divergent economic and social

development trajectories of early-developing countries and late-developing countries to neocolonial agendas (Earle & Simonelli, 2000). Although dependency theory has been largely discredited for its overemphasis on economic factors and lack of attention to political, social or cultural factors influencing development (Schaaf, 2013, p. 21), dependency theory influenced the field of adult education and rural development in significant ways (Youngman, 2000, p. 130).

One of the most significant contributions dependency theory made to the fields of adult education and rural development was through its (adapted) application by Paulo Freire (Youngman, 2000, p. 65). Freire stretched the limits of dependency theory to include cultural dependency in addition to economic dependency. In his Latin American context, Freire implicated the process of ‘Europeanization’ in creating “alienation and a culture of silence” (Youngman, 2000, p. 65) for Latin Americans.

Populist and grassroots development theories suggest a holistic and people-centered form of development. These development approaches attempt to take social, political, cultural and other internal factors into account, in addition to economic factors, when conceptualizing development processes. Both populist and grassroots development strategies are linked with participation and empowerment (Schaaf, 2013, pp. 22, 213-215; Youngman, 2000, p. 73).

According to Youngman (2000),

the populist model of development has had a significant influence on adult education, resonating with the tradition of adult education as a popular movement for social change. The idea of ‘people-centered development’ necessarily puts great value on engendering the consciousness and abilities that are required for people to form and manage their own organizations. This gives prominence to forms of adult education that are highly accessible, especially to groups that are normally excluded, and very responsive to the needs and interests of the participants. (p. 79)

Schaaf (2013) raised critiques of participation as a people-centered development approach. She notes the issues of the increased time and energy needed to engage in a participatory practice, the

potentially limited or short-sighted effectiveness of development projects put forth through participatory means, and the potential for participation to become coercive or tyrannical (p. 215).

Indeed, though some are likely more effective and more just than others, every approach to development has the potential to harm participants inadvertently—at the mild end of the spectrum, by wasting their valuable time; and at the more extreme end of the spectrum, by disrupting community dynamics, diminishing material resources, or by causing psychological damage. Earle and Simonelli (2000) have noted “how easy it can be to create unintentional difficulties in the midst of one’s best efforts” (p. 98), and they advocated strongly for development practitioners to exercise caution in their approach to avoid harming their participants. Ronalds (2010) agreed, and went further in suggesting that the overall objective of ‘do no harm’ may be unrealistic. Ronalds argued,

seeking to do no harm may be too high a standard and that it may be enough to understand the harm your actions may have (through better technical skills) and seek to ameliorate them while closely monitoring the net effect your activities are having. (2010, p. 136)

Unfortunately, despite what generally appear to be altruistic intentions, international and community development projects are regularly accused of inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Earle & Simonelli, 2000; Pretty, 2002). In 2000, Earle and Simonelli commented, “the failure to develop a rigorous approach to helping the disadvantaged despite huge investments of resources may become a historical legacy of the past fifty years” (p. 98). Unfortunately, this has continued relatively unabated into the twenty-first century.

The role of non-governmental organizations in development. As facilitators of community development, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are self-directed, not-for-profit, community-driven, and are seen as occupying a third space, apart from the public and for-profit sectors (Boglio Martínez, 2011, p. 3). NGOs often become responsible for filling in service

gaps unaddressed by the public and private sectors (Earle & Simonelli, 2000, p. 99). According to Boglio Martínez, NGOs may be viewed as “vehicles through which citizens organize to advocate for improvements or changes in the state’s dealings with social, economic or cultural issues, and confront the market’s inability to provide goods and services in an equitable and/or affordable manner” (Boglio Martínez, 2011, p. 4). The term ‘non-governmental organization’ encapsulates a genre of service and aid organization that is motivated by heterogeneous values and evidences different purposes and roles in different societies. Most commonly, NGOs rely on the leadership of their staff with guidance from a self-appointed board of directors and are driven by their strong values (e.g., ethical or religious) (Brett, 2009). Two of the most common claims of supporters of non-governmental organizations are that they have the capability of simultaneously strengthening democratic processes and empowering their beneficiaries (Brett, 2009, p. 168).

Because NGOs are neither public nor private for-profit enterprises, they appeal to both neoliberalist and socialist agendas (Brett, 2009). Earle and Simonelli (2000) offered an example at each end of the NGO spectrum:

On the one extreme, many NGOs internalize the notion that their programs are short-term bridges on the long road to privatization, promoting economic opportunities which are seen as part of the process of liberalization. At the other extreme, the organizations act as spokespersons for civil society in rebellion, seeing their alternative development initiatives as ways to subvert and circumvent the system. (p. 103)

Because of their heterogeneity NGOs, can be seen as facilitating neoliberalism or as fostering social and political change. Indeed, both arguments have been effectively made.

In their promotion of community development, NGOs may be seen as “complicit in the weakening of the ‘social contract’ between state and citizen” (Hickey & Mohan, 2005, p. 244) carrying out the colonial tradition of valuing the (re)production of stable communities as a means

of counteracting sociopolitical change (Hickey & Mohan, 2005, p. 240). Similarly, NGOs' intense focus on fostering change at a local level often precludes them from effecting larger-scale structural change because they are ill-equipped to address the major external factors (e.g., global market forces, national and global politics, etc.) that contribute to the local situation. The role of NGOs in carrying out a neoliberal agenda should not be underemphasized (Shivji, 2007). In spite of driving values that ostensibly stand in direct contradiction to values of neoliberalism, NGOs are often forced to solicit funds and support from global financial leaders who rely heavily on the maintenance of the status quo. This ever increasing dependency on funders, and subsequent upward accountability serves to "short-circuit" NGOs' abilities to maintain downward accountability to the people they intend to serve (Hickey & Mohan, 2005, p. 245).

More optimistically, NGOs, because of their values-driven nature and their stance apart from private and public sectors, may be viewed as "sites through which power over marginalized groups is articulated and deployed" with "the potential to carry out not only ideological work, but also practical work (social interventions) that advances a variety of political causes" (Boglio Martínez, 2011, pp. 4-5). Regardless of where particular NGOs lie on the spectrum of community development ideology, as a genre, NGOs are commonly viewed as critical to the practice of community development.

Accountability in development practice. NGOs, as neither publicly funded programs nor private industry with self-sustaining income, experience a unique tension in balancing accountability. In their book *The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs*, Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman noted the well-documented tension that NGOs must contend with in balancing accountability to donors (upward accountability) and accountability to 'beneficiaries' (downward accountability) (2007, p. 39). The authors argued that the tension is

similar to that of a large company that must satisfy the needs of both shareholders and customers, where sometimes a decision may benefit shareholders but not the customers, as in development, what may appeal to a donor may not best serve the ‘beneficiary’ of development (p. 39).

Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman pointed out, however, that in the case of development the power differential between donors and development stakeholders (‘beneficiaries’) does not mirror that of shareholders and customers, as the survival of an NGO relies more heavily on appeasing the expectations of donors, rather than serving the actual needs and demands of ‘developees’ (p. 39). To illustrate this point, the authors quoted a development worker from the UK who told them: “you don’t see NGOs being passionate about the poor and wanting to meet their needs in the way [a large supermarket] does with their customers” (p. 39). In particular, Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman noted the difficulties of using the conventional evaluation standards, such as the logframe approach, as the standards by which impact must be measured.

In asserting this point, the authors pointed out “the paradigm of controlled, measurable change seems to be the norm at every level, even though the reality of life is far more complex” (p. 129). Following Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman, the power of donors over development NGOs results in a greater emphasis on upward accountability and an orientation toward oversimplified evaluation and reporting that may not be designed with the needs of ‘developees’ in mind. Thus, the current model of donor-driven development results in dysfunction on the part of development NGOs, and lack of emphasis on more substantial but less readily measurable social and systemic change.

Participation

In her seminal work, Arnstein (1969) defined citizen participation as being directly linked to “citizen power” (p. 216). She explained that participation represents “the redistribution of

power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future” (p. 216). Arnstein (1969) used the image of a ladder to represent what she referred to as the eight levels of participation. The ladder’s lower rungs are occupied by non-participation, and middle rungs represent token participation. The upper rungs of the ladder represent true citizen participation characterized by “partnership,” “delegated power” and “citizen control” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

Pretty (1995) built from Arnstein’s ladder and adapted it for use in participatory learning for agriculture. Pretty (1995) identified seven types of participation ranging from non-participation, (including manipulative, passive, and consultive), to participation for material incentives and functional participation (still slightly coercive or token). Participation for intrinsic ends includes interactive participation and self-mobilization. Self-mobilization may represent the beginning of an empowering or emancipatory form if the participatory process is successfully executed.

Two principal aims motivate people to engage in participatory research, extension and development (Bartlett, 2008; Hellin et al., 2008; Lilja & Bellon, 2008; Pretty, 1995). One motivation is founded in emancipatory goals, including the potential opportunity of participatory approaches to empower farmers. According to Hellin et al. (2008), the primary goal here is to “enhance local capacity to analyze problems and seek out solutions” (p. 82). Researchers and extensionists also find motivation to engage in participation with local stakeholders from the standpoint of efficiency, in the view that when farmers are engaged in the process of technology development from the beginning, the impact of the technology may be greater (as evidenced by higher rates of adoption) (Neef & Neubert, 2011; Sumberg, Okali & Reece, 2003). Pretty (1995) indicated that participation can lead to both increased efficiency and empowerment of

stakeholders, with the additional benefits of greater transparency, enhanced cost-effectiveness, and “strengthened capacity of people to learn and act” (p. 1251). Pretty argued that the legacy of participation has included the coercion of individuals into participation, even when the practice or outcome bears no interest or consequence for them.

Biggs (1989) categorized participation into four ways that farmers may be integrated as participants in agricultural research. For Biggs (1989), contractual participation occurs when scientists hire farmers on a contractual basis to provide land or services used in their research. Consultive participation involves scientists gaining information from farmers about their needs in order to develop solutions to meet those needs. These both represent methods that would be classified as non-participation or token participation by Arnstein (1969) and Pretty (1995). Interactive participation in agricultural research, is most often represented by collaborative and collegial participation, where the research tasks are divided between scientists and farmers, and by collegial participation where the research agenda is both initiated and managed by farmers and supported by researchers (Biggs, 1989).

According to Neef and Neubert (2011), the majority of researchers currently engaging in a participatory approach view participation from a functional perspective. Hellin et al. (2008) argued that empowerment goals of participation are best left to organizations driven by development objectives, rather than research objectives. They argued that that “most participatory research initiatives carried out by research organizations do not . . . have sufficient presence on the ground, and do not involve the required interaction with farmers, to generate and support direct empowerment of more than a few farmers” (p. 90). This is likely due to a commitment to functional goals of participation that dictate use of token or non-participation over more inclusive forms of participation. Incorporating goals of empowerment, when the

overall goal of the research organization takes a stance in functionality, may also reduce the cost-effectiveness of the project (Hellin et al., 2008).

A more complex issue is the potential for epistemological conflict between goals of empowerment and a prerogative for research. Participatory research projects, despite having a professed desire to include diverse epistemologies and ontologies, often hold funder-driven orientations toward objectivity and positivist-leaning worldviews. Whether these positivist- and post-positivist-leaning worldviews that hold the notion that objective reality and truth exist are incongruous with participatory approaches is a contentious question (Kincheloe, 2009, p 108).

Additionally, Pretty (1995) pointed out that those aiming toward more participatory approaches are often crippled by the dilemma between the perceived need for participation (e.g., to attract funding or assess needs) and an overwhelming uneasiness with participation because it is perceived as “less controllable, less precise and so likely to slow down planning processes” (p. 1252). Pretty noted that this dilemma often results in token participation, and that token participation breeds distrust and alienation among participants. Participation in agricultural learning and research that is guided by goals of self-mobilization is characterized by meaningful and systematic exchange between farmers and scientists or extensionists aimed at addressing practical issues the farmers face (Neef & Neubert, 2011, p. 186; Hellin et al., 2008, p. 81). This approach to participation should indicate the inclusion of all who are affected by the process or outcomes of the research and learning, either directly or indirectly (Neef & Neubert, 2011, p. 187). From a participatory approach, the role of an expert is to assist others in carrying out their own research toward their own objectives. Here the objective of participatory approach is to gain improvements and advances in knowledge that can be validated as potential solutions by the stakeholders themselves.

According to Pretty (1995), inherent to the participatory approach is reciprocal and social learning, with the assumptions that learning and knowledge is situated and context-bound, and that learning is facilitated by stakeholders themselves. A key element of participatory learning is the inclusion of diverse perspectives, recognizing that individuals and groups form opinions and make assumptions through a particular lens, which leads to “multiple possible descriptions of any real world activity” (Pretty, 1995, p. 1253). Social learning represents a theory of change employed by the participatory approach. The theory of social learning holds that social change and social transformation are based on: “critical self-reflection; the development of participatory multi-layered democratic processes; the reflexive capabilities of human individuals and societies; and the capacity for social movements to change political and economic frameworks for the better” (Woodhill & Röling, 1998, p. 53). For Pretty (1995), the ultimate defining characteristic of participatory methodology is that it “motivates for sustained action,” (p. 1254) in that participants implement changes and have increased capacity to initiate their own learning and research following the participatory process.

Sustainable agriculture as participatory learning. Sustainable agriculture cannot be discussed independent of its human dimension. The concept of sustainability is bounded not only by environmental virtues, but also by its socioeconomic context. The term sustainable agriculture refers to farmers’ “enhanced capacity to adapt in the face of unexpected changes and emerging uncertainties” (Pretty, 1998, p. 29), rather than referring to a distinct set of agricultural practices. Sustainable agriculture describes a learning practice more than a set of farming practices. Uphoff (2002) explained: “sustainability is multiply-contingent on many factors. It is not inherent in any particular practice or farming system, nor is it something that can be assessed for more than a short period of time” (p. 8). Sustainability, then, is better thought of as the ability of farmers to

learn, innovate and adapt, rather than to adopt, indefinitely, a particular set of practices. Pretty (1998) identified three steps that together constitute sustainability. The first step is encapsulated as “improved economic and environmental efficiency,” and the second as the “integration of regenerative technologies” (p. 30). The third step is related to human resources and social capital, where “local people have self-reliance and cohesion—they have the capacity to plan, experiment, problem-solve and interlink with other communities so that solutions spread” (p. 31). This conceptualization of sustainability-as-learning ties it closely to the practice of participatory learning, and frames sustainable agriculture and agroecology as less compatible with conventional positivist education and extension. Many have argued that technology transfer is not effective in addressing rural innovation in complex, dynamic and resource-limited agricultural systems (e.g., Hellin et al., 2008; Pretty, 1995; and Warner, 2008; Woodhill & Röling, 1998).

Conroy (2005), Pretty (1995), and Pretty and Uphoff (2002) all have asserted that the classical extension paradigms based in positivism and behaviorism are unable to address the needs of complex agricultural systems such as the diverse low-input agroecological systems commonly used by marginalized and resource-limited farmers:

Where the problem situation is well defined, system uncertainties are low, and decision stakes are low, then positivist and reductionist science will work well. But where the problems are poorly defined and there are great uncertainties potentially involving many actors and interests, then the methodology will have to comprise these alternative methods of learning. (Pretty, 1995, p. 1258)

Pretty went on to posit that developing new ways of learning is central to the practice of sustainable agriculture, making a basic distinction between teaching and learning.

Pretty asserted that this conventional method is threatening to the practice and development of sustainable agriculture because it is devoid of “self-development” on the part of the farmer and it

does not strive to “enhance the ability to learn” (Pretty, 1995, p. 1258). For Pretty, self-development and self-awareness within an individual’s process of learning are requisite to learning about complex agroecological models.

According to Conroy (2005), two major factors delineate a participatory process from a non-participatory one. For Conroy, a participatory process can be achieved if the researchers “respect the knowledge and skills of the farmers,” and if they “recognize that the farmers or livestock-keepers are the most important stakeholders, and that their role is to support them” (Conroy, 2005, p. 1). Here the research process is driven by farmer demand and is inherently a joint process of inquiry. In contrast, classical extension approaches rely on a linear flow of knowledge and expert/lay power dynamic where the educator, or expert, prescribes technology to meet what they see as the farmers’ needs (Hellin et al., 2008; Warner, 2008). Technology transfer is not effective in addressing rural innovation in complex, dynamic and resource-limited agricultural systems (Hellin et al., 2008; Pretty, 1995; Warner, 2008; Woodhill & Röling, 1998).

Farmers and researchers must agree on the topic to be researched and the desired objectives of the process. Conroy posited that a successful and sustained participatory process may contribute to self-reliance in future development projects, and may aid in enhancing “awareness, self-respect and self-confidence” of the community partners involved (Conroy, 2005, pp. 1-2). Pretty and Uphoff (2002) described the reimagined role of scientists in this “multipolar process of knowledge”:

This does not derogate scientists’ role or make them redundant. It recasts their role so that many kinds of people are contributing to new knowledge by learning from and with each other. Multi-role collaborations draw together the experience, insights and intelligence of different categories of people in investigation and learning that is both cross-disciplinary and multi-institutional. (p. 244)

Pretty and Uphoff also emphasized the importance of principles of social interaction such as “reciprocity, mutual respect, transparency, equity and fairness in the sharing of resources and responsibility” (p. 244). They deemed these critical to participatory learning, and subsequently, to agricultural innovation.

Neef and Neubert (2011) offered a new framework to describe the continuum of participatory methodology. They characterized participation of community stakeholders as a “multi-dimensional” process, where aspects of participatory methods may be applied depending on the context of the research. For them, there are six dimensions of participatory research and development to consider in project design.

The first dimension is the type of research (including whether the project is basic or applied, the objectives of the research and the level of risk involved) (Neef & Neubert, 2011). Another dimension is the approach of the inquiry. This considers the methodology and epistemology of the inquiry (e.g., positivist or constructivist). Other dimensions focus on the researchers and stakeholders themselves. This includes any characteristics researchers and stakeholders possess that may influence the inquiry, the level of desired interaction between researchers and stakeholders, and the potential benefits to the stakeholders (p. 182). In this framework, participation is not represented as a linear continuum, but rather as a multi-dimensional paradigm with customizable utility.

Neef and Neubert (2011) made certain claims or assertions regarding the applicability of participatory practices to certain research contexts. Participatory methods are most successful when used in tandem with applied agricultural research (“where knowledge is geared toward action”; p. 183). They argued that basic or experimental research does not benefit to the same degree from the participation of local stakeholders as more applied forms of research.

According to Neef and Neubert (2011), participatory approaches may be most easily paired with research where the objectives are relevant to the needs and priorities of stakeholders (demand-driven). The level of risk is also a factor. Research and technology development that carries a high-level of risk may be best left to controlled experiments without participation of local stakeholders, allowing the risk to be borne by the researchers themselves and not participating farmers. They also noted that a reductionist or mono-disciplinary research approach may be more difficult to align with participatory practices than research that is inherently holistic and transdisciplinary. Neef and Neubert (2011) pointed out the potential synergism in participatory transdisciplinary research, noting “the particular strength of participatory approaches lies in addressing complexity and heterogeneity in a holistic way” (p. 184). It may be difficult to harness the benefits of participatory practice from a positivist research stance. Neef and Neubert (2011) argued that participation may be applied more readily to “a constructivist approach that is open to integrating local perspectives and indigenous knowledge without subjugating them completely to scientific explanations of reality” (p. 185). Lastly, Neef and Neubert (2011) pointed out that the level of experience with participatory practice on the part of the researcher, along with their willingness to engage with local stakeholders, can ultimately define the overall success of participatory research. Neef and Neubert (2011) wrote about participation in the context of efficacy, functionality and pragmatism, following the example of Sumberg, Okali, and Reece (2003) who stated:

in effect, thinking about participation in agricultural research has been confused by those who have seen participation in research, almost independent of any eventual research outputs, as primarily a route to the empowerment of local populations. Such an approach can only be wasteful and disappointing. (p. 751)

Neef and Neubert, however, recognized linkages between the participation of stakeholders in research and the formation of social capital.

Agroecology and the creation of sustainable futures. Participation proves essential to the promotion of agroecology (Pretty & Uphoff, 2002, p. 244). Agroecology can be defined as an applied science that integrates agricultural and ecological systems where “agricultural systems are supported by interactions and synergies between and among biological components that enable these systems to sponsor their own fertility, productivity enhancement and crop production” (Altieri, 2002, p. 41). Agroecology, paired with sustainable agriculture, are commonly cited as strategies for agricultural development that may be more effective in addressing the needs of the millions of rural agrarians living in poverty across the globe. Uphoff (2002) cited Conway (1997) in the call for “a doubly green revolution,” (p. 1) indicating the call for a second green revolution that would not only address agricultural production but would simultaneously address issues of environmental destruction and would provide universal access to nutritious food. As envisioned by Pretty (2002) and Uphoff (2002), this agroecological revolution would capitalize on human resources by mobilizing the latent capacity of farmers by facilitating sustainable agriculture via participatory learning.

This doubly green revolution is arguably more sustainable and equitable than its predecessor: the green revolution of the mid-twentieth century. The original green revolution was reliant on higher levels of external inputs and did not emphasize continued innovation or adaptation. Perhaps its greatest fault, however, lay in the narrow conceptualization of farmers as adopters of technologies, rather than as partners in developing and evaluating new technologies. Pretty (2002) argued that the farmers’ partnership in developing new technologies is essential to their sustained adoption. Further, he asserted that adoption is a counterproductive goal: “if innovations are enforced or coerced, they will not be adopted for long. Small modifications that could make the technology more beneficial will remain untapped as long as ‘adoption’ is the

goal and criterion of success” (Pretty, 2002, p. 53). As an alternative, Pretty turned to participatory development and diffusion of new technologies, arguing that capacity building is intrinsic, and as such, paves the way for continued innovation and technological improvement, and thus, sustainability (Pretty, 2002, p. 53).

As donors have begun to recognize the shortsightedness of conventional agriculture projects reliant on high external inputs (of both resources and knowledge), the twenty-first century has seen a shift in favor of more participatory approaches to development (Pretty, 2002, p. 51). Indeed, diverse methods of participatory development have been shown to be successful on a number of levels (e.g., Röling & Wagemakers (Eds.), 1998; Uphoff (Ed.), 2002), yet a robust critical analysis of these approaches is still nascent. Participation involves complicated dynamics of power and politics and the approach is fraught with *a priori* assumptions that have only recently begun to come under closer scrutiny (e.g., Cooke & Kothari (Eds.), 2001). Although it is unlikely that these assumptions will undermine the intrinsic value of the participatory approach, a thorough and well-documented critical analysis has great potential to improve participatory learning and address any ways it may cause harm to the people and communities it is intended to serve.

Participation in governance, democracy-building and social justice. Participation plays a significant role in governance, democracy building, and social justice. This is particularly relevant in contexts of international development where democratic forms of government are relatively new or where democracy is a pretense of what is, in reality, an authoritarian regime (Gaventa, 2007). Participation is closely linked with *deepening democracy* where participation in government is not limited to voting but rather democracy “is a process through which citizens exercise ever-deepening control over decisions which affect their lives through a number of

forms and in a variety of arenas” (Gaventa, 2007, p. xiii). Participation in this context represents a pathway to “full democratic citizenship” where newly formed “full citizens” hold the “right to create rights,” a right claimed via grassroots participatory processes (Gaventa, 2007, p. xiii).

Clientelism, state corporatism, and implications for participation. Deepening democracy requires what Arnstein (1969) and Pretty (1995) considered *true participation*, and cannot be achieved through manipulative or token participation (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). Cornwall and Coelho (2007) argued that true participation often requires training, through processes of popular education: “for people to be able to exercise their political agency, they need to first recognize themselves as citizens rather than beneficiaries or clients” (p. 8). This holds particularly true for those previously excluded from participation in political processes (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007, p. 8). State corporatism and clientelism represent two mechanisms for states to interfere with the political participation of citizens.

According to George (2003), state corporatism is defined by “extremely centralized administration, where available avenues of political participation are sharply curtailed and limited by the executive power of the state” (p. 1). Following George, the existence of a corporatist state holds negative implications for the possibility of genuine pluralism (p. 1). Clientelism represents a distinct political strategy that serves to limit participation and pluralism in similar ways.

Clientelism is voluntary, reciprocal and dyadic (Hilgers, 2008). A clientelistic relationship is defined by “a rational, interest-maximizing exchange of votes or other forms of political support for benefits” (Hilgers, 2008, p. 127). The goods and services that are exchanged are commonly considered to be ‘noncomparable’ (Hilgers, 2008, p. 125). Within a clientelistic relationship, an individual with higher social status, the patron, exchanges goods and services

with an individual with lower social status, the client, anticipating the client's political support in return (Hilgers, 2008). George (2003) contended that this relationship serves to "pacify potentially unruly constituents by financing either co-optation or repression" (p. 1). Within academic discussions of clientelism, the tension between clientelism's effects of coercion and exploitation, and the notion that clientelistic relationships are voluntary and based on mutual obligations is a point of emphasis (Hilgers, 2008). This debate is based on the subjective nature of applying value to the resources exchanged, given that they are 'noncomparable.' Generally, however, clientelism is associated with a negative connotation based on claims that "clientelist relations thwart the emergence of collective organization, limit the internal democracy of civil society, obstruct efficient production and resource allocation, and generally inhibit political freedom and participation while perpetuating economic inequality (Hilgers, 2008). Corporatism and clientelism are generally associated with a depressed culture of participation and have been employed to prevent or to undermine popular political organization.

The impact of clientelism on the ability of the Movimento Sem Terra (MST) and the Zapatista Movement to mobilize disenfranchised peasants in Brazil and Mexico serves as an example of the negative relationship between clientelism and democratic participation and pluralism. In a 2011 article, Starr, Martínez-Torres, and Rosset examined the impacts of clientelism on the organization of these two movements and noted that "for the MST and the Zapatistas the biggest issue of autonomy is how to avoid demobilization through clientelism and paternalism induced by government programs and political parties" (p. 113). These movements have served as examples of Cornwall and Coelho's (2007) claim that true participation requires training and education. The MST and the Zapatistas recognized this and created popular education processes or 'schools of democracy' to help raise the their constituents' consciousness

related to governance, participation and systems of inequality and oppression (Starr, Martínez-Torres, & Rosset, 2011).

Praxis of Participation

Theories of participation and participatory learning have been applied to practice in diverse ways. In the following section, I discuss a few of the ways these theories contribute to the practice of community development. The theory-driven praxis of popular education, action research and participatory rural appraisal are three key examples of the ways theories and principles of participation and participatory learning have been applied in development.

Critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a form of popular education based on the principle of a dialogic relationship between the educator and the educand (Freire, 1974/2013). Critical pedagogy is oriented toward social change through the process of reflexivity, critical self-reflection, coming to critical consciousness, and the pursuit of collective self-emancipation. Critical pedagogy is offered in opposition to the “banking concept of education” (Freire, 1970/2010) where “education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (p. 72). In the pursuit of humanist popular education (framed in opposition to banking), Freire (1970/2010) warned of the potential for inadvertent propagation of oppression despite, or perhaps because of, humanitarian intentions: “many of these leaders, however, (perhaps due to natural and understandable biases against pedagogy), have ended up using the ‘educational’ methods employed by the oppressor. They deny pedagogical action in the liberation process, but they use propaganda to convince” (p. 68). Critical pedagogy and forms of popular education rooted in a humanist philosophy rely entirely on full participation of both educator and educand in what Freire (1970/2010) referred to as “*co-intentional* education” (p. 69). Popular education, as a “humanizing pedagogy” (Freire,

1970/2010) requires the oppressed to become the central actors in their own conscientization and liberation. In a 2006 article, Giroux attempted to make the case for critical pedagogy in higher education. He argued the following:

Pedagogy at its best is about neither training nor political indoctrination; instead, it is about a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills, and social relations that enable students to expand the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens while using their knowledge and skills to deepen and extend the possibilities of living in a substantive and inclusive democracy. Rather than assume the mantle of a false impartiality, pedagogy recognizes that education and teaching involve the crucial act of intervening in the world and the recognition that human life is conditioned not determined. The responsibility of pedagogy amounts to more than becoming the instrument of official power or an apologist for the existing order. Critical pedagogy attempts to understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts and seeks to constitute students as particular subjects and social agents. It is also invested in the practice of self-criticism about the values that inform our teaching and a critical self-consciousness regarding what it means to equip students with analytical skills to be self reflective about the knowledge and values they confront in classrooms. (p. 31)

Following Giroux's definition, critical pedagogy requires critical practitioners to lead the practice of critical pedagogy, and trains individuals to become critical thinkers. Clearly, critical pedagogy is closely aligned with an epistemological position based on critical theory with an orientation toward disrupting systems of oppression and pursuing social change.

Indeed, Paulo Freire's conceptualization of critical pedagogy, published in the 1970s, forged important connections between the field of adult education and the pursuit of social change. Freire contended that the practice of adult education is inherently political and implicated adult education as a "force either for reproducing social domination ('domestication') or for emancipation ('liberation')" (Youngman, 2000, p. 37). For Freire, social conflict is intimately linked with critical consciousness; Freire referred to social conflict as "the midwife of consciousness" (Shor & Freire, 1987, pp. 175-176). Following the tradition of Freire, critical

consciousness spurs political action through which society may be transformed to the advantage of the oppressed (Youngman, 2000, p. 38).

Building from his commitment to a dialogic approach, for Freire, education and participation are inextricably linked. For Freire, “the mark of a successful educator is not skill in persuasion—which is but an insidious form of propaganda—but the ability to dialogue with educatees in a mode of reciprocity” (Goulet, 2013, p. xii). The act of persuasion resembles the forms of manipulative participation described by Pretty (1995). Education by persuasion and participation by manipulation, Freire would argue, advantage the oppressor by continuing the domestication and the culture of silence of the oppressed, (excusing the gender biased language of his time):

perhaps the greatest tragedy of modern man is his domination by the force of these myths and his manipulation by organized advertising, ideological or otherwise. Gradually, without even realizing the loss, he relinquishes his capacity for choice; he is expelled from the orbit of decisions. Ordinary men do not perceive the tasks of time; the latter are interpreted by an ‘elite’ and presented in the form of recipes, of prescriptions. And when men try to save themselves by following the prescriptions, they drown in leveling anonymity, without hope and without faith, domesticated and adjusted. (Freire, 1974/2013, pp. 5-6)

Freire argued that through action and participation (i.e. the types of participation represented in the ‘upper rungs’ of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation), people within the popular classes of society may begin to disrupt the status quo and effect social change.

For Freire, getting to the point where the poor and oppressed may engage in action and participation occurs through dialogic popular education: “conscientização [conscientization] represents the *development* of the awakening of critical awareness. It will not appear as a natural byproduct of even major economic changes, but must grow out of critical educational effort based on favorable historic conditions” (Freire, 1974/2013, p. 15). This popular education would

enable men to discuss courageously the problems of their context—and to intervene in that context; it would warn men of the dangers of time and offer them the confidence and the strength to confront those dangers instead of surrendering their sense of self through submission to the decisions of others. By predisposing men to reevaluate constantly, to analyze ‘findings,’ to adopt scientific methods and processes, and to perceive themselves in a dialectical relationship with their social reality, that education could help men to assume an increasingly critical attitude toward the world and so to transform it. (Freire, 1974/2013, p. 30)

Freire conceptualized popular education as “an act of love” (p. 34), requiring the courage to critically analyze reality, and to engage in creative dialogue and participation. Popular education, as conceived by Freire, contributed to the framework that allowed for the development of participatory forms of education, research and extension.

Action research. Action research is characterized by the convergence of action, research, and participation (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 5). Action research is a participative and emergent process that links theory to practice. In the practice of action research, the research is framed around the life experiences of participants (Reason, 2006, pp. 188-189). Greenwood and Levin (2007) defined action research as “social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and members of an organization, community or network (‘stakeholders’) who are seeking to improve the participants’ situation” (p. 3). Reason (2006) described the purpose of action research as tackling real everyday problems affecting individuals and their communities with the overarching goal of contributing “to the increased well-being . . . of humanity and to a more equitable and sustainable relationship with the wider ecology of the planet” (p. 191). Action research must have useful applications to the daily lives of all involved in the research. Greenwood and Levin (2007) claimed that action research is an inherently democratizing practice because it includes stakeholders as co-researchers (p. 3). Additionally, Greenwood and Levin (2007) asserted that the social change agenda that action research pursues is specifically aimed to “increase the ability of the involved community members or organization

members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so within a more sustainable environment” (p. 5). Action research provides a critique of conventional academic research.

Within the context of action research, conducting social research without direct and explicit links to joint problem solving and co-created interventions is unethical. Additionally, action research rejects the separation between academic theorizing and research and action claiming that this binary is unhelpful and damaging because it,

creates a useless dance between disengaged theorists and engaged actors, a dance that liberates both sides from the need to generate valid understandings of the social world and its change processes and to hold themselves accountable to both meaningful social consequences and solid methodological and theoretical groundings. (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, pp. 5-6)

Apart from describing the theoretical underpinnings of the praxis of action research, and describing what action research is not, it is difficult to summarize what the practice of action research looks like.

Action research attempts to use the most appropriate and suitable forms of inquiry possible for the context. This means that action research utilizes diverse methods within qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods approaches. Because action research embraces the multiple perspectives of professional researchers and community stakeholders, it is impossible to preordain how research or inquiry will take shape. Action researchers do, however, hold dear the notion of validity. Validity in the context of action research is demonstrated by the usefulness of the research process and findings as evaluated and verified by the stakeholders (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

Participatory rural appraisal. The term *participatory rural appraisal* (PRA) is used to represent a type of action research that allows a group of stakeholders, typically a rural agrarian community, to analyze the conditions and situations they face, to plan for action to improve those conditions and work toward a solution. PRA took root in the late 1980s and early 1990s and was born, in part, out of *rapid rural appraisal* (RRA)—an approach commonly used in the 1970s and 1980s.

The development of RRA can be credited to three sentiments that were gaining traction in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Chambers, 1994). The first was growing discontent with biases of “rural development tourism,” (Chambers, 1994, p. 1441) where visitors (including development professionals, politicians, and others with power) would be shielded from the areas experiencing the most extreme levels rural poverty, suffering and neglect. Second was survey fatigue experienced by survey administrators: consistently, labor-intensive surveying of an area would be fraught with dysfunction and would lead to the collection of inaccurate data and irrelevant reporting, which grew tiresome for all involved. The third impetus for the creation of RRA was a motivation by development organizations to identify more cost effective ways to learn from the stakeholders, including from indigenous technical knowledge, which was then just gaining recognition as a legitimate and important source of information (Chambers, 1994).

These roots of RRA are significant to the legacy of PRA. The main difference between the two is the locus of ownership of the process. In RRA control is held by outsiders, in PRA the local people own the entire process. The power of PRA is that it can be instrumental in breaking down the notion that the rural poor need help from outsiders in favor of the idea that “primary responsibility lies with, and can be fulfilled by, others in the community” (Chambers, 2012, p. 74).

Methods of PRA are varied and are derived and adapted from activist participatory research and participatory action research, agroecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, and agricultural field research (Chambers, 1994). Potential methods used in PRA include (but are not limited to) interviewing, experiential learning, transect walks, participant observation, visual mapping and modeling, case studies, ethnographies, oral histories, storytelling and a presentation of findings for the community. These methods are adapted on a case-by-case basis and are most often led by the participants themselves. These methods are designed to be rooted in reciprocity rather than in the extraction of data.

PRA is based on a cyclical process of experience, reflection, planning and action. It relies on the use of methods that were developed and co-generated by the people who the PRA is designed to serve (Chambers, 2012, p. 74). PRA is founded on the co-generation and co-construction of knowledge. The terms ‘co-generation’ and ‘co-construction’ are seen as helpful in advancing us away from expert controlled extractive research toward a more truly participatory form of learning and research that includes collaboration among all stakeholders in the formation of knowledge (Chambers, 2012, p. 72). For Chambers (2012), knowledge is seen as “dynamic, provisional and changing, organic rather than mechanical,” and it is plural rather than singular:

There is not one but a multiplicity of epistemologies and knowledges, with varied personal methodological and contextual origins and situations. With participatory processes, we can find interpersonal and creative sharing of knowledges which in turn generates new insights and ideas...every participant carries away a separate personal knowledge, making plural *knowledges*. (p. 72)

PRA is based on three specific knowledges or ways of knowing. These include “experiential knowing” (knowledge gained through experience and interactions), “presentational knowing”

(knowledge expressed through performance), and “practical knowing” (skills and competence that can be tested and built through practice) (Chambers, 2012, p. 74).

PRA is rooted in sharing and co-generating knowledges, which dictates that planning and action be led by what works in practice rather than what is dictated by academia. In practice, PRA acknowledges the influence of power at every level of the process. This includes the power held in choosing the topic of discussion and deciding who is included or excluded. It includes the power in how facilitators influence the way that knowledge is generated and spread and what ideas take hold. Lastly, the practice of PRA acknowledges who has the power of dissemination and follow-up (i.e. the power to summarize and highlight key points and to reach out to others) (Chambers, 2012, p. 78).

Participation and Empowerment

The radical participatory approach of participatory action research (PAR) emerged as a potentially revolutionary and transformative methodology of research and development during the mid-twentieth century (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009, p. 5). At that time, the PAR approach was closely aligned with and influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. Freire advocated for the application of social science to “relocate the everyday experiences and struggles of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized from the periphery to the center of social inquiry” (Jordan, 2009, p. 15) through an emancipatory process of *conscientization*. Conscientization is the process that allows the poor “to become agents of social and political transformation aimed at creating a just, peaceful, and democratic societies” (Jordan, 2009, p. 16). In recent decades, however, participatory action research and associated forms of participatory approaches to research and development (e.g., action research, community-based participatory research, participatory learning) have lost their radical and revolutionary edge. This has occurred through what Jordan

(2009) describes as “a subtle process of institutionalization and co-optation by mainstream social science researchers, private consultants, government bodies, international development agencies, and non-governmental organizations” as well as through a “gradual and insidious separation of PAR from its radical origins and depoliticization as a methodology of the margins” (p. 15). Despite this depoliticization and shift away from radical and emancipatory roots, participatory approaches continue to be speciously presented as a mechanism for sustainable development and are commonly associated with goals of empowerment (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009, p. 6). This misrepresentation embodies the co-optation of the participatory approach in the surreptitious promotion of a neoliberal agenda that will continue the legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009, p. 6).

These depoliticized participatory approaches to agricultural development have been gaining traction since the 1970s. The popularity of these approaches is due in large part to the perception of their increased effectiveness in improving the conditions of the rural poor in ways that are more substantial and more enduring than their conventional counterparts. These conventional counterparts promote “off-the-shelf” technologies through a training and visit approach or technology transfer approach.

One critique of the participatory approach is that, due to its depoliticized nature, participatory practices cannot go far enough in promoting sustained societal change that would allow farmers to take control of their own development (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009). Instead, these approaches ask farmers to participate safely within the confines of boundaries that have been determined by outsiders, and most often toward pre-determined ends dictated by funders or development organizations (Bartlett, 2008). There is a gap in understanding how participatory approaches play a role in realizing empowerment and subsequent societal transformation (Friis-

Hansen, 2008). The potential for empowerment to become an attainable objective of participatory research and learning has not yet been fully realized. Additionally, tools that can adequately assess and evaluate empowerment are limited at best, and further research is needed in the evaluation of farmer empowerment.

Within the discussion of empowerment, there are two divergent discourses. One revolves around the intrinsic value of empowerment, and the other focuses on its instrumental benefits (Bartlett, 2008, p. 525). The intrinsic value of empowerment refers to empowerment that is most readily characterized by farmers liberation movements—social movements through which farmers demand “access to land and freedom to make independent decisions about what to produce, . . . rather than be exploited by landlords, colonialists, corrupt governments and, more recently, multinational companies” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 525). This post-Marxist conceptualization of empowerment views empowerment as a radical ‘bottom-up’ process of social mobilization that presents itself as a “challenge to hegemonic interests within the state and the market” (Mohan & Stokke, 2000, p. 249). This process is strongly linked with Freire’s process of conscientization, or the development of critical consciousness. The binary between empowerment for its intrinsic or instrumental value is reflected in Freire’s (1970/2010) conceptualization of generosity. Freire’s (1970/2010) discussion of generosity serves to explain the attraction of those in positions of power to instrumental empowerment:

Any attempt to “soften” the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed [as in instrumental empowerment] almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their “generosity,” the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. (p. 44)

This dynamic also extends to participation for placatory or manipulative purposes as described by Arnstein (1969) and Pretty (1995).

Freire's explanation indicates the significance of empowerment's co-optation for instrumental ends by implicating this version of empowerment in the continuation of oppression and injustice. Freire (1970/2010) alluded to empowerment for intrinsic purposes in his definition of "true generosity" (p. 45). He contended, "true generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need to be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work, and working, transform the world" (Freire, 1970/2010, p. 45). In this excerpt, without referring to the concept of empowerment by name, he vividly demonstrated the distinct contrast in intentions and outcomes between empowerment for instrumental value and empowerment for intrinsic value.

Intrinsic empowerment takes the view that empowerment cannot occur within the existing power structure. Here, "power is conceptualized in relational and conflictual terms" and "empowerment of marginalized groups requires a structural transformation of economic and political relations toward a radically democratized society" (Mohan & Stokke, 2000, p. 249). Intrinsic empowerment was the goal of the original participatory approaches to development that emerged in the mid-twentieth century and was based on a radical ideology.

The concept of instrumental benefits of empowerment stems from a more recent discussion of gains in efficiency and cost-savings associated with the empowerment of workers (Bartlett, 2008, p. 526). Mohan and Stokke (2000) view instrumental empowerment as a neoliberal strategy for institutional reform. Instrumental empowerment, according to Mohan and Stokke (2000), can occur within the existing power structure because of its basis in the harmony mode of power where "power resides with individual members of a community and can increase with the successful pursuit of individual and collective goals" (p. 249). Because empowerment

for instrumental benefits does not threaten the overall distribution of power, it is attractive for certain development initiatives and certain funders who do not seek to interrupt the status quo.

Instrumental benefits are likely what is referenced when empowerment is presented as a goal of participatory approaches to agricultural research and development but is not the primary objective of the research. Instrumental empowerment as a research objective has been used to catch the attention of funders, increase efficiency for development projects through stakeholder investment, and to advance other project goals (Bartlett, p. 256).

According to Hellin et al., (2008) it may not be appropriate for research organizations to list empowerment as a primary objective for their projects. Hellin et al. (2008) argued that empowerment may be best left to development organizations with demonstrated longevity in a region. They advise that perhaps only where research is fully participatory and closely coordinated with a development organization, or where action research is used, may empowerment be considered an attainable goal (p. 90).

Encouraging instrumental empowerment may be counterproductive. According to Bartlett (2008), instrumental empowerment simultaneously promotes and constrains agency because “it involves giving rural people greater choice within predetermined boundaries” (p. 528). Bartlett offered the following scenarios as examples of the limitations of instrumental empowerment:

farmers are allowed to manage their own community-based organizations in accordance with regulation by a donor or the state; they are given an opportunity to participate in the development and testing of technology that subsequently requires official approval before it can be widely used; they are taught to make their own decisions about crop management at the same time as being put under pressure to adopt or reject certain practices. In all of these examples, agency is localized, it is limited to decisions and action taken within narrow technical and/or social parameters. (p. 528)

For Bartlett (2008), the distinction between instrumental and intrinsic empowerment lies in the role that farmers play within a project. Instrumental empowerment is developed when farmers are given the opportunity to participate in a preconceived project. Intrinsic or “real” empowerment occurs when farmers take control of a project from design to dissemination (p. 528). One outcome of intrinsic empowerment is a “profound and lasting change in the way people live their lives,” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 527) or, in other words, a transformation (Chambers, 1994).

Within the participatory approach, Hickey and Mohan (2005) have identified what they deem to be four key elements that may indicate a successful reconnection of participation and empowerment (p. 250). They include: 1) the project’s orientation toward political and radical goals with explicit recognition of power and politics; 2) the freedom to engage in participatory approaches that emphasize processes of development and seek to address inequalities directly, rather than projects that artificially orient the process toward prescribed policy processes or specific interventions; 3) the project’s “explicit focus on and pursuit of participation as *citizenship*” (p. 251), to engage people in political processes and encourage them to claim their right to participation in political fora; and 4) the setting and context of the approach allows for the opportunity to separate economic power from political power.

In a similar vein, Bartlett (2008) has identified three mutually dependent elements that lead to transformation and intrinsic empowerment (Bartlett, 2008, p. 527). The “means of empowerment” includes rights, resources, capabilities and opportunities. The “process of empowerment,” which must be self-directed (i.e. free of coercion), includes farmer driven analysis, decision-making and action. Lastly, the “ends of empowerment” are characterized by “people taking greater control of their lives” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 527). This is demonstrated by

previously under-valued or marginalized members of a community take greater control of livelihood assets (Bartlett, 2008, p. 527).

According to Bartlett (2008), there are certain ways in which development professionals may contribute to the empowerment process. One such tactic is to focus on the agency of the participants rather than their adoption of a particular technology. This would allow barriers between the development professionals and the stakeholders to begin to deteriorate through the process of transfer of power and control that takes place within the development process (Bartlett, 2008, p. 529). To best promote agency, and therefore empowerment, Bartlett (2008) recommends designing programs that are “carefully planned and organized at the outset, but which become increasingly flexible and open-ended as farmers start to demonstrate greater agency” (p. 530). Bartlett (2008) criticized behaviorist approaches to development and technology transfer, referring to new technology as a prescription rather than an opportunity for farmers. He argues instead that opportunities for intrinsic empowerment lie in “land reform, the provision of credit, and the regulation of markets,” (p. 530) among others.

The development of knowledge and organization has also been recognized as key contributors to farmer empowerment. According to Friis-Hansen (2008), “knowledge-empowerment enables farmers to understand the causes and effects of their own agricultural problems and to articulate their needs in terms of technology, extension, and development as informed demands” (p. 508). This allows farmers to ‘take control of their lives’ and contribute to meaningful demand-driven research, further reinforcing their empowerment (Chambers, 1994). Knowledge and organization also contribute to the formation of farmers’ organizations, and the recruitment of members (Friis-Hansen, 2008). The existence of well-organized farmers’ groups

further allows for the empowerment of farmers by allowing power in numbers, garnering political influence and attention around demands or issues.

Bartlett (2008) suggested constructivist approaches to learning are more likely to promote intrinsic empowerment than behaviorist approaches that reward compliance and have pre-determined objectives set by outsiders. The use of constructivist approaches may replace or be used in tandem with behaviorist approaches. These approaches, which include emancipatory, transformational, and discovery-based learning, allow farmers to develop agency through ownership of the learning process and cogeneration of knowledge (Bartlett, 2008).

Measuring participation and empowerment. Participatory approaches to farmer learning and research have now been in use for more than thirty years. Their use has been employed in many different contexts from short-term research or development projects to self-sustaining and self-replicating farmer field schools. Lifecycle evaluation of participatory research and development projects has not yet taken hold. This is likely due to the lag time that must elapse between the implementation of a program and the evaluation of empowerment potentially associated with farmers' involvement in the program. Some of the longer-term projects are now becoming ripe for evaluation. Empowerment of agrarian communities that has occurred in tandem with these ongoing projects may now be evident. Evaluation and assessment of participatory approaches may be used to create improved methodologies that are more effective in creating power shifts and societal change.

The participatory arm of evaluation practice may inform the evaluation of participatory methodologies, as their onto-epistemological positions are aligned. Participatory evaluation follows a similar basic framework as action research where the stakeholders jointly determine the focus and questions for the research or evaluation and make decisions regarding

methodology (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, pp. 338-339). Participatory-paradigm critiques of conventional evaluation mirror the paradigm's critiques of conventional research and the technology transfer extension model.

Estrella and Gaventa (2000) noted “as institutions become more inclusive in the ‘front-end’ of project development—that is, in promoting participation in appraisal and implementation—the questions of ‘who measures’ results and ‘who defines’ success become critical” (p. 3). In their 2000 literature review, Estrella and Gaventa claimed “‘Who counts reality?’ may prove as significant a question as ‘whose reality counts?’” (p. 3). According to the authors, participatory evaluation is advantageous. Estrella and Gaventa claimed that these advantages may be associated with social learning and capacity building, including an enhanced collective understanding of the processes of development, increased evaluation capacity building for stakeholders, and increased opportunity for stakeholders to share their experiences (p. 16). The advantages are also pragmatic when compared to conventional approaches. These pragmatic advantages include increased authenticity of findings and heightened relevance for local actors, enhanced sustainability of project activities through the identification of strengths and weaknesses, better accountability to donors, and more efficient application of project resources (p. 16).

These advantages of the participatory approach pertain most readily to the pragmatic or quantifiable impacts of a development project. Many participatory development projects, however, also include goals of empowerment. Instrumental empowerment may be measured by conventional indicators, for example, through the use of adoption rates. But it is not possible to evaluate intrinsic empowerment using quantifiable and externally prescribed indicators.

Bartlett (2008) rejects the use of adoption rates: “by using adoption rates in the design and evaluation of projects, development professionals are promoting compliance rather than real empowerment” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 529). Bartlett (2008) contends that the use of adoption rates as an evaluation indicator allows developers to dictate, through their outsiders’ lens, what is best for the developpees—a process that is inherently disempowering. Similarly, cost benefit analyses, like adoption rates, may successfully satisfy requirements for accountability within an impact assessment, but they do not adequately provide answers to the true impacts a project has had on farmers lives, and therefore cannot serve as indicators of empowerment nor self determination (Hellin et al., 2008, p. 81).

Lilja and Dixon (2008) have asserted that, in assessing empowering participation, it may be helpful to monitor two types of effects—‘embodied’ effects and ‘disembodied’ effects. Embodied effects include the measureable increase in productivity or efficiency derived from the use of a new technology or practice (Lilja & Dixon, 2008). Disembodied effects are more closely aligned with intrinsic empowerment and refer to the farmers’ gain in capacity or knowledge as a result of their participation in the research and learning process. Embodied and disembodied effects clearly influence one another, but to obtain a more accurate impact assessment, it is helpful to evaluate them separately.

Intrinsic empowerment is exceedingly difficult to assess and measure. It is unhelpful to view empowerment as a routine aspect of a development process, or as an objective of a project that can be measured (Bartlett, 2008, p. 529). Instead, empowerment is evidenced only by “rural people setting their own goals, managing their own activities, and assessing their own performance” (Bartlett, 2008, p. 529). Self-assessment of empowerment may be most easily accomplished through the use of indicators selected by the stakeholders themselves.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study includes participatory learning (Pretty, 1995, 1998, 2002; Pretty & Uphoff, 2002), the concept of empowerment (Bartlett, 2008; Freire, 1970/2010, 1974/2013; Hickey & Mohan, 2005; Mohan & Stokke, 2000) and critical theory (Brookfield, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, as cited in Carspecken, 1996). Participatory learning brings an orientation toward constructivism to this study through its emphasis on social learning and the cogeneration of knowledge. Empowerment in this study is conceptualized through its association with critical pedagogy and conscientization, as a product of learning and community development that leads to increases in agency, ability to self-determine, and self-directed pursuit of social justice and social change (Bartlett, 2008; Freire, 1970/2010, 1974/2013; Hickey and Mohan, 2005; Mohan & Stokke, 2000). Critical pedagogy and critical theory provide a way to link knowledge generation through participatory processes with emancipatory learning and empowerment. As a component of the theoretical framework, critical theory also reaffirms the value-laden nature of knowledge generation and the political processes by which knowledge is created. Lastly, the theory offers an activist orientation to the study through its emphasis on dismantling oppressive conditions and the pursuit of social justice and emancipation.

Participatory learning. There are two dominant schools of thought regarding participation; with one driven by aims of increased efficiency, and the other that values participation for its intrinsic value and views participation as a “fundamental right” (Pretty, 1995, p. 1250). For this second school of thought, the intrinsic value of participation is tied to its value as a mobilizer for collective action and empowerment (Pretty, 1995, p. 1250). These conceptualizations of participation mirror those offered by Bartlett (2008) to describe the concept

of empowerment as divided into two camps: those who recognize empowerment for its instrumental value, and those who recognize empowerment for its intrinsic value.

The theory of participatory learning as described by Pretty (1995; 1998; 2002), where participation is recognized for its intrinsic value and emancipatory potential, informs the conceptual framework for this study. Participatory learning theory has an epistemological basis in constructivism and critical theory. Key components of participatory learning are its basis in social learning and the cogeneration of knowledge, and the ideas that knowledge is context-bound, socially constructed, and value-laden (Pretty, 1995). Participation and cogeneration of knowledge is rooted in the notion that “truth” is a “mirage” (Eisner, 1990, p. 80, as cited in Pretty, 1995, p. 1250). This notion has implications for the methodologies we use to find out about the world. It suggests that because qualitative methodologies preserve the voice and perspective of participants and provide space for open participation, they better accommodate the notion of truth as a mirage than positivist-leaning methodologies that are based on the notion of a single discernable and discoverable truth that is independent of values and context (Pretty, 1995, p. 1250). Qualitative methodologies that adhere to the framework of participatory learning must be open and emergent: “rather than answering questions which are directed by the values of the researcher, local people are encouraged to explore their own versions of their worlds” (Pretty, 1995, p. 1255).

This theory of participatory learning lays the framework that guides the methods of inquiry in this study. In application, participatory theory dictates the inclusion of participants’ perspectives, voices and worldviews in the design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of this study. This requires methods of inquiry that are emergent and adaptive and are driven and validated by the participants themselves. Similarly, because participatory learning theory is

linked to the emancipatory potential of education and cogenerated knowledge, the findings of this study must be validated by their potential to guide action in the pursuit of social justice.

Empowerment. The theory of empowerment that lends to the theoretical framework of this study is that of intrinsic empowerment (Bartlett, 2008). Intrinsic empowerment is fundamentally radical and political. It is characterized by a self-directed bottom-up process of social mobilization (Mohan & Stokke, 2000, p. 249) that allows people to reach critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2010, 1974/2014) and ‘take control of their lives’ (Bartlett, 2008). Intrinsic empowerment, as a theoretical underpinning of this study is informed by Freire’s conceptualization of “true generosity” (Freire, 1970/2010, p. 45) or generosity that provides the opportunity for the pursuit of self-determination and self-directed transformation. Intrinsic empowerment involves a power shift where those at the margins are provided the means, through critical pedagogy and participatory learning, to take latent power by recognizing hegemonic interests and dismantling them and the pursuit of popular social reform and social justice through democratization.

Critical theory. Participatory learning ties directly to critical theory. Indeed, as in participatory learning and research, critical theory “breaks down the difference between subject and object, of researcher and focus of research” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 26). Like the theory of participatory learning, critical theories are “aimed at challenging and destabilizing established knowledge with the goal of raising consciousness of social conditions and promoting emancipatory values such as equity, social welfare, justice, mutuality, and political liberty” (Thomas, 2009, p. 54). One of the goals of critical theory is to access “previously silenced knowledge about social reality” and the theory emphasizes the “contextualized understanding of social phenomena” (Thomas, 2009, p. 54).

Critical theory emerged out of the University of Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research. There, beginning in the early- to mid-twentieth century, a group of scholars gathered to examine fascism "as a perversion of the entire Enlightenment project" (Finger & Asún, 2001, p. 77). These early scholars included Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Walter Benjamin; and are collectively referred to as the first generation of the 'Frankfurt School.' These scholars were principally concerned with themes of domination and emancipation in post-Enlightenment European society (Finger & Asún, 2001). The second generation of the Frankfurt School added German philosopher Jürgen Habermas to the roster, along with Americans Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse. According to Finger and Asún (2001), Habermas attempted to "outline a rational theory of emancipation, conceived as a cognitive consciousness-raising process among socially interacting individuals" (p. 78). According to Murphy and Fleming (2010), critical theory is most vivid in Habermas's "quest to construct an overarching 'grand' theory of modernity and colonization, combined with an ongoing defense of modernity and a desire to further aims of democracy" (p. 4). Habermasian critical theory is most apparent in his books *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987) and *Between Facts and Norms* (1996) (Murphy & Fleming, 2010). In Habermas's theory of communicative action, he "tries to reaffirm the possibility of a critical reason against what he calls the 'colonization of the lifeworld' by instrumental reason" (Finger & Asún, 2001, p.78). Through his theory of communicative action, Habermas grappled with "the question of whether, and if so, how, capitalist modernization can be conceived as a process of one-sided rationalization" (Habermas, 1984, p. 140, as cited in Murphy & Fleming, 2010, p. 6). In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987), Habermas explained that "yes, capitalism has ushered in a process of one-sided (instrumental) rationalization, and has done so via the state and the market overstepping their own functional

boundaries and ‘colonizing’ the lifeworld” (Murphy & Fleming, 2010, p. 6). One of Habermas’s central critical theorist claims in his theory of communicative action is that

the pursuit and maintenance of state political agendas, alongside the ability of capitalism to exploit new avenues for wealth creation, have resulted in more and more decisions affecting the lives of citizens being based on the ‘bottom line’ of power/money. (Murphy & Fleming, 2010, p. 6).

This claim is central to critical theory and informs the possibilities for the praxis of critical education.

Authors within the critical tradition have recognized that consciousness and thinking are socio-historically situated (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 33; e.g., Foley, 1999; Freire, 1970/2010 & 1974/2013; Youngman, 2000). The role of critical education, then, is to increase awareness of the contextual nature of thinking and action. This awareness, as the theory holds, allows us to “realize that consciousness is constructed by individual agency, individual will, and the ideological, discursive and regulatory influences of social forces” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 33). The claims of critical theory aim to balance context and autonomy: socio-historic context is not deterministic, “nor is consciousness and selfhood autonomously constructed by free and independent individuals unhindered by the burden of history” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 33). Rather, in reality, thinking and action represent an amalgam of context and autonomy.

Critical theory explicitly recognizes the value-laden nature of knowledge and takes an activist stance in its aim to “[illuminate] restrictive and alienating conditions, and [promote] resistance and struggle to rectify oppressive conditions” (Thomas, 2009, p. 54). Critical theory offers the development of critical thinking as a way to counter extant alienating conditions: “critical theory views thinking critically as being able to identify, and then to challenge and change, the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs” (Brookfield, 2005, p. viii). Critical theory’s emphasis on

emancipation, transformation and denunciation of oppressive forces, along with the preeminence of themes related to popular education and critical consciousness, run parallel to the key areas of interest in this study.

Brookfield (2005) identified a number of questions that critical theory presents in the context of adult learning (p. 53). Several of these questions point directly to the questions of interest in this study, demonstrating the appropriateness of critical theory as a lens in this context. According to Brookfield (2005),

A critical theory of adult learning will explore several questions concerning how alienation might be overcome to allow the exercise of true freedom. How do people learn to develop a sense of free agency where they feel they possess the desire, capacity, and resources to shape the world according to their desires? How do adults recognize the varying degrees of freedom that can be experienced in different contexts? How do they learn to detect when they're living a life that is supposedly free, but in reality shaped by corporate advertising? How do adults learn to fight the alienating forces and obstacles that prevent them from claiming freedom? How do they live with the sense of failure and frustration this sometimes induces? How do people learn to reconcile their desire to act freely with cultural constraints or collective disapproval? . . . How do they learn to question socially constructed images and metaphors of freedom (such as the free press or the free market) that disguise the control exercised by powerful political economic and political forces? How do people live with a perceived absence of freedom? And, finally, what kinds of adult educational approaches and conditions tend to foster a sense of freedom in participants? (p. 53)

These questions are well aligned with the research questions of this study and they indicate the need for further exploration of critical consciousness, agency, and intrinsic empowerment within adult education. Through this study, I have attempted to provide commentary that responds to the questions Brookfield raises.

Critical theory also offers both an explanation for and a critique of the schism that has formed between the camp asserting the instrumental benefits of participation and empowerment, and the camp that argues for the intrinsic (non-economic) value of participation and empowerment. According to Marxist and critical theory, the instrumental benefit camp is

operating within the *commodity exchange economy* (Brookfield, 2005, p. 24). The commodity exchange economy assigns value based on the estimation of future profit to be gained. Here people's participation and empowerment can be commodified and "fetishized" (p. 24).

Instrumental benefits of participation and empowerment are appraised for their "exchange value" within an economic system based on the assumption that inanimate objects and human labor "contain some innate financial value or monetary worth that has been magically determined by forces beyond our recognition" (p. 24). Horkheimer's analysis of the commodity exchange economy used the lens of critical theory and is based on the idea "that the commodity exchange economy that dominates social relations must be reconfigured so that people can realize their humanity and freedom" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 24). Horkheimer's analysis then pointed to the validity of the second camp that holds that participation and empowerment have intrinsic value independent of the commodity exchange economy. This emphasis on the pursuit of freedom and humanity, accompanied by a critique of dominant capitalistic structures and their impacts on social life, represent central tenets of critical theory.

Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) provided a framework of the principles that they perceive to be the essence of critical theorists:

we are defining a criticalist as a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations which are socially and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and, although reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression which characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary or inevitable; that oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g., class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them; and finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often

unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race and gender oppression. (pp. 139-140, as cited in Carspecken, 1996, p. 4)

For Carspecken (1996), the major distinguishing characteristic of a critical theorist is a drive to conduct research with the goal of benefiting the oppressed.

Echoing participatory learning's critique of traditional scientific research, critical theorists contend that research oriented in positivism fails to recognize "the emancipatory values of justice, mutuality, and autonomy," with significant ethical implications for this type of research (Thomas, 2009, p. 56). Alongside this critique, critical theory carries its own explicit values rooted in a strong moral and ethical stance: "critical research is ethically motivated via its interest in exposing prevailing oppressive social and power structures and its aim to emancipate and empower disenfranchised people" (Thomas, 2009, p. 56). To further explicate these values, critical theory frames inequality and oppression as inherently bad and frames "equity, democracy, social justice, and inclusiveness" as inherently good (Thomas, 2009, p. 60).

As Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) have emphasized, the role of power in constructing knowledge plays a central role in research driven by critical theory. First, critical theory strives to use a lens that reveals the power at play within every interaction, beginning with the general inequality and injustice of contemporary society that privileges some and oppresses others (Carspecken, 1996, p. 7). Critical theorists also pay careful attention to the role of power in interpersonal social interactions, recognizing the effect of power on truth claims: "unequal power distorts truth claims. Critical epistemology will have to be precise about the many ways, a good number of them highly subtle, in which power corrupts knowledge" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 21). Additionally, critical theory recognizes the distorting effects of power within the act of research itself.

Critical theorists raise ethical questions regarding the power dynamic between researcher and participant and the potential for the imposition of dominant, colonial and/or inappropriate ideologies onto the participant. Critical theory suggests that participants have a right to take part in designing the study and to maintain a degree of control over the way the study is to be used, and to derive some benefit from the study. Critical theory also holds that privileging dominant or conventional forms of inquiry over non-dominant inquiry or traditional ways of knowing poses an ethical issue.

To address these profound and potentially paralyzing ethical issues in research, critical theory emphasizes critical reflection and reflexive practice on the part of the researcher to make explicit values, beliefs and prejudices that, if left suppressed, could undermine the authenticity of the work. This reflexive practice is also helpful in explicating power dynamics within research. An allegiance to critical theory indicates a recognition that knowledge and power are inextricably tied, where relations of power filter the ways in which knowledge is created and meanings are made. This recognition contributes to the design of this study, and together with participatory learning theory, contributes to the themes of social justice upon which this study is based.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Guided by Pretty's (1995, 1998, 2002) theory of participatory learning, theories of intrinsic empowerment (Bartlett, 2008) and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2010; 1974/2013), and by critical theory (Brookfield, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, as cited in Carspecken, 1996), I aimed to understand the relationship between participatory approaches and farmer empowerment. The study's epistemological, ontological and axiological positioning informed each facet of its design. This inquiry rests on the assumptions of the *new paradigms* taking elements of constructivist, critical, and participative epistemologies and ontologies to provide the basis for the approach. The epistemological foundation rests on the contextual nature of knowledge and the value of cogenerated knowledge. The ontology is based on the presence of multiple realities and the notion that diverse stakeholders experience different realities. The axiology, founded on principles of critical theory, recognizes the value-laden nature of knowledge and the role of power in knowledge construction. Building from the theoretical framework and informed by the onto-epistemological positioning, this study employed a qualitative ethnographic case study design. The principal methods of data collection included in-depth interviewing, participant observation, after-action review, and content analysis of primary sources. Given the guiding epistemology, the validity of this study must be assessed by the research participants themselves and is evidenced by the ability of the findings to inform action for social change by participants and other marginalized parties with relevant interests.

Philosophical Stance

The methods of inquiry I have chosen to use in this study are based on certain assumptions I hold about the nature of reality (ontology), the way knowledge is constructed

(epistemology), and the ways new knowledge may be gained (methodology) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). These assumptions have broad implications for the way the research is driven or controlled (and by whom), the way the validity of my findings can be assessed or evidenced (and by whom), and the overall aim of the inquiry more generally. More significantly, these assumptions dictate the way I, as a qualitative researcher, view and interact with the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). This study rests on assumptions that reflect a blended worldview built from elements of critical theory, constructivism and participative inquiry. This blended worldview is based on Lincoln, Lynham and Guba's (2011) assertion that paradigms may be combined, with elements chosen from commensurable paradigms where "models (paradigms, integrated philosophical systems) share axiomatic elements that are similar or that resonate strongly," (p. 117) as they do among the new paradigms I am using.

Assumptions concerning the nature of reality that originate from constructivist and participative worldviews form the ontological basis for this study. The principal constructivist assumption that informs this study is the notion that multiple realities exist, are constructed by each individual, and do not exist independently of an individual (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 102). This assumption is based on the intersubjective construction of reality (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). A constructivist ontology necessitates the significant involvement of research 'subjects,' in that their participation allows the researcher and participant to co-generate knowledge that depicts the reality of the participant as accurately and effectively as possible (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 102).

Undergirding the constructivist ontological basis for this study is the critical theorist ontology that holds: "the things we normally believe to be 'out there' come from uncritically accepted preconceived assumptions about the world" (Thomas, 1993, p. 34). Critical theory

holds the assumption that reality is shaped by interactions and relations that are firmly rooted in dynamics of power, privilege and oppression (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). This assumption about the basis of reality has a strong affinity toward the epistemological foundations of the participative paradigm where knowledge is deemed a manifestation of power (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 113).

The concept of epistemology represents the assumptions the researcher holds about the way knowledge is constructed and the assumptions regarding “the relationship between the inquirer and the known” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). This study is based on the assumption that “we construct knowledge through our lived experiences and through our interactions with other members of society” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 102). Following the critical theorist and participative paradigms, I also hold the assumption that the construction of knowledge is inextricably linked to relations of power (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 103, 113). Within this frame, I also carry the critical theorist assumption that my voice and my paradigm, as the voice and paradigm of the primary researcher, are infused throughout every aspect of the study (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 115). Continuing in the critical theorist tradition, in addition to my voice, it is my intention to convey the voices of the research participants into the study without imposing my paradigm onto their worldview (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 115).

My adherence to the critical paradigm has a significant influence on the broad social justice aims that guide this study. This paradigm is based on the notion that social science has the moral imperative to bring to light oppression, inequality, and injustice, and can have real impacts that affect people’s lives for the better. Critical theorist epistemology is also grounded in the idea that “knowledge is an attempt to emancipate the oppressed and improve the human condition”

(Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 114) and that the generation of knowledge has the ability to “change existing oppressive structures and remove oppression through empowerment” (p. 103). Critical theorist claims regarding knowledge, and critical theorist epistemology more generally, steer the context of this study, the way it is carried out, and the way the findings are validated.

Critical theory claims the primary goal of research, and hence the central goals of knowledge generation, is to herald social change and to influence the way people think. With this in mind, I carried out this research with the idea that common practices of community development aren't good enough, and that we, as development practitioners, can do better to improve livelihoods and extend social justice in a more responsible and effective way. Aligning myself with the critical theorist tradition, I view action as a political and ethical imperative of research (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 117).

Critical theorist assumptions about how we can find out about the world guided my methodological choices for this study. These paradigms agree that control of a study must be shared between researcher and participant (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). This extends from the inclusion of participants' voices and worldviews throughout the study, to the participants' ability to make decisions regarding how the research is to be carried out and what techniques are to be used (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 113).

Questions of Trustworthiness

My onto-epistemological assumptions also dictate how reliability, generalizability, and validity of findings may be assessed. Conventional positivist interpretations of the concepts of ‘reliability,’ ‘generalizability,’ and ‘validity’ are not appropriate measures for new-paradigm driven inquiry. Traditionally, in quantitative inquiry, reliability is defined by “the ability of a measurement instrument to measure the same thing each time it is used” (Singh, 2007, p. 77) and

is determined by the consistency of the resulting data. This measure of reliability does not apply in qualitative social research driven by the new paradigms. Constructivist epistemology is based on an assumption that there are multiple realities and that reality is socially constructed, and therefore a universal, external and objectively knowable ‘truth’ cannot exist but rather conceptualizations of truth are socially and contextually bound. Adherents to the constructivist paradigm, for example, prefer terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and transferability to the conventional quantitative terms of reliability and generalizability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 25).

Guba and Lincoln (2005) explained that in qualitative inquiry guided by an epistemology based in the new paradigms, both the method and the process of interpretation are implicated in the delivery of these socially- and contextually-bound truth claims (p. 205). Thus, Guba and Lincoln argue that two arguments for rigor may be used to examine trustworthiness in new paradigm driven qualitative research. They explained;

The first, borrowed from positivism, argues for a kind of rigor in the application of the method, whereas the second argues for both a community consent and a form of rigor—defensible reasoning, plausible alongside some other reality that is known to author and reader—in ascribing salience to one interpretation over another and for framing and bounding an interpretive study itself. (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 205)

Within these arguments, Guba and Lincoln noted that the most salient question of ‘reliability’ or ‘validity’ for research of this nature is: “can our cocreated constructions be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomena?” (p. 205). Given that the subjects of interest in this study are oriented toward principles of critical pedagogy, and that the epistemological positioning is rooted in the constructivist, critical and participatory paradigms, it is fitting that the criteria for trustworthiness of this study should be dialogic, critical and rooted in forms of moral discourse rather than the criteriological “regulative norms for removing doubt

and settling disputes about what is correct or incorrect, true or false” (Schwandt, 1996, p. 59, as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 206). These criteria for trustworthiness are relevant to the validity of the research.

Validity in new-paradigm driven qualitative research can be defined as a verification of accuracy of findings and conclusions (Creswell, 2009). The participatory paradigm holds that “validity is found in the ability of the knowledge to become transformative according to the findings of the experiences of the subjects” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 103). Similarly, validity within the critical theorist paradigm is based on how research spurs consequent action or action research, and in doing so “creates the capacity for positive social change and emancipatory community action” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 103). Although validity based on consequent action may be difficult to evaluate in the timeframe allotted for this project, the validity of findings for this project must be determined by the research participants themselves, and it is my hope that the findings are relevant and valid enough to inform some future action or reform.

Lastly, following Creswell’s (2009) recommendations, I have taken several pragmatic measures to satisfy the criteria of reliability and validity in the most basic sense. For reliability, or consistency, these steps included thoroughly checking transcripts for transcription errors, and ensuring that the definitions of codes didn’t drift by recoding transcripts and comparing newly coded excerpts with previously coded excerpts as I worked. To satisfy the basic criteria for validity, as prescribed by Creswell (2009), I established and justified my themes using diverse data sources and perspectives, I used rich, thick description in discussing the findings, and I included ‘discrepant information’ where relevant and possible to show contrasting perspectives.

Finally, to enhance validity, I included a reflexivity statement that explains how the lens through which I view the world was shaped.

Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the “process of reflecting critically on the self as a researcher” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 115). My intention in offering a statement of reflexivity is to make my voice and my views explicit and overt. Because I, as the researcher, am the principal instrument for data collection (Lincoln & González y González, 2008, p. 795), my experience, background, and social positioning significantly influenced this study. My stance as a white woman from the United States situated me as an outsider in the rural southern Mexican setting where I chose to locate my research. I grew up in a monolingual, monocultural middleclass household in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. My privileged upbringing sheltered me from the extreme inequalities of the human experience and continues to inform the lens with which I view the world.

My outlook began to expand and change when I visited Nicaragua for a sister-city project in 2005. As my first exposure to the unpleasant realities of extreme inequality and injustice, the trip had a significant impact on my worldview, and influenced my motivation to work in the arena of community development both domestically and internationally. I have since spent a significant amount of time traveling, working and learning in Latin America, and in Mexico in particular.

Although I have familiarized myself with Mexican language and culture, several aspects of my background play a important role in the way I can carry out this research, and position me as an outsider in this area of study. First, English is my first language. Although I am a proficient Spanish-speaker, I will never be a native speaker. This influences the way I interpret and understand both spoken language and non-verbal communication. Moreover, I am white and

from the United States. I represent a colonizing culture and the participants in this study represent a colonized indigenous group. This cultural divide and the significant implications for power dynamics between me, as a researcher, and the participants in this research, have significant epistemological and ethical impacts on this study.

In an attempt to moderate some of the effects and implications of cultural differences, I drew from the concepts of cultural humility and cultural competence, which first originated in health-oriented fields. The practice of cultural humility involves self-reflection and self critique, awareness of power imbalances between the researcher and participants and effort to curtail potentially damaging dynamics, and a focus on fostering mutual respect between the researcher and the participants (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998, p. 119). Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) cautioned against an overdependence on cultural competence, noting the potential of a false or exaggerated feeling of cultural competence to contribute to a reliance on generalizations or stereotypes about the culture. To temper an overestimated sense of competence Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) recommended “a simultaneous process of self-reflection (realistic and ongoing self-appraisal) and commitment to lifelong learning” that, in turn, encourages a researcher to be “flexible and humble enough to let go of the false sense of security stereotyping brings” (p. 119). I relied on my developing cultural competence, kept in check by cultural humility, to mitigate the ethical and epistemological dilemmas and contradiction inherent in cross-cultural research.

Study Design

Driven by the assumptions of the new paradigms of inquiry, I took a qualitative approach to design this study. A qualitative design is based on interpretation and naturalistic inquiry where “researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret

phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). This study design borrows from the cultural studies concept of ‘bricolage’; the notion that research is based on emergent design involving multiple methods of data collection revealing findings that coalesce to form “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4).

Based on the concept of bricolage and the notion that the multiple perspectives offered by the use of multiple methods of qualitative inquiry contribute enhanced rigor, richness and depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5), this study used multiple forms of data collection and analysis based on an emergent findings and adaptive design. To stitch together these multiple perspectives and representations of realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 11), as formed through social construction and as filtered through each individual’s lens, I intended to create “psychological unity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5) via triangulation. I use the term triangulation here, bucking the notion of triangulation as a means to capture a single objective reality. Instead, I use the concept of triangulation to indicate the simultaneous “display of multiple refracted realities” where triangulation invites readers “to explore competing visions of the context, to become immersed in and merge with new realities to comprehend” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). Through this study, triangulation of findings and the use of bricolage, I aimed to limn themes of social justice and opportunity for action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). This social justice goal is driven by the assumption that action is an ethical commitment of research and by Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) assertion that we, as researchers have an ethical commitment to a value-driven and decolonizing research practice (p. 12).

Case study. This study used a single embedded case study design (Yin, 2003, p. 40) as a lens to observe and answer the research questions. A case study does not in itself represent a methodological choice but rather, it functions as a way to narrow and focus the area of interest to be studied (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 24). Yin (2003) has suggested case studies are preferable when the research involves questions of 'how' or 'why,' when the researcher cannot control events taking place, and when the research attempts to investigate a complex, contemporary real-life intervention or social phenomenon. A case study design aligns well with the questions driving this research because it "copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points," (Yin, 2003, pp. 13-14) and is well suited to multiple methods of inquiry. Here, I used a case study design to "*explain* the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies," to "*describe* an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred," and to "*illustrate* certain topics . . . in a descriptive mode" (Yin, 2003, p. 15; emphasis in original).

In this study, the programs, staff, and participants of a single non-governmental organization represent the case of interest. I selected this case based on the relevance of their programming to my interests, and the potential for the actors and participants to serve as informants to provide insights into my research questions. Existing social capital that I had developed with the organization prior to the study and my existing knowledge of the region and culture also contributed to my selection of this organization as a case study of interest.

Ethnography. Components of ethnography informed the methods I employed in this study. Ethnography is a research method based in anthropological and sociological traditions and is used to gain insight into and to explicate "the detailed interactive and structural fabric of social settings that social researchers suspect to be sociologically interesting" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 14).

According to Carspecken (1994), qualitative social research and, specifically, critical ethnography, are well-suited to “nonquantifiable features of social life” (p. 3). Critical ethnography, as a methodological choice, indicates an orientation toward capturing rich detail about lived experience and locating the emergent phenomena on axes of power and inequality (Boglio Martínez, 2011, p. 22). Carspecken (1994) noted that critical research methods, such as critical ethnography, may be separated from other research methods, such as traditional ethnography on the basis of two categories, which he defines as “(1) the value orientation of critical researchers and (2) the principles of critical epistemology” (p. 5). I found that critical ethnography, as methodological choice, both aligned well with my onto-epistemological positioning, and was well suited to the questions guiding my inquiry and context of my study.

According to Boglio Martínez (2011), the critical ethnographic orientation “allows us to capture issues and problems at a smaller scale, with the conviction that the understanding generated contributes to larger scale theoretical discussions” (p. 22). This dynamic between stories of lived experience and larger social commentary was particularly attractive to me in designing this study because it enables us to create space for local action and to contribute to broader discussions of social change.

Although ethnography can encompass a wide range of methodological choices, usually relying more heavily on qualitative methods of inquiry, and occasionally informed by quantitative data, the methods I chose for this study are purely qualitative and are based on the epistemology, ontology and axiology dictated by the theoretical framework and my onto-epistemological positioning. The methods of inquiry I employed in this ethnographic case study included in-depth interviews and informal conversation, participant observation, and after-action interviewing, informed by a preliminary informal content analysis of primary sources. Essential

to these methods is the careful process of critical reflection and reflexivity on the part of the researcher, which was continually documented in memos and fieldnotes.

Boglio Martínez (2011) and Markowitz (2001) provided a compelling case for the use of ethnographic research on the role of NGOs in development, while offering a balanced perspective on the unique challenges and opportunities the process offers. Of particular relevance to this study, Boglio Martínez noted the exceptional ability of ethnographic research to provide “critical perspectives on the social processes that constitute the political field in which community practices take place” and simultaneously explore “the gap between the *rhetoric* associated with these models and the *actual, observed practices* generated by them” (p. 28; emphasis mine). Ethnography allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of approaches to development while maintaining a strong sense of their contextualized nature (Boglio Martínez, 2011, p. 28).

Markowitz (2001) noted the usefulness of narrowing the field by focusing on specific projects and following the organic trajectories of those projects. She also recommended the use of “polymorphous engagement,” (p. 43) involving a diversity of methods based on informal, emergent primary source analysis and participant observation, allowing the researcher to gain a familiarity with the worldview of a person or project prior to conducting participant observation in a community or undertaking in-depth interviews. Finally, this study takes heed of Markowitz’s (2001) suggestion that an ethnographic study of NGOs “requires doing local fieldwork within a web of relationships that are inherently unstable among groups of people with whom one has widely varying relationships” (p. 41). This suggestion has significant implications both for gaining entrée into the field and for locating and drawing bounds around the field itself.

Ethnographic context. Because ethnography is inherently contextually bound, a description of the organization that formed the center of the case study, as well as its geographic and socio-historic context, is relevant. In the following pages, I will provide a brief description of the essential elements of the organization of interest in this study. Additionally, because my analysis is contingent on an understanding of the cultural and socio-historical context in which study participants operate, I will provide an abridged explanation of the cultural and social history of the region.

Organization description. In this document, I will refer to the organization as “Adelanto¹” to maintain the confidentiality of both the organization and study participants. Adelanto formed with a peace-building mission in response to intra- and inter-community violence associated with the Zapatista rebellion of 1994. The organization staff is comprised largely of workers who first came to Chiapas to serve in a religious role associated with the Catholic Church. These staff had been influenced by liberation theology and Bishop Samuel Ruiz, who served as bishop of the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas from 1960 into the late 1990s. All staff previously associated with the Catholic Church have since renounced their formal ties to the Church, and staff consider Adelanto to be secular and open to participants of all faiths, as well as the nonreligious. The staff of Adelanto are all Mexican, although four of five staff are from Central Mexico, and are not native *Chiapanecos*. Those who are not originally from Chiapas have lived in Chiapas for varying periods of time, ranging from six years to more than 40 years, with an average of about 23 years.

¹ In Spanish, *Adelanto*, is both the conjugated verb “I advance,” “I improve” or “I move forward,” and a noun meaning an advance (either a cash advance or deposit, or a social advance like a scientific discovery). I chose this name because these meanings have relevance to the mission and programs of the organization.

Adelanto is oriented toward community education in alternative agricultural practices, community health, and solidarity economy, with a focus on the promotion of peace and justice. Through a recent strategic planning process, Adelanto has identified actions and program areas to pursue related to three key problems. The first is organizing rural producers collectives and promoting strategic and coordinated alternative and solidary economic activities to address the problem of poverty and the inefficacy of individual effort within the neoliberal system. Second, Adelanto seeks to address environmental destruction and reduce dependency on agrochemicals by sharing knowledge on agroecological practices and providing opportunities for groups to experiment and learn from each other to develop less damaging environmental and agricultural practices. Third, the organization seeks to address the marginalization of women (and youth) by encouraging the participation of women (and youth) to advance their empowerment².

One of the main entry points the organization has established for its work in rural communities is through its microcredit program. Using microcredit to build trust and gain legitimacy in communities, organization staff work to create opportunities for learning and popular education to accompany the microloans and attempt to make participation in these learning processes compulsory to microcredit recipients (although this is not always successful). The organization is committed to the use of informal participatory action research to develop its programs and is committed to participatory learning as the key mechanism for the promotion of its programs and goals.

Adelanto has a limited budget and limited but flexible funding from international donors. As a result, the organization's staff earn a living stipend to help offset their living expenses, but

² Empowerment (“*empoderamiento*” in Spanish) is not explicitly defined in Adelanto's strategic plan.

do not earn a salary for their work. Despite this, staff retention is high, with most of the staff having worked for the organization for more than 10 years.

Socio-historic context of Chiapas. Chiapas is the southernmost state in Mexico bordering Guatemala to the south and southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Veracruz in the northwest, and Tabasco in the north and northeast. As one of Mexico's top states for agricultural production, agriculture and forest products represent the primary economic activities of Chiapas (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2010). Simultaneously, Chiapas has the lowest Human Development Index score in the country (Foster, Lopez-Calva, Szekely, 2005), earning a score that ranks the state comparably with Ghana, a country that ranks 138 of 187 nations, and well below Mexico's overall rank of 71 (United Nations Development Program, 2014).

In Chiapas, 27% of the population speaks an indigenous language (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2010). This represents one of the highest rates of indigenous language speakers in Mexico, second only to Oaxaca. The Mexican government primarily uses the measure of indigenous language speakers to indicate the percentage of the population that is indigenous.

As in all of Mexico, indigenous peoples in Chiapas—henceforth collectively referred to as *indigenas*—have long held unequal status to colonizers of European descent and to *mestizos* of mixed European and indigenous heritage. This inequality, in Chiapas, is closely tied to the colonial legacy of plantation agriculture. The fertile lowlands and the cool mountains of Chiapas present prime opportunities for the cultivation of corn, sugar, tropical fruits, cattle, and coffee. The legacy of Chiapas's colonial agricultural production began in the late nineteenth century where large tracts of land were converted into large plantations run by people of European

descent using the labor of indigenous workers. Increasingly, *indigenas* were stripped of their land for the dual purposes of expanding plantation production and manufacturing conditions for cheap indigenous labor by fostering dependency on plantation work by depriving communities of their means of subsistence (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003, p. 2). This relationship continued relatively undisrupted until the 1970s: “radical dispossession, followed by carefully rationed land reform, ensured for almost 100 years that Chiapas’s indigenous communities would provide a regularly increasing labor supply to the state’s steadily expanding agriculture” (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003, p. 3). In the 1970s, falling profitability of agricultural products, and reduced government price supports for commodities such as corn, marked the beginning of the end of the era of plantation agriculture for Chiapas, in tandem with other Mexican states (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003).

Retreating plantations, along with the increased technological efficiency of those that remained, meant fewer jobs for *indigenas* who had grown largely dependent on wage labor as their community structures and subsistence livelihoods had been systematically destroyed. This loss of income occurred as the indigenous population exploded and as 200,000 Guatemalan Mayans entered Chiapas as refugees, fleeing the civil war in their country (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003). The arrival of Guatemalans, even more destitute, and hence, desperate for work than their *Chiapaneco* counterparts, represented an influx of cheaper labor that further undermined the economic situation of the region’s *indigenas*. As a result, *indigenas* established new territories in the relatively infertile Lacandón Jungle in southern Chiapas, or reestablished themselves as laborers in the margins of Chiapas’s cities. Additionally, many *indigenas* began to travel larger distances in search of work—to Cancun, the Gulf Coast, and increasingly, to the United States. Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace (2003) noted “in barely

thirty years, what had been the economic foundation of Chiapas's indigenous societies through most of the preceding century was swept away" (p. 7). Remarkably, the authors also noted:

when indigenous people talk about these years they stress not the material changes, but the new political self-consciousness and sense of ethnic identity that have come from confronting the crisis on their own and finding their own solutions . . . it has become common to refer to the entire period as the time of awakening. (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003, pp. 7-8)

As part of this awakening, indigenous leaders were beginning to organize against dominant political parties and political leaders that had heretofore been successful in silencing grievances and suppressing resistance.

These young indigenous leaders had been trained as catechists beginning in the mid-1960s. Led by Bishop Samuel Ruiz of the Catholic Diocese of San Cristóbal, a network of more than 8,000 catechists was in place by the end of the 1980s. These young catechists were well positioned to take leadership during this economic and political crisis:

Empowered by their training in literacy and community organizing, by their travel to different communities, and by the contact they had with Indians from around the diocese, the catechists were not only the religious leaders of their communities but had also often become social and political leaders as well. Eventually they also became the grassroots leaders of a larger movement in support of Indian rights. (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003, p. 10)

With this new leadership, *indigenas* increasingly rejected state corporatism and state-sponsored peasant organizations and turned to *indigena*-led grassroots organizations, or formed allegiance with Ruiz's liberationist church. The 1980s brought further economic downturn when Mexico declared a moratorium on its debt and accepted a bailout loan from the International Monetary Fund. This contributed to an economic restructuring that greatly disadvantaged rural areas through a reduction in credits and subsidies (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003, p. 11).

Indigenas in Chiapas moved increasingly toward self-organization and autonomy through the 1970s with the formation and expanding influence of indigenous-led social and political

organizations, setting the stage for the Zapatista uprising of 1994. Rus, Hernández Castillo and Mattiace (2003) characterized the timeline of the Zapatista rebellion as having four major phases. The first year of the rebellion, 1994, was characterized by excitement and hope. Armed combat spanned twelve days beginning on January 1st, 1994, the first day of the uprising, and ending when the Zapatistas and the Mexican government agreed to a cease-fire. Following the cease-fire, Zapatistas and the Mexican government engaged in negotiations and Zapatista supporters remained optimistic about the prospect of political reform without violence (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003, p. 16). During this time of optimism, territories under Zapatista control grew as the Mexican Government fell into political turmoil. The Mexican federal government invaded Chiapas in February of 1995, breaking the cease-fire and effectively ending the period of excitement and hope.

Rus, Hernández Castillo and Mattiace (2003) referred to the second year of the rebellion (1995-1996) as a year of negotiation. The negotiation took the central theme of Indian culture and rights. The Zapatistas convened the National Indian Forum extending an open invitation to Mexican civil society, attracting over 500 attendees (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, p. 17). The second phase of this negotiation period resulted in the creation of the San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Culture and Rights, signed by the Mexican government and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (in Spanish, *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, or EZLN) on February 16, 1996. The accords forbid military action against indigenous peasants in the “zone of conflict,” yet pervasive military and paramilitary presence in the area continued and what had heretofore been characterized as a ‘low intensity war’ began to intensify (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, p. 18).

The period from 1996-1998 is referred to as 'the stagnation' (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, p. 19). The accords that were agreed upon in 1996 were not being implemented. Dialogue between the parties was suspended largely due to government inaction. The EZLN and Mexican Government eventually reached a stalemate where the government refused to agree to a constitutional reform proposal and the EZLN refused to renegotiate the San Andrés Accords. During the period from 1996-1998, the Mexican president wavered between feigning interest in negotiating peace in Chiapas and fanning the flames of the low intensity war by positioning military and paramilitary troops throughout the region. In December of 1997, paramilitaries attacked indigenous human rights organizers and Zapatista sympathizers who were praying in a chapel in Acteal, a village in central Chiapas, resulting in a massacre killing 45 men, women and children (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, p. 20).

The years between 1998-2002 are characterized by deterioration and reorganization. The massacre of Acteal altered the sentiments of many:

Before Acteal, divisions among and within communities over religious and political party affiliation, sympathy with the Zapatistas, and the distribution of resources and land were rampant and increasing in intensity. After Acteal, however, tensions eased up a bit as a reconciliation movement began to take root and people started reaching across divisions to their neighbors (recognizing, perhaps, that all the fighting encouraged by "outsiders" had further undermined their own quality of life). Acteal made the danger of such division patently clear. (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, p. 20)

In 2000, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), a party that had been in power since 1929, lost the presidential election. Additionally, *Chiapanecos* elected a governor who had openly criticized the federal government and had formerly resigned from the PRI. President-elect Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) had made pre-election promises to resolve the conflict in Chiapas. The new political leadership instilled a feeling of hope (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, p. 21). Fox moved the proposal for constitutional reform that had

been generated in the mid-nineties into the senate for consideration. Senators attenuated the proposal, limiting its scope by reducing Indian autonomy to the municipal level and referring to Indians as ‘subjects of public interest’ rather than ‘subjects of public law’ as they were in the original proposal (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, p. 21). In both proposals, the Mexican state retained ownership of subsoil rights. The newly weakened proposal passed easily through the senate and congress in 2001.

Five hundred years of colonial history and marginalization of indigenous people at the hands of powerful colonizers, and then the Mexican state, culminated in a Zapatista uprising. Rus, Hernández Castillo and Mattiace (2003) provided a clear explanation of the events and injustices that led to the uprising:

In the face of deepening economic distress, with a government that had only made things worse by eliminating aid programs and ending agrarian reform, and then had met Indian’s attempts to solve their own problems through independent organizations and cooperatives by repressing those organizations, indigenous people throughout Chiapas were by the early 1990s increasingly angry with the government and willing to defy it. In a way it was almost overdetermined, perhaps inevitable, that there should be a rebellion. (p. 15)

Following the uprising, Zapatistas have focused their energy on the creation of autonomous regions and on the creation of a pan-Indian movement and the pursuit of “‘ethnic citizenship’: access to both citizenship rights and rights based on ethnic identity” (Rus, Hernández Castillo, & Mattiace, 2003, pp. 14-15). In doing so, they have pursued their right to self-determine their own livelihoods and futures.

The unique context of Tojolabal identity. This study takes place in a southern region of Chiapas called *La Región Fronteriza* (the border region). This geographic region encompasses the municipalities where the NGO at the heart of this study works. The region is dominated by Tojolabal *indigenas*. Tojolabal communities have a distinct history from the other three predominant indigenous groups in Chiapas (the Tzotzils, Tzeltals, and Cho’ls). Through

colonization, the Tojolabal communities were effectively “deterritorialized”—no longer identifying with their ancestral lands but rather with the *finca* villages where they worked (Rus, Hernández Castillo & Mattiace, 2003, pp. 5-6). As a result, the Tojolabal language and culture was less preserved and maintained than other indigenous cultures of Chiapas. Many perceive Tojolabals as having “lost” their indigenous dress, language and community structures (Mattiace, 2003, p. 113). Many Tojolabals, having been deterritorialized, have relocated and established new communities in the Lacandón jungle, others live in and around the small cities of the *Región Fronteriza*.

Participant selection. I selected Adelanto based on an existing relationship I had developed with the organization and its staff. My initial involvement with this organization is what originally sparked my interest in participatory approaches to community development. Adelanto was a natural partner due to the nature of their programs, their approaches, and my existing relationships with the staff members.

I reached out to the organization staff to describe my study and explain that I was looking for an organization to serve as a case in this ethnographic study. The staff responded with interest and enthusiasm. I then began to orient my study and my research protocols with Adelanto in mind. Once I received an approval letter from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board in April 2015 that indicated my research protocols had been approved (Appendix A), I sent the staff of the organization a formal invitation to participate (Appendix B), which they accepted. In May of 2015, I traveled to southern Chiapas and took up residence in Adelanto’s office building to work and live alongside the staff for three months of ethnographic data collection.

Gaining entrée. Following a narrowing of research interests and questions, a review of literature, and the selection of a case study, is the step of gaining access or entrée into the community of interest (O'Reilly, 2009). This involves the researcher gaining permission to temporarily embed him or herself into the community and to engage in activities that allow for candid conversations and unselfconscious observation. To begin, I presented my intentions and my research interests to my hosts, the staff of the non-governmental organization, in a transparent way, and sought their advice to choose which of their partner communities to work with for this study. This led me to initial informants for interviews and provided insights into key events and activities that offered opportunities for participant observation.

I communicated my research interests and intentions to key informants and participants of events I attended. I intended to strike a balance between full transparency and my need to withhold certain information. I was mindful of the potential advantage of withholding certain information about my full intentions to avoid any suggestion of what might be perceived as 'correct' answers to my questions. I found that withholding full transparency helped to avoid influencing the way informants and participants answer questions or alter their behavior in my presence. I sought the advice of the NGO staff and relied on my own judgment as a researcher to make decisions regarding the appropriate level of transparency in these instances. For example, although my interest was in the participatory nature of Adelanto's programming, I did not always emphasize this interest in my interviews with participants. Rather, I would describe my more general interest in community development, allowing participants to choose whether to emphasize participation as integral to Adelanto's approach based on their experience, rather than catering to my interest. When program participants would either describe their experience as contrasting or aligning with the participatory approach, I would probe for details. My intention in

withholding my specific interest in this example was to overcome some social desirability and attain responses that more authentically reflected program participants' perceptions of their interactions and experiences with Adelanto.

Simultaneously, I kept careful memos and fieldnotes and continually developed more effective ways to communicate my research. I adhered to the advice of O'Reilly (2009) in my attempt to "appear both naïve and knowledgeable" (p. 10) in entering the community and presenting myself as a researcher to the participants. I took care and caution in my attempts to gain access to the community and to informants and participants, following the notion that "the means through which access is gained will affect whom the ethnographer can speak to about what, and how the research participants respond" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 6). I was aware that the way I communicated and negotiated my entrée could have had significant influence on the way I was able to access and subsequently interact with research participants. I also was mindful of the need to constantly reevaluate and renegotiate my access and recorded my reflections on the process as memos and fieldnotes (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 6).

The data collection and analysis of this ethnographic study are intertwined and I carried out portions of data collection and informal analysis simultaneously following the iterative-inductive approach of ethnography (O'Reilly, 2009). I employed a diverse and continually adapted range of data collection methods to derive the most comprehensive picture possible and create a bricolage. This process included participating in events and observing interactions between participants, engaging in informal conversations and carrying out more formal, in-depth interviews that I transcribed and analyzed. I also made note of potentially significant portions of conversations that I was privy to as a form of observation, and I carried out an informal content analysis of primary sources that I deemed relevant to the developing story. Throughout all of

these data collection methods, I followed O'Reilly's (2009) suggestion of doing this work "reflexively, with a research puzzle guiding us, and with constant reflection on what we are seeing and hearing" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 14). This reflexivity and reflection represents an early process of analysis used while still in the field, allowing the researcher to identify potential details or points of interest that merit more in-depth inquiry (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 16).

In-depth interviews and conversations. I used in-depth interviews as the principal method of data collection for this study. Following the ethnographic tradition and framed within my epistemology, these interviews functioned as "an exchange or interconnection of views rather than a one-way flow of information" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 15). I designed the interviews as semi-structured conversations with informants. I attempted to choose informants that I had the opportunity to build a relationship with and develop rapport, although this was not possible in all cases. I identified key informants via convenience and used chain sampling based on my own and others' perceptions of who may provide the richest descriptions of their experience. Participant observation also informed my selection of key informants. Key informants included the staff of the non-governmental organization and participants in the NGO-led community development projects, as well as those who had discontinued participation. I used a verbal recruitment script to recruit participants (Appendix C).

Because of social desirability, I was aware that participants might have been inclined to provide responses to my questions that they thought I wished to hear. I also realized that participants might have viewed me as an evaluator, which could have had implications for the responses they provided. I attempted to counter these factors by obtaining either written or verbal informed consent (Appendices D and E, respectively), being transparent about my motives, by developing rapport, and by interviewing participants with diverse roles in the projects. My use of

participant observation and primary source analysis helped to bring these factors to light allowing me to address them directly as I recorded, analyzed and wrote-up findings.

The ethnographic tradition offers reflexive practice on the part both the researcher and, to a degree, the participant to counter social desirability and to generate rich descriptions that may help to communicate and construct the participant's reality in a way that others may understand (O'Reilly, 2009). Following this tradition, I began with an outline or plan for an interview but allowed the interview to be co-led by the participant, enabling the participant to introduce new topics that they deemed relevant to the conversation (O'Reilly, 2009, pp. 126-127). Building from the literature review and the theoretical framework, I created master lists of questions for staff and program participants before setting out on my research (Appendices F and G, respectively). I added questions and topics as they emerged through reflection and continuous analysis (O'Reilly, 2009). I used this continually adapted master document to create an outline for each key informant, allowing the format of the conversation to be driven jointly by the outline and by topics the participant deemed to be relevant. These had an average length of 52 minutes, with the shortest less than 12 minutes, and the longest lasting one hour and 18 minutes. I had more than one conversation with certain key informants on more than one occasion as the data collection and informal analysis progressed. I obtained written or verbal consent (Appendices D and E) prior and voice recorded all of these semi-structured conversations. In accordance with the paradigms that provide the key assumptions for this study, this interview process allowed ample opportunity for participants to offer unsolicited insight and interject new stories or topics that they wanted to share.

While in the field, I collected 30 interviews with 35 individuals. These included 10 interviews with the five Adelanto staff members. I interviewed one staff person three times, three

staff members twice, and one once. All interviews with staff were one-on-one. Of the 20 interviews I conducted with 30 program participants, 14 were one-on-one, and six were group interviews with up to four individuals. I conducted interviews in seven different towns where Adelanto works, and interviewed one participant from an eighth town during his visit to the main office in Pasto³. In my findings, I name five principal towns and municipalities where I conducted interviews with program participants. These include the towns of La Merced (five one-on-one interviews), San Lázaro de las Sierras (two one-on-one interviews), San Pedro de los Pinos (seven interviews with a total of 11 individuals), and the municipalities of La Vega (four interviews with a total of eight individuals in three different towns within the municipality) and Nueva Tlaxcala (two interviews with a total of four participants in two towns within the municipality). In interviewing, I determined I had reached data saturation when I had interviewed participants from all of the regions where Adelanto works, and found that I was not gathering new information relevant to my research questions from participants.

Participant observation and after-action conversations. I utilized participant observation and brief after-action interviews to contribute to bricolage and triangulation of findings. Participant observation is the practice of “establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001, p. 352). Generally, participant observation involves embedding oneself in community life by living in the community, using the local language, participating in both quotidian activities and unusual or special events and recording field notes, and using casual conversation as interviewing (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 4). Before beginning participant observation, I obtained verbal consent from

³ I have replaced the names of all locations with pseudonyms.

participants for participant observation using an informed consent script approved by Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board (Appendix H). I developed a participation observation guide (Appendix I) to lend structure to this component of data analysis.

Participant observation in this study spanned a period of three months and included my participation in staff meetings, meetings between organization staff and community members, and conversations among community members. Following certain events, I conversed with staff to gain background or relevant historical information or to gain a sense of their perspective on central or contentious issues, interactions or events. After-action conversations with staff often occurred immediately after the close of the event. Most of these conversations were usually with staff and occurred during the car ride back to the main office in Pasto. Due to the informal nature of these conversations, and the background noise that was generally present (as they often occurred in Adelanto's 1980s-era Volkswagen Beetle that lacked a functioning muffler), I did not voice record these after-action conversations, but captured key details in my field notes. The staff were generally open to engaging with me in processes of critical reflection about the events, meetings, or conversations or allowing me to sit in on their debriefing conversations with each other. These interviews also represented an ongoing process of reflection that occurred over the course of several days following the event as I informally conversed with the staff during our daily work and over shared meals.

I engaged program participants in this ongoing process of reflection as well, as my visits to communities often occurred shortly after a face-to-face gathering in the main office, giving us the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the process a few days or weeks later. This joint process of critical reflection allowed program participants to contribute their voices and epistemologies to the growing body of knowledge by highlighting what they deemed to be most salient and

significant and by interpreting these elements through their worldview. This joint practice also helped me further develop my reflexivity as a researcher by illuminating elements that I may have missed or may not have identified as particularly significant due to my background, positionality, and worldview.

Documentation through the use of fieldnotes and reflexivity memos is a central component of participant observation. Written documentation helped me to produce more comprehensive written accounts that informed the study and contributed to triangulation. In this study, field notes played a central role in data collection because, as DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) contended, “observations are not data unless they are recorded in some fashion for further analysis” (p. 142). Field notes also begin the iterative process of analysis in that they represent initial forms of data reduction and interpretation. Field notes represent a detailed record of daily activities, and include specific observations, and notes from conversations and interviews (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 143). My field notes, gathered initially as jotted notes throughout the day and transformed into expanded notes at the earliest opportunity, allowed me to revisit my initial reactions, “reconstruct the development of [my] understanding” (p. 142), and reflect on my emerging relationships with participants. This practice allowed me to build and document a reflexive process of data collection and analysis.

My jot notes and subsequently expanded field notes included detailed records of physical environments, people involved in activities and events and their communication (verbal and nonverbal). Following DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), I intended to include verbatim quotes and exact words that participants used wherever possible. I also recorded my thoughts, ideas, and feelings, and offered potential explanations as side-notes to track the development of my understanding and create a record of my reflexive process. Together with my field notes, I

recorded reflexivity memos that articulated where my opinions and subjective stance may have altered my lens in a significant way. I intended to heed the advice of DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) that one cannot capture too much detail in field notes (p. 150). Complementing my field notes were methodological notes that explain the ways I derived the data recorded in field notes. Where relevant, this included my justification or decision-making process for the type of method used as well as how I implemented the method and any problems I encountered (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 152). In addition to the intrinsic value of participant observation (as a method that allowed me to gain understanding of explicit and tacit aspects cultural frameworks, group dynamics, and intricacies of community life and NGO interventions), participant observation had extrinsic value in that it helped me to construct more informed, relevant and culturally appropriate interview questions to be used in subsequent in-depth interviewing (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

Participant observation also allowed me to identify key informants to be interviewed. Typically, Adelanto staff would suggest individuals in each region for me to interview to help me begin chain sampling for interviews in a community. Participant observation complimented the use of chain sampling by offering the opportunity to interview those who may have not been suggested by staff or others, or who may not have been reached via convenience sampling, including less powerful or more marginalized community members, particularly women.

Content analysis of primary sources. Throughout my research, I made use of relevant primary sources as they became available. To engage in a summative content analysis (Hseih & Shannon, 2008), I drew from grant proposals, grant reports, evaluations and recommendations of hired consultants, as well as documents that describe programs, goals, and protocols. I reviewed meeting notes when they were available. According to Hseih and Shannon (2008), a summative

content analysis is characterized by “[going] beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis” (p. 1283). A latent content analysis, according to Hseih and Shannon, “refers to the process of interpretation of content” where “the focus is on discovering underlying meanings of the words of the content” (pp. 1283-1284). In this analysis, I honed in on words and themes related to empowerment and emancipatory goals, as well as themes and content that would illustrate the type of participatory approach and vision of participation as related to Pretty’s (1995) ladder. My intention was to derive some idea of program goals and the organization’s theories of change through primary source analysis. This process informed the analysis of interview and participant observation data by allowing me to develop a more holistic understanding of the organization and its goals, strategies and ideals. The process of primary source analysis also helped me generate questions to gain insight into program goals and the terms used to describe them.

Analysis

In this study, initial analysis was informal, iterative and occurred in tandem with data collection. The major components of the analysis that occurred post data collection included data reduction, interpretation via coding and emergent themes, and coming to conclusions. According to DeWalt and DeWalt, “the goal of all data analysis is the summarization of large quantities of data into understandable information from which well-supported and well-argued conclusions are drawn . . . this is a process of reviewing, summarizing, cross-checking, looking for patterns, and drawing conclusions” (p. 163). Through analysis, I attempted to critically engage with the data in order to isolate findings relevant to my driving research questions.

The analysis represents a coalescing of understanding gained from participant observation, after-action reviews, interviews and conversations and primary source analysis.

Analysis was mediated by the lens of my onto-epistemological positioning and was framed by my theoretical framework. Analysis in ethnographic research involves “flashes of insight” and vivid realizations as the result of “careful categorization, organization, summarization, and review of materials” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 163). DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) have suggested treating these flashes of insight as if they were new hypotheses, where sufficient logical data must be gathered and analyzed to either support or reject it (p. 163). This process is intended to build toward the development of “a well-supported argument that adds to the understanding of a phenomenon, whether the understanding is phrased in descriptive, interpretive or explanatory terms” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 164). The analyses of the diverse methods of data collection in this study coalesced, triangulated, and crystallized through the final write up of the project. I conducted all data analysis in Spanish, and translated only the quotations that appear in the findings section of this thesis.

Analysis of interviews. Following each conversation, I transcribed the recording verbatim (in the original Spanish) into a Microsoft Word document. In analyzing the data, I followed Creswell’s (2009) recommended procedure. Upon leaving the field and returning to Blacksburg, I revisited the recordings. I listened to each recording a second time and edited the transcriptions following Creswell’s (2009) suggestion that this may allow me to “obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning” (p. 185). At this time, I began considering themes and codes that might be present in the data. Following the process outlined by Creswell (2009), coding began by reading through the transcriptions, and jotting down ideas and potential codes or themes related to the research questions. I created working categories and themes for the emergent codes along with codes derived from my *a priori* propositions (Appendix J) as described by Creswell (2009, p. 187). I created a master list of

codes and themes I considered to be salient from across the transcripts related to my research questions and the themes I had identified in my literature review (Chapter Two) and interview guides (Appendices F and G). I then imported the transcripts into ATLAS.ti to begin formal analysis via a detailed process of excerpting and coding.

Once in ATLAS.ti, I chose one transcript to work through with these initial codes to see how they fit, and to develop a replicable process for analyzing each of the transcripts. I began by creating excerpts in my test transcript. Excerpts represent cohesive strings of thought that contain one or two readily identifiable topics or ideas. As I excerpted, I applied line-by-line coding. Following Creswell's (2009) recommended steps for qualitative analysis, I used the coding process "to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis" (p. 189). Coding is a process of "deriving and developing concepts from data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 65). I named most of the codes to represent concepts represented within the data, and some codes represented in-vivo codes where codes were comprised of the actual words of the participants (p. 65). In coding, I followed Corbin and Strauss's (2008) suggestions that "a researcher can think of coding as 'mining' the data, digging beneath the surface to discover hidden treasures contained within the data" (p. 66). According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), this requires the researcher to interact with and analyze the data by "asking questions about the data, making comparisons between data, and so on, and in doing so deriving concepts to stand for those data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimension" (p. 66). New codes were informed by my *a priori* propositions (Appendix J) and the logic structure I developed for the study (Appendix K). After reviewing this initial transcript, I revisited and revised my codes and themes for accuracy, reduced codes by combining similar codes, and added new codes that emerged from the document. I then repeated this process with a different

transcript, and then recoded the first test transcript. At this point, I felt confident that my code list was comprehensive enough to begin excerpting and coding the rest of the transcripts.

After I finished excerpting and coding all 30 transcripts, I revisited the original themes I had generated and revised them. I aimed to have between five and seven themes based on Creswell's recommendation (p. 189) and found that I could logically organize my 62 codes into five distinct themes (Appendix L). These final themes or categories frame the narrative that forms the discussion section of this thesis. Within the discussion, themes and codes are represented by one or more quotations. I chose quotations that I deemed to be either a paragon of a particular category, or multiple quotations designed to show the breadth of responses, or I chose an unusual quotation to share the uniqueness of a particular piece of data. I removed all identifying information and replaced names and places with pseudonyms in the quotations included in the findings section of this thesis. I translated roughly half of the quotations included in this document, and a professional translator, Kristen Taylor of Lunamoon, LLC translated the other half.

The Role of Translation and Language

Because the content of this English language thesis is based on data collected solely in Spanish, the act of translation across languages and cultures played an influential role in the collection and analysis of the data that informed this study. The act of translation carries innumerable ethical and cultural implications. My role as a bilingual researcher and translator is not neutral: language is used to create and re-create social worlds and identities and no individual is positioned neutrally in these processes (Temple, 2006, p. 3).

The major ethical dilemmas that arise through translation are the inevitability of both loss of information and loss of integrity. This occurs because language is inherently value-laden, the

idiosyncratic use of language and associated values are used to construct and communicate context-bound concepts. The act of verbatim translation without regard for value and context is a relatively simple task that can be completed with a high degree of intelligibility by computer software. In contrast, the translation and reconstruction of stories of lived experience that serve to depict individuals' realities requires a full translation of values and context, and is an immensely complex undertaking and, in certain circumstances, is nearly impossible. Translation becomes even more problematic when one recognizes that the translator does not play a neutral role, but rather, the translator becomes a "cultural broker" (Lincoln & González y González, 2008, p. 794) as she consciously and unconsciously filters and translates through her own lens constructed by her own context (a lens constructed based on gender, ethnicity, class, etc.) (Lincoln & González y González, 2008; Ryen, 2001; Temple, 2006). The translator cannot avoid projecting her or his own values into the text with potentially insidious effects on the data analysis and, consequently, the validity of conclusions that can be drawn. As a translator, I attempted to minimize the negative impacts of translation by employing a reflexive practice and by inserting myself and my voice as a bilingual researcher and translator in a transparent way (Lincoln & González y González, 2008), and by including the original untranslated quotations in the final document (Appendix M).

Limitations

The limitations of this study are not insignificant. The principal limitation derives from my role as the principal research instrument. As such, all of the data I gathered and analyzed is mediated by me and through my lens. To address this inevitable mediation, I engaged in ongoing reflexive practice, documented in memos throughout my fieldwork and the data analysis process

and I have shared here what I determine to be the most significant aspects of my positionality and reflexivity as a researcher.

Another significant limitation is the role of language in this study. As previously referenced, translating narratives of lived experience is an onerous task. The ability to capture the worldviews and lived experiences on the page as written text is already a daunting and complicated task fraught with its own myriad complications, but to then translate from Spanish to English brings another more nuanced level of complications (Ryen, 2001). It was inevitable that information and integrity would be lost in the process. With the intention of mitigating these ill effects of translation, I have offered excerpts in both English and in their original Spanish in this document (corresponding excerpts in Spanish can be found in Appendix M). I also hired a translator translate roughly half of the quotations I used in this document, which helped to ensure that my interpretation of a quotation was accurate.

As a method, ethnography carries what many would consider critical limitations. In the context of this study these limitations include: 1) the highly contextualized nature of the data and the findings derived from the data which results in what some would find to be a lack of generalizability; 2) the highly ‘subjective’ nature of the data collection and analysis processes; and 3) the intense reliance on relationship building and trust, relationships that some would argue ‘taint’ the data that are collected. Although these limitations conflict to varying degrees with the worldview and onto-epistemological paradigm that guide the study, they present real limitations to this study’s significance in broader academic and non-academic discourse (where guiding onto-epistemology is incongruous with that of this study) and may limit the potential of this study to inspire action for social change.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

I sought to examine two central questions in this study:

- Whether and how the participatory approach, as used by a small, local non-governmental organization serves the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve; and,
- Which components of a participatory approach are directly tied to either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants' intrinsic empowerment.

My findings provide color and commentary to these questions. Through my discussions with and observations of program participants and NGO staff, I was able to examine the central characteristics of participatory approaches to development and consider the meaning of empowerment within this context.

To gain richer contextualized understanding of participation and empowerment in a development context, I employed an ethnographic case study grounded in qualitative inquiry. I partnered with a non-governmental organization committed to a participatory approach and oriented toward emancipatory development goals. I gained insight from 30 semi-structured interviews with program participants and NGO staff, innumerable informal and unstructured conversations, participant observation, and a review of primary sources. In this chapter, I discuss the major themes that framed my interpretation of the data. Although I examined diverse themes during the course of my analysis of the data, the themes represented here are those that arose as either the most significant to understanding the ethnographic context of the study or the most relevant to the questions that drove analysis.

Through analysis of the data I collected, I found several themes were particularly salient in their contributions to understanding related to my research questions. I examined the cultural

and historical contexts in which participation within this case study occurs. These contexts included participants' experience with Catholic liberation theology, their understanding of gender and gender equality, their participation in or experience of the Zapatista uprising, and their perceptions related to their own illiteracy or lack of access to primary education. I found that these contexts were important to my understanding of the way participation may operate, and provided cultural and socio-historic context that may be used to enhance understanding of the other themes that emerged through my analysis.

Given my research questions and theoretical frame, I focused on aspects of participation and the participatory approach to development, informed, in part, by Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation and Freirean principles of critical pedagogy. Using the lens outlined in my theoretical framework, and informed by my literature review and my onto-epistemological position outlined in Chapter Three, I found that interactive participation, leadership and decision-making, partnership and solidarity, and participatory learning comprised the most essential components to understanding the participatory approach used by Adelanto staff and experienced by their program participants.

Similarly informed by my theoretical framework, with emphasis on my critical theorist lens, I attempted to identify the ways research participants recognized and named systems of oppression. I found evidence that suggests the Adelanto staff are operating as critical practitioners, aware of their own continually developing critical consciousness, critically questioning the dominant neoliberal frame in which their programs operate, and examining the impacts of their programming through a critical lens. I also found evidence of critical thinking on the part of participants, particularly through the lenses of intra-community division and violence, out-migration from their communities, and their role as clients in a patron-client system of

governance. Through these themes, I examined the development of critical consciousness and attempted to relate this to the construct of empowerment.

In considering empowerment as a theme in this research, I explored the ways participants described critical learning experiences as well as their diverse definitions of the Spanish word *conciencia*, or ‘consciousness.’ I also explored a theme I labeled ‘economic empowerment,’ where participants described a shift in their perceived level of power resulting from a newly developed source of income. These descriptors, definitions, and alternative forms of empowerment, together with the other themes noted above, allowed me to begin to conceptually link participation with empowerment.

To explore the linkages between participation and empowerment, I relied heavily on Pretty’s (1995) construct of self-mobilization and Freirean critical consciousness. Using my theoretical framework as a lens, my findings provided insights into my research questions; depicting the ways the participatory approach may serve rural agrarians and the ways that participation and empowerment may be linked.

Cultural and Socio-Historical Context of Participation

The role of socio-historic context looms large in driving methods and outcomes within the participatory approach. Critical pedagogy and the development of a critical consciousness are similarly context-bound. In this Chiapas, Mexico case study, several contextual elements stood out as being central to understanding the role of participation and empowerment for the purposes of this study. Program participants and staff provided explanations of the ways personal experiences with religion, cultural notions of traditional gender roles, the collective memory of the Zapatista uprising and the legacy of Neozapatismo, as well as personal experience with resistance movements, pervasive illiteracy, and clientelistic government programs combine to

create a unique context for the praxis of participation and empowerment. I found ties between Catholic liberation theology, the Zapatista movement, and participants' expressions of critical thinking and consciousness. In their (2002) book, Morrow and Torres noted the complexity of these relationships:

theological questions remain inevitable for those caught up in transforming the way of life through which their identity was formed. The vast majority of oppressed groups retain strong religious beliefs as part of their popular culture. One of the weaknesses of the critical modernism of Habermas and others has been its ambivalence toward the diverse forms of religious revival that have become apparent in the context of resistance to globalization and the postmodern condition. The practical question is whether critical modernism can sustain a productive dialogue with revitalized religious traditions that are consistent with the emancipatory impulses of critical social theory informed by Freirean pedagogy (Habermas, 2001, pp. 78-89). The fraternal relation between the Zapatista National Liberation Army and liberation theology in Chiapas, Mexico, provides an illustration of such possibilities, as well as the tensions (Johnston, 2000). (pp. 159-160)

In the following section, I present the cultural contexts, that emerged as most relevant to critical pedagogy and critical consciousness, as lenses that influence the organization's programs and participants in diverse ways.

The role of religion and liberation theology in the region. Religion, and particularly, Christianity, presented as recurring themes in my discussions with participants. Because Adelanto is not expressly a religious organization, and staff repeatedly denied that their work was faith-based or in any way associated with religion, I struggled to understand the influence and importance of religious faith to the work of Adelanto, as many program participants mentioned the religious backgrounds of the staff as something that attracted them to the organization and helped them build trust with the staff. I realized, however, that this is likely an aspect of Mexican and *Chiapaneco* culture that does not easily translate, as Mexican culture, and *Chiapaneco* culture in particular, has strong ties to Christian belief systems. When I discussed this with Octavio, an Adelanto staff member who co-leads the microcredit program and who had

previously served as a Catholic priest, he explained it this way, which helped me to understand the ways that religion does and does not inform the work:

So there have been times when I have said to my co-workers that the peasants here—indigenous people—are deeply religious, whether you like it or not. So in our work, we also have to consider that—not relating it to a particular religious doctrine, necessarily, but rather something that reinforces their spirituality. Spirituality, for example, that inspires justice—that inspires human rights. But something that, well, is something. It's like I was telling you about, how there was the fight against racism in the United States. And what Mandela was doing during the South African apartheid—all that. I think that is what is known here as liberation theology. It's a current trend—a current trend in thought—that's similar to Marx's philosophy about social classes, exploitation. About the roots of poverty, which is not something—Religiously speaking, it's not something God wants or allows, right? But, it's not something that goes against God's plan, either—at least, according to religious interpretation, it's not. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

As Octavio explained, the overwhelming majority of rural *campesinos*⁴ are religious adherents, most commonly of Christian faith. The role of faith and religion repeatedly emerged as being related to development of critical consciousness in a significant way.

I found that experience with liberation theology, as taught by the Catholic Church in the latter half of the twentieth century, appeared to be a key indicator or precondition for the development of critical consciousness. I found that many people who exhibited some aspect of being on a process to critical consciousness mentioned that their involvement with the Catholic Church had helped orient them on that path. For example, Patricio, a former Zapatista from San Lázaro de las Sierras explained:

Religion also brings us together, and we've become accustomed to that. There we can see really clearly what is aligned with our own class—differences in the classes . . . the dominant class, and the working class who fights, who has to work for their survival—the poor class. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

⁴ The word *campesino* is used to describe rural peasant farmers. I chose to leave this word in the original Spanish because there is not a commonly used American English equivalent that captures the sentiment.

Similarly, when I asked Francisco, a community organizer and catechist from Nueva Tlaxcala, how he came to have “*conciencia*” (consciousness), he described his experience working as a catechist under Bishop Samuel Ruiz:

Ever since I was a young boy I’ve worked in the church—the Catholic Church. At almost 16 years of age, I started participating in church. I’ve worked in many different positions in the church. For example, I worked with children as a catechist. Teaching the children Christian principles was the first step. Then I worked as a catechist for the community. Then I became a youth representative, a youth motivator. I was the southeastern regional representative for all the parishes—on the diocese level. I would go to the diocese; we would get together with Don Samuel [Ruiz], who was a very—He was a bishop who was really into helping society out, too. There, we talked a lot about things—what has to be done for others and the services and everything. And that’s how I started. —Francisco, Nueva Tlaxcala

Francisco’s account underscores the important role of the Catholic Church and liberation theology in many participants’ lives and the recent history of Chiapas more generally.

In Chiapas, liberation theology informed the operations and stance of the Catholic Church during second half of the twentieth century, led principally by Bishop Samuel Ruiz. Each of the staff of Adelanto had firm connections with the Catholic Church at some point in their lives and had been closely aligned with the teachings of liberation theology. A few of them had personal relationships with Bishop Samuel Ruiz, and Bishop Ruiz had helped to provide resources for the founding of Adelanto.

The connections between liberation theology and the history, mission and orientation of Adelanto were recurring themes across the narratives provided by the staff. When asked how her religious views influence the way she works in Adelanto, Gloria explained that, although she doesn’t intentionally carry her religious beliefs into her work, her background as a nun is always with her:

It’s not like that, I mean, there are things that I can’t deny. For example, I can’t renounce my baptism, nor can I renounce a belief system that I carry with me from many years back. There it is. It opened up, it’s not active because I’m not living that belief system as

I used to, to go to mass everyday, to do all the sacraments, no, not anymore. It's not like that. But for that reason I don't renounce it either, and I can stop looking at that part of myself, it's a part of me that's back there. And I'm not fighting with that part of me either. I can't. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

Several of the staff related their approaches to development to what they had learned during their service to the church. For example, Octavio sees religion as playing an important ideological role: “religion comes to play a social role as part of the ideology—it can be in favor of the system, sustaining, maintaining and strengthening it, or it can have the work of opposition, of protest, right?.” The notion of religion as playing a critical ideological role and the staff's background in the practice of liberation theology are important to understanding the context and grounding of Adelanto. Octavio described his background in liberation theology, which continues to inform his work as a development practitioner:

From my work with the church, having done work for the empowerment of *campesinos* from a biblical perspective, to consider with whom did Jesus associate? Who were his friends? Who were his enemies? I put those questions to them so that they would critically question, for example, power; question authority, laws—that's what Jesus did, right? He critically questioned many laws. So, really, if you go back, you can criticize the same religion, the same church, based on that very reflection, [those questions]. It's valuable for the *campesinos* who are believers, and really religious, to discover that Jesus was with them, and that they [as *campesinos*] have dignity, you know? And that they can oppose the government when a law is unjust, or whatever it is. And that they have a right to the land, that they have a right to life, that they have a right to a dignified livelihood. They have a right to a sufficient income. So, you can get to all that from an ideological aspect. And religion has a really strong ideological role that can be really ambiguous; it can be in favor of the dominant system, to maintain it, to give it cohesion; or it can be against it, to encourage critical questioning, and to give more consideration to the people who are fighting against the situation. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

The religious experience of the staff also appears to have led them toward the participatory approach to development. Gloria explained it this way: “working from within the church, from the very first training, we did not want the people to be treated as an object. Rather, there was talk of the need for empowerment so that people could be the subject of their own story.” From

my conversations with the staff, it became apparent that liberation theology was closely tied with their practice of critical pedagogy and participatory development.

The lens of gender and gender equality. Traditional gender roles and gender inequality is powerful in Chiapas, and these themes had a strong showing in the narratives provided by female participants. Adelanto offers group therapy for women in indigenous communities with variously defined goals related to empowerment. The majority of women I spoke with who had participated in these workshops had experienced significant emotional development as a result, and found that this emotional development, coupled with education regarding their rights, had helped them to assert their power with their spouses and within their communities.

Betania and Bienvenida, women from San Pedro de Los Pinos, described the ways they feel that working with Adelanto has helped to change the traditional dynamic of gender roles in the community:

Yes, it has benefited us, because maybe we don't have guidance, you know? But there, we do get guidance—how we should work, as women. Because we've always been told that as women, now we have that right. Before, maybe our parents, our mothers, didn't have the right before. A woman wasn't allowed to speak; a woman wasn't allowed to speak her mind. She couldn't work for herself. –Betania, San Pedro de Los Pinos

A little bit, because we didn't have a say before—we couldn't say anything, or at least we felt that way because we're women and we don't have a say. But, now, us women—well, we can speak up now because now we've also been taught a little about that, too. –Betania, San Pedro de Los Pinos

Yes. For example, say something seems wrong to us. We can say what we think now, because that's what people want, because it's coming from a woman; it's what we see. Because if we are listened to, we are told we can say whatever we see. So there are certain things we can say, then, because women do have rights. For example, if our husbands mistreat us—well, we're not going to be quiet about it anymore. We can talk about it, and we're listened to; women are important. We don't let [our husbands] hit us anymore. –Betania, San Pedro de Los Pinos

Yeah, a lot has changed in the way I think. Like I was saying, I used to be really different. I wasn't allowed to say what I felt, what I thought. I said, no, no—I wouldn't dare. I mean, I was shy; I was embarrassed, really. I was embarrassed to speak. And if I

thought something—well, I kept it to myself because I didn't have the strength or the motivation. But now, yes. Now I've learned to participate, because in these workshops, we're taught that we should speak up, how to make our mark. How to overcome fear. And yeah, with that workshop, I learned to not be embarrassed, because I really was embarrassed to speak. But not anymore. Not anymore. –Bienvenida, San Pedro de Los Pinos

The themes and sentiment apparent in these quotations were common across the majority of interviews I conducted with women. Women often told me that traditionally women often have little power, are under the control of their husbands who held economic power over them, mistreated them, and used physical abuse. Many women also expressed a newfound awareness of their rights as women as a direct result of their work with Adelanto.

Women also related this newfound power to their ability to work on their own projects as a result of microcredit, allowing them some of their own money to spend as they wish. For example, Betania explained:

They explained to us how we could work. What we didn't have, maybe, was a way, like, with the [microcredit loan] money that they give us, and with the explanation of how we could work with and use the money, we'll work, and we'll be able to pay it back, we'll be able to have a project that gives us results. As a family, we can support ourselves from the little we earn from the projects. Principally, as women, we're the ones who raise chickens; and they give us [the microcredit loan] money and we buy our hens. The chickens gave us meat and eggs. That allows us to sustain our children, and our husbands also. –Betania, San Pedro de los Pinos

I examine a power shift related to this income later in this chapter, under the heading of 'economic empowerment and gender equality.'

The staff who design and run these programs also had some astute observations on gender inequality and the role of women within traditional community structures. For example, when I asked Ramona about the goals and challenges they face in their work, she described the work this way:

It's that, I think it's as if there are two levels. One well, okay, it's the same, you know? Emotional health, that's one of the challenges, okay? That if there were a higher level of

trust among the women, and trust in themselves, well, they could become more successful with their projects, and they would stop gossiping [about each other] because, with more trust they would know what's going on in the lives of the other women and in their own lives. That's one of the challenges. We've also thought that—or at least, I think that as long as gender issues aren't brought to the forefront, no one will deal with it or address it—to know that it's not normal; it's not normal to be hit, it's not normal to have so much work that's just for the women to do, you know? That it's not normal for women to serve the men. Or, that, yeah, you have to share the work. But if we don't realize that, well, no, [change] is not going to come about. And I say that that has something to do with their awareness of their rights so that they are able to demand their rights. –Ramona, Adelanto staff

Ramona's conceptualization of their work and goals was reiterated in my interviews with the other Adelanto staff members. During my first interview with Gloria, she described the need for women to critically consider their culturally dictated roles as women, and to “open their eyes and realize”:

What's happening? Why aren't things fair? What has happened over the centuries, in one way or another, beginning with our indigenous ancestors? Because they train boys better. Because they—When it comes time to raise their boys, they give boys certain jobs to do, and for girls they have certain jobs. They're going to prevent gender equality later [in life]. And that's the way it is, more or less. When they leave their homes, they leave with questions. They don't ask others; they don't judge others. But rather—each and every one—they wonder, what's going on here? What am I to do? How will I fit in? –Gloria, Adelanto staff

So, then—how can it be understood that the indigenous woman, because she's an indigenous woman, has a three-fold disadvantage. Then how can it be understood that if a man values his horse, his cattle, more than his wife. Then the woman has to look for something: self-esteem. Though self-esteem is harder for her to get, because she lives this every day. But what's missing there, in my opinion, is that those women open their eyes and realize what's going on. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

The themes captured here by Gloria echo descriptions of experiences that many participants provided. For example, Desi, a woman in her mid-twenties from San Lázaro de las Sierras described the differences between her upbringing and that of her brothers, and she also described the need for indigenous women like herself to “develop their minds” and not be complacent:

My brothers were more the ones who were taught and trained, my brothers and I, as we're just two women among us, it made it so I dedicated myself more to the kitchen,

and to sewing. Because I didn't really have much, like, I was the only girl in my family. Since we always had a lot of people coming to our house, my father's house, I saw that my mom was getting behind [on the household chores], and as I was the only girl, well, I dedicated myself more to that, to the house. It was my brothers who had more freedom. I don't know much of the outside. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

I, as a mother, I've just barely been married three years, but as a mother, I've realized a lot of things. To put myself in the place of another woman like myself, why? Because this same work, or that same possibility compels us to develop our minds, our capacities. Because, I've said, if I were happy with what I've been given, supposedly, I'm not thinking about giving it back, or things like that. I would be content. But in this case, no, I'm not content, and because of that I'm committed to working, and for me, that's what Adelanto wants, for us to make more of an effort, learn more and go on developing our families, because just as we're working, it's like our children go on developing their minds, I see it with my son, I've discussed with my husband. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

The experience of Neozapatismo. The impact of the Zapatista Movement of the 1990s on contemporary Chiapas should not be underestimated. Adelanto staff member, Gloria remembered it this way:

To make a long story short, I came back in '95. I get here at the end of '95. And I start working in a border town [on the Guatemalan border] that was one of the most successful municipalities of the new Zapatista government. Somehow, when I started working, what I did—what I realized—is that there was a huge social disconnect among families. Some are fighting with others. It is very bad. We started working to keep the violence at bay. There was a whole lot of punishment for crimes during that time, and there really was a huge social disconnect. There were also very young people committing suicide. And on the other hand, there was the jungle, which was like Vietnam. There were a whole lot of green, blue soldiers—both federal and state police dressed in black, all over the communities. There were also a lot of human rights violations, and soldiers who prostituted the indigenous women. There was so much hunger, because there was no way for women and children to go to work; many of them were on their own during all of this. A lot of people fled to the mountains because of the war, and other people were escaping to the United States, Cancun, Campeche, and other places to work, so that they could eat and survive. That was a very chaotic situation. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

Octavio described the mark the Zapatista movement left on indigenous communities in Chiapas:

I think the Zapatista uprising left a mark that can't be erased. I mean, Chiapas will never be the same after Zapatismo as it was before Zapatismo. So for example, the awareness of being indigenous has—I mean, before, saying, 'I'm an *indígena*' was embarrassing; it was embarrassing to say, 'I'm an *indígena*.' You had to lower yourself before others; you felt that you had no rights. You wanted to be like everyone else; the less native you

appeared, the happier you were, you know? But many people acknowledge the *indigena* now; they're considered people. Before, many *indigenas* weren't even considered people, you know? So their culture, their—and the recuperation of their land, no one's ever going to take those things away from them again. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

Although few participants explicitly mentioned the impacts of the Zapatista movement on their lives and the way they think about systems of inequality, I found that, in general, participants who had taken part in or aligned themselves with the Zapatista movement were more articulate in their descriptions of critical consciousness, clientelism, and systems of oppression. For example, Patricio of San Lázaro de las Sierras seemed to have more experience with the Zapatista movement than any other program participant I interviewed. He had served in the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and had developed a Zapatista-oriented school for popular education for children in his community. He, along with his daughter, Desi, who had attended the school, spoke most openly and articulately about critical consciousness, the effects of government clientelism and alternative paths for development, and the reality of capitalism, neoliberalism and oppressive forces. These themes can be seen in their quotes that I have included throughout this chapter. Similarly, Leopoldo, a staff member of Adelanto who had previously served for 10 years as an administrator for a Zapatista municipality, despite having limited formal education, made some of the most insightful and articulate comments and arguments related to these themes.

Illiteracy and lack of access to education. Roughly half of the program participants I interviewed for this study were illiterate. Illiteracy rates in Chiapas are the highest in all of Mexico with 17.8% of the population being illiterate (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2010). This is likely higher in rural areas and among women. Most of the communities where I conducted interviews only recently had a school established in their town. Only one of the four communities where I interviewed had a high school, with the others having

only a small *primaria* or elementary school. One town also had a *tele-secundaria* or a remote learning middle school in their town, where instructors teach via television.

This recently established access to education meant that about half of the program participants I interviewed for this study had no access to formal education, or had completed only primary school. This was true of both women and men. Many participants expressed a lack of self-esteem, and a lack of confidence in their own capacities and the capacities of their communities related to their illiteracy. This lack of self-esteem and confidence serves as evidence of systems of oppression that have created a severe lack of opportunity and education for the rural *campesinos* with whom I spoke. Lack of literacy is marginalizing, and participants spoke openly about how their lack of literacy and education had limited certain aspects of their lives:

My mind is closed because I didn't study. –Marcela, La Vega Municipality

Because we didn't study we don't know things, we lack knowledge. As my father used to say, we're really ignorant in life. Well, we learned a little at home. But maybe we're lacking mentally. –Marcela, La Vega Municipality

Because of [our illiteracy] we don't have much capacity, on the other hand, the kids who are a little older, the ones that are in school, now they have a little more capacity. – Teodora, San Pedro de los Pinos

Similar to Teodora, Graciela, a restaurant owner in the town of La Merced, described how she believed her children's education would advance their capacity:

But yes, I was able to send my children to school because with my work, I get a little bit of money. I try to give them—Maybe I don't give them, I don't know, like, luxuries. But they're getting the very best thing they can, which is an education. Because I want them to be someone in life. I don't want things to always be the same for them. Like, I never got an education, so that's why I sometimes don't have what I need. That's what happens sometimes—we have enough to buy only corn and beans, or we don't have land to work for what we need. So, an education is even better, because they'll have a stable income. Even if it's not very much, we at least know they'll have a stable income. In that way, it has helped me, because I've given my kids opportunities—not just with that support, of course, because I've worked, too. And so has my husband. And the boys, too. They go to

school. And when they get home, if I have customers, they help me out. –Graciela, La Merced

The theme of providing children with an education was common throughout my conversations in the communities.

As an adult learner, Adelanto staff member, Leopoldo, has lived this experience.

He described this opportunity as being instrumental to moving his life forward:

I'm of indigenous origin. I'm Tojolabal. My parents are Tojolabales. I didn't have any schooling because of the misfortune that my parents were laborers of the *caciques*⁵ during those years. So, for that reason, I didn't have the opportunity to go to school. But when I was 14 years old I had the opportunity to get some training in other schools, like in workshops and courses. In those courses, I learned to read and write, although just a little bit. But it gave me sort of a first step to follow to move my life forward. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

While I was undertaking this study, Leopoldo completed his elementary school equivalency exam and began his *secundaria* or middle-school studies.

Participation and a Participatory Approach

Because the mission and approach of the NGO at the center of this study is based firmly in an ethos of participation, descriptions and examples of a participatory approach abound in the narratives of both staff and participants. In coding the transcripts, I paid careful attention to examples from across Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation, and examined transcripts for descriptions of unique cultural and historical contexts that influence the nature of the participatory approach in this setting. I found evidence of interactive participation and self-mobilization related to the programs of Adelanto, as well as descriptions of nonparticipation related to governmental clientelistic programs. I also found that commentary on leadership,

⁵ Here, Leopoldo uses the term *cacique* to describe the people who ran the *hacienda* or plantation. *Cacique*, here, translates literally to 'chief' or 'boss' but is used to indicate a tyrannical or despotic style of leadership.

decision-making processes, partnership and solidarity, and participatory learning provided insight into the way the participatory approach unfolds in practice in the case of this NGO. In the following sections, I will illustrate how Pretty's (1995) conceptualization of interactive participation was depicted in the commentary of program participants and organization staff. I will then examine the ways in which a Freirean notion of solidarity and partnership contribute to Adelanto's success in creating space for authentic participation. Lastly, I will examine the role of participatory learning as a key component of Adelanto's approach.

Interactive participation. Pretty (1995) described 'interactive participation' as participation in "joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions" (p. 1252). Further, for Pretty, participation in this sense "is seen as a right, not just a means to achieve program goals". According to Pretty, interactive participation is characterized a constructivist epistemology, employing interdisciplinary methodology, embracing diverse perspectives, and using "systemic and structured learning processes" (p. 1252). Lastly, essential to Pretty's definition of interactive participation is a shift in the locus of control: "groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices" (p. 1252). Interactive participation is significant to this study because Pretty, on his ladder of participation (1995), identifies it as a rung above, and consequently, a step in the direction of self-mobilization. For the purposes of this study, self-mobilization, which is defined as "people [participating] by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems" (p. 1252), is directly related to a shift in power where the marginalized and oppressed may take control of their lives and destinies; the definition of empowerment.

In examining the transcripts, using Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation as a guide, I

noticed that when program participants spoke of the work of Adelanto, they often used the first person plural, “we,” rather than using “them” and “us.” They also described Adelanto as strengthening their capacity. Themes of solidarity and partnership between staff and participants emerged alongside themes of interactive participation.

During interviews, participants told me that Adelanto doesn’t impose ideas, that ideas are generated by the groups themselves, and that it doesn’t feel like an obligation to work with Adelanto, but a voluntary choice. Participants also emphasized the value of discussions and unstructured chats, for example, Marcela, a woman from the La Vega Municipality explained:

We’ve been with Adelanto for five years, and the meetings that they’ve had are always for us to improve ourselves; how we are going to work, how we are going to get better. I think that Adelanto is pretty good, yeah, because with the government we never have a talk like that, how we’re going to live, how we’re going to grow. No, but with Adelanto, we do. –Marcela, La Vega

Salvador, also of La Vega, described the ability of the staff of Adelanto to create flexible and adaptable programming:

The way Adelanto works is that they give you something so that you work, they give you a loan so you can help yourself to support your family, as well as the families nearby who we want to organize with [to work as a collective]. That’s the advantage that’s here with Adelanto. So, when the staff see that something isn’t working, or that the help that they’re giving isn’t working for the group, they look for another approach to make sure we rise up, that we overcome, or that we look for an alternative model so that we can escape from the situation we’re in. The government doesn’t do that. –Salvador, La Vega

Participation was a central theme in my discussions with program staff. Leopoldo described the participation of the people as being central to the essence of and inspiration for the organization:

Yeah, for us as Adelanto staff, we’ve really valued the participation of the people because we don’t want to be knowers of everything, but, rather, what we want is that any type of work or project that we want to do, that we would get the participant base together, and that they would tell us what they think of it, what they think would be good. And in that way, we would be able to move a process of development forward together, where all of us have the space to put in our two cents, where we all have a vote, and everyone has the chance to say yes or no. For us at Adelanto, it’s really important that that happens. The question of participation of the people we work with, that’s what gives us inspiration to

be able to better develop the project. And if we were to just decide, if there wasn't the participation of the people, we would be following the model of the system that we're living in. So that wouldn't be a change. For that reason, for us, it's very important to have the participation of the *compañeros*⁶. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Ramona provided an emotional description of her frustrations with the participatory approach. Her frustration and her level of emotion show both her commitment to the approach and the work, and indicate a high level of solidarity and desire for partnership. She discussed the complexity of the approach, as well as the difficulty she has had in employing an approach grounded in participation to advance development in the community where she lives and works. Through tears, she described her frustrations with the work:

So one of the things that I've done is manage to exchange and connect with the community a little more—Maybe not in the way it should be done, and that's all [I've been able to do], you know? Just that. I haven't been able to make a plan. I've wanted to try; I've tried to do it, to organize, to listen—or to look for something that would interest the people. But yeah, I realize that my interests aren't their interests, so, well, it's not enough; it has to be something that they care about, that they need, that would move their lives. And no, I don't give that to them. . . . How does one base their work in the needs of the community? And that's been hard for me. —Ramona, Adelanto staff

Ramona's emotion, and her drive to engage in work that the community genuinely finds interesting and beneficial represent the challenge and complexity of participation in this context.

Ramona described the approach she attempts to follow as “derived from the reality of the *campesinos*”, she explained; “what serves them is derived from them, what they seek, from what they ask for, without imposing.” Both Leopoldo and Gloria, echoed Ramona's sentiment:

Well, we thought when we designed this space, that's when we realized that you always bring something to the people, or you propose something to them. Sometimes you don't propose, but rather you impose something onto them. ‘My project is this, that's it, that's how it is. Do you want to participate or not? That's it.’ But we think that that doesn't help much in making things better, or, that isn't a form of helping people. To impose is not the

⁶ *Compañero/a* translates to colleague, associate or partner. I kept the original Spanish *compañero/a* to capture the sentiment of partnership and to maintain integrity in the instances where the word is used.

same as to propose. However, what we've realized works better is that you have to propose something. Let them decide. So, from there we designed the type of work that is necessary. But because we were seeing that people can also have a say, and can share their point of view of how they see the design of work that we've created, with their input, that's how we manage that aspect. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

For example, we can't manipulate people into being leftist. It doesn't work. Or use force to make them Catholic. It doesn't work. I think that things have to be done with a lot of freedom. And at the same time, with the understanding that people have the right to choose what they like best. So, yeah, I think that popular education, as long as it's popular education without the intention of—without the intention of co-opting minds, or of bringing them as water for your mill, I think that it works really well. I think that when you have the end goal of them doing what you want them to do, then it doesn't work. In that sense, it won't work. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

The value of trust, humility, mutual respect, partnership, and solidarity emerged as common themes throughout my conversations with staff and program participants related to interactive participation. Adelanto's approach was consistently identified as being jointly led by participants and staff. Shared or dispersed leadership emerged through these conversations as an integral component of Adelanto's success in facilitating a participatory approach. The ability of Adelanto staff to engage in interactive participation and pursue a shared or dispersed model of leadership and decision-making demonstrates that the staff prioritize the interests and aims of their participants (downward accountability) rather than pursue impacts and goals prescribed by funders (upward accountability).

Leadership and decision-making. A major indicator of the style of the participatory approach is the way leadership is or isn't shared. To learn more about Adelanto's participatory approach, I asked questions that I thought might allow me to gain insight into the style of leadership that Adelanto uses. I found that participants described a dispersed or shared style of leadership, where staff and program participants share leadership and decision making responsibilities. For example, when I asked Francisco if there was anything he would change about the way the organization worked, he told me this:

It would be in the way it's carried out, I think, for me, how they're doing it now I think is okay because they don't impose anything on the community, but rather the community itself can decide what it is they're going to do, what they want to work on. So it is important that [Adelanto] doesn't impose it, you know? But rather—I mean, that the group or the community has the freedom to decide. So for me, it would be that they keep working like they have been, because there's a freedom the groups have to make their own decisions. They don't say, 'No, come on—you have to do this and that,' you know? The group itself decides what it wants to work on, and that's important, that's good. Because—and well for me, the suggestion would be almost, no [I don't have one], because, because I've been able to take a really good look at the way they've been working up to this point, and [my suggestion to them would be] to keep working the way they have been. —Francisco, Nuevo Tlaxcala region

Other participants echoed the sentiment Francisco shared:

So we're working with them up to that point. But yeah, what I've felt is that they're more aligned with the alternative [approach] than any other process. And they've always told us about the benefit of working as a collective, of helping each other out—that we all do our share. That we all work. We've organized ourselves in that way. That's what we've worked on with them. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

One of the things that has helped us a lot—Well, women have started working now, too. And thanks to the Adelanto meetings, well, everyone coexists and we all participate in the same way, because there is no leader. There's not one person who's telling everyone what to do, but rather—Well, of course, there are responsible parties, but they're reaping the successes, what comes out. —Mauricio, San Pedro de los Pinos

The style of leadership program participants described was corroborated by the organization staff. For example, Leopoldo described the ways they share leadership with program participants and encourage participants to make decisions:

Well, the groups make decisions about the projects in the communities, the group decides what project they want to work on and how they would like to work. So we support and value that opinion, and the participation and opinion of the women or men who comprise that group. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Similarly, Octavio defined leadership as being based in an ability to relate to people and understand their needs, rather than to have authority over people:

Well, for me, leadership is something that you can accept or gain from a moral influence, not through authority. So, true leadership is based on you offering a service that the people are interested in. . . . So, in the communities the leaders are people who, due to the way they relate to and connect with the community, with the people, are accepted and

valued as people who can contribute and they can—a type of person that people follow. But it's not that they're going to impose it—Leadership can be gained when you when you are in touch with people and understand their problems. You propose something that pleases them, that benefits them, so they follow you. On the other hand, they'll send you packing even though you talk nicely. That's how it is. Okay, so me for example, over in the Nueva Tlaxcala region where I lived for many years, I earned, we could say, a moral authority with the people. Not so much because of my position [as a Catholic priest], but because of how we worked with the people. So, right now, I'm not with the church or anything, but people follow me thinking of me as someone who has provided for them, or that I'm with them, they recognize me as one of their own in that sense, you know? – Octavio, Adelanto staff

This model of leadership, and the shared leadership and decision making that Adelanto employs, also represents a sentiment of solidarity and partnership—themes that arose in many of my conversations with both staff and program participants. Patricio, in the following excerpt, captured themes of trust and partnership in his description of the style of participation employed by Adelanto:

That's what we see as the biggest difference between Adelanto and governmental credit programs. And here at Adelanto, well, they don't have to condition me. They don't have to tell me what to do. They just have to probably—They have to watch out for me, but that's necessary. That's necessary, and it's a good thing, too, because the staff can act as consultants, and share their experience or knowledge [if its relevant to my project], well, they'll tell me things; they'll be happy to tell me things. That's the way it would be because that's a good way to do things, you know? It would be very dignified for us, too, because we feel like it's not out of self-interest, but rather interest in our economic process, in the project that we want to carry out. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Descriptions of leadership style were closely linked with descriptions of partnership and solidarity. Many participants described the partnership and solidarity they saw between Adelanto staff and participants within their discussions of leadership and decision-making styles. The style of leadership and decision-making depicted by study participants in my conversations with them, as well as their descriptions of the partnership and solidarity they feel, help to illustrate the participatory approach and the experience of participation within this case study.

Partnership and solidarity. Central to Freire's ideal of dialogic critical education is a basis in genuine solidarity. I found solidarity to be a theme in the narratives of many participants and staff. A relationship based on partnership, solidarity, friendship and trust was evident in the language participants used to describe their work with the organization as well. Participants expressed their perception that the staff of Adelanto held their interests as a priority driving the organization and its programs. This was particularly evident when participants contrasted their perceptions of the intentions of Adelanto with those of the government. For example, Patricio of San Lázaro de las Sierras described it this way:

And what is different about Adelanto is that we do our own projects. 'Hey, look, friend, look, brother,' as we say [to Adelanto staff]. 'I've got this thing here. What do you say—can you help me?' 'Yes, of course.' It's your project; it's what you want to do. That's what we see as far as the solidary part goes. We treat each other like brothers and sisters because we've known each other for a while; and what links us together most is social class, that we are the same everywhere, you know? We've suffered together in the same way. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Because of the importance of Christianity in the communities where I conducted interviews, the religious background of the Adelanto staff was well received by the participants I spoke with, and seemed to have a positive effect on the staff members' abilities to engage participants and build trust. Several participants spoke directly about the relationship between religious underpinnings and a sentiment of partnership, for example:

So yes, what he was saying is that they won me over me as a participant. Why? Because in Adelanto meetings, it's informed, in a way, by scripture. And that's where you can see the difference we were talking about before, for example, between the government and Adelanto. Because the government is never going to take a biblical theme that may help us to mature or to think, you know? But Adelanto does. —Salvador, La Vega

Participants also indicated a basis in what they perceived to be genuine partnership and solidarity in the ways they described their relationship to the organization and its staff. For example, Santiago of the La Vega municipality perceived that the frequent attention and visits from

organization staff was grounded in generosity, whereas other organizations intend to advance themselves and their own work, rather than hold the participants' needs as the top priority:

Because, yeah—Because the organization is well founded. I say that because they always come to us, they visit us. We've always participated wherever they want us to. And I say that, too, because they let us in on everything, and they learn more because of it. Yes, because I've seen other organizations that have sometimes cared for themselves only. But they're not like that; they share everything. That's why I say it like that; yes, we've participated in every way we can. —Santiago, La Vega

Other evidence of solidarity and genuine partnership emerged in discussions about Adelanto's microcredit program. Participants noted that the flexibility of the microcredit program, and the trust between organization staff and recipients of microloans allowed the staff to cater the program directly to participants needs, and to be flexible in the event of a financial emergency such as a crop failure. The notion of flexible and adaptable programming as evidence of solidarity is embodied by this excerpt from Leopoldo:

I think what has been very useful is accompanying people in the work, along with this little resource [of a microcredit loan]. That's why people have told us that there has never been an organization like Adelanto, one that not only gives money, but an organization that also sticks with people while they carry out their projects. And Adelanto does this in a flexible way, and it never challenges or fights with people. But rather we're able to understand the reality in which people live. And if they ask us for an extension, well, we'll give them an extension. So that is a part that has helped people out. So people like the program that we're running because not only do we offer them a little bit of money, but we also offer to stay with them throughout the process and with our workshops, and with our way of organizing, with our thoughts and reflections, well with all this it's what, yeah, we think that, yeah, it helps. And that's it. It's something that is helping out communities and the groups [we're working with]. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Here, Leopoldo also illustrates the notion that Adelanto's programming is not as much about the microcredit loan as much as it is about genuinely helping and providing a service to the people, however that may be executed.

The actions and perspectives of the staff also provide evidence of solidarity. The staff of Adelanto do not draw a salary, rather they receive a monthly stipend for their work, which staff

members explained barely covers their expenses. These staff are not independently wealthy and live entirely from their small stipend, demonstrating their fierce commitment to their work and the organization's goals. The longevity of the staff's tenure with the organization and in the region is also indicative of their solidarity to the *Chiapaneco campesinos*. Three of the five staff have served the organization for more than ten years. Prior to founding or working for Adelanto, two of the staff served the region for 30-40 years in religious roles promoting liberation theology, while the third worked to form producers' cooperatives and was an administrator of an autonomous Zapatista municipality.

The solidarity of the staff is also evident in the ways the staff talk about their work, for example, in the following excerpt Gloria, a founding staff member of Adelanto, acknowledges the small scale of their work, and that the staff won't get rich by doing this work:

I lasted without any salary, well now, yeah, from '99 until around 2005, looking for a way to make sure that there would be enough capital to sustain the staff who were full-time. So, somehow—well, I never thought that could happen, but it did happen. And it's always been like a miracle that we're still alive [as an Organization], as the one who takes those little steps with people, because I recognize that our work is that of ants; it's a very tiny job. And Adelanto is not a place where people come to get rich, and we have really come to terms with that. —Gloria, Adelanto staff

In other conversations, staff echoed Gloria's recognition of the small scale of the work and their disinterest in financial gain, focusing instead on the service they intend to provide to the individuals in the communities where they work. Leopoldo, a native of the area, indigenous Tojolabal, and coffee-growing *campesino*, appears genuinely animated and impassioned when he discusses his work. When Leopoldo explained what drives him in this work, he exhibits his solidarity with the people he works with and for:

Yeah, what motivates me in the work is that, well, always being with the people who have the least capacity, who have the least [materially], and I'm valued in the presence of the communities and the groups [we work with]. For me, that's what motivates me. And I value this effort I've put in to feel more aligned with my people, that they understand me,

and that I can serve as their mentor so they can get closer, and understand more to be able to talk about our economic situation, or our rural situation. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Octavio, in the following excerpt, describes the goal of the microcredit program as helping to improve the quality of life for *campesinos*, rather than gaining financial advantage from the program:

Actually, we've been changing and giving more shape to this work because we didn't want to resemble a government program, as if we were just giving out money and charging money. That for us is not essential to the rural *compañeros*, or the peasant farmers. For us it's necessary to have a plan of work that improves the quality of life of our *compañeros* who have suffered year in and year out because of their inability to get bank loans. So, we are an organization that helps them with a small microcredit to start up a small business or a small production, and that helps them to improve the quality of life within their family, within their group, or the community. The project that we manage is not with the interest of capitalizing ourselves as an organization, but more than anything, it's a service that we are putting out with the communities, or with the groups, those with whom we work. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

The humility of the staff of Adelanto was readily apparent throughout all my conversations and participant observations with them. This humility and respect for local knowledge demonstrates that the onto-epistemology of the staff and their approach is well-suited to critical pedagogy and emancipatory community organizing. In the following excerpt, Octavio, Adelanto staff member, describes the balance of participation and the complexity of the approach from his perspective:

Consider what we had that here in the 1980s. . . . There was a tendency for everything to be decided by the Zapatista base, and a tendency for the revolutionary leaders to say the direction. But what we saw is that you can't leave everything in the hands of the people, nor can everything be in one direction. But, rather, if you really want people to take ownership of a process, the people have to feel like it is their own. But you can help if you commit yourself to the people. You're not going to rule them or tell them what to do, nor make decisions. But, rather, you're going to be with them and pay attention to what the people really think, what the people feel. So in that sense, participation by the people also has to be a little—I mean, if you're an advisor, you have to go to the people, chat with them. You can find out in meetings what concerns they have. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

But you, as an advisor, need to have the capacity to understand which necessity yields the possibility of starting a process. So in that sense, experience and being with people is important. I mean, having worked with people for a while, that's where someone also

learns what the work of popular education is. People aren't always in favor of what you think would be good. Sometimes people—And it's good, because people sometimes correct you. I mean, in meetings, that's where we have to find out how their concerns and worries are affecting them—like what they tell you. Well, this man has rabbits; they have fish. So it can be that there's a possibility for a collective project with these things. It could be fish, it could be rabbits, or other similar things. He could organize in a way that's less familiar to him. So that's one worry he has. One must understand that and not tell him, 'I'm going to say that you're going to do it this way,' you know? That is not the way to do it. It's like a dialogue. It is not just him who is going to have a say, but you are, too. But he is, too. And that's the way it is. And little by little, you learn to respect his—Now, when it's a worry or concern that is not going to help—Well, you also have to say so. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

Lastly, I found that the staff frequently use the word *acompañar*, 'to walk with someone' or 'to accompany' in describing their role as development workers. For example, Leopoldo explained "there's a certain accompaniment in the process so that they can walk in stride with us in their project." Staff rarely, if ever, used the language of 'us' and 'them' when referring to their work with program participants, providing evidence of the depth of their commitment to a participatory approach, and of their genuine solidarity and partnership with the people they work with.

Participatory learning. Through conversations with program participants and organization staff, it became clear that Adelanto promotes participatory learning within and across communities. The centrality of participatory learning within Adelanto's ethos was embodied by Leopoldo's comment: "Here we're all teachers. Here there isn't anyone who doesn't know anything, we all know something." This grounding in participation was reflected in the ways participants shared stories of their experience and interactions with the organization and its staff. For example, in the quote below, Mauricio used the word "*empujar*," to push or compel, to describe the way Adelanto introduced the program, and then said that they themselves, as participants, continued discovering new techniques, indicating that following the initial encouragement, the learning was self-guided. Following this step, other community members

began to realize the success of the work, and see the possibility of alternative fertilization techniques:

In terms of tomato cultivation, this region is pure agrochemicals. But now with the work that Adelanto pushed us to do, now we have been discovering [new techniques], and this work bore fruit because now a lot of people have started to see that here in our own community we have this type of [agroecological] fertilizer to fertilize our plants. – Mauricio, San Pedro de los Pinos

This is one of many examples of participants discussing their experience of participation and linking it with participatory learning. Program participants provided evidence of the ways participatory learning has been a central component of their experience with the organization:

As my father mentioned, to start, the most important thing for Adelanto is that our work is as a collective to start to promote our own work. Sometimes we work as individuals, but with [Adelanto], no. We start to work as a collective and we learn many things. – Mauricio, San Pedro de los Pinos

Well, I've seen, for example, that Adelanto comes to organize, and we're also open to the organization, too. Well, if there's some meeting outside of Pasto or in another place— Well, we attend and participate in that way. We also share our knowledge, some experiences that we've had—And we're happy to do so, you know? With the others. – Gabino, La Vega

Yeah, that's it. Together, we were given the training. And the other is that, if somebody needed help with their animals, with their vaccinations—something, some experience— then yes, we helped them. And yeah, in any of the workshops, not just those of us in the group attended, but others came as well. Or anyone who wanted to attend from the community was invited. But yeah, that's how we work—as a group, you know? United. – Bienvenida, San Pedro de los Pinos

I: But, how are they teaching? As a teacher and as students?

P: No, just like this, like civil meetings where they give their ideas, and we also shared our experiences. I mean, something like that—talking about what someone already knows, about what someone is already familiar with, or what someone is trying to do. So, it was like a friendly meeting. –Joaquín, La Merced

Well, because in the case of participation—Well, I know it's very necessary and very effective when they think about it, when one of the consultants in the case of Adelanto encourages people to think, people to participate. For people to see what's going on, the needs that they're experiencing or the problems that are coming about. That form of participating and of sharing experiences, I think, is helping a lot, and it is very—Well, it's a key point for Adelanto because it gets people together. That is to say, a representative

from each partnership, from each group. They are given a space and some time—so that they can say what they feel, what they do, share what they achieve and what they think. So it's like that. So yes, I think—Yeah, it helps out a lot with participation. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

The emphasis on participatory learning reflected in both the narratives of the staff and program participants demonstrates the staff's humility and respect for their program participants. The ability of participatory learning to be successful in this context is likely rooted in the partnership and solidarity between participants and staff, and is closely related to the process of coming to critical consciousness.

Recognizing and Naming Systems of Oppression

Freirean critical consciousness involves a process of learning to recognize and name systems of oppression as a prerequisite to addressing and overcoming those systems. I found that participants had a range of experiences resulting in varying abilities to recognize and name their oppressors. Because Adelanto actively seeks program participants that they determine have some existing consciousness, I found that the majority of program participants were able to identify and articulate the nature of these systems of oppression. The findings and themes selected and highlighted in this section were informed by the critical theorist component of my theoretical framework and, specifically, the notion that critical thinking is the ability to “identify, and then to challenge and change, the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs” (Brookfield, 2005, p. viii). Here I examine the ways study participants are demonstrating their critical thought, either through their descriptions of their development practice as Adelanto staff, or as program participants and community members through the lenses of intra-community division and violence, migration, or as clients within a patron-client system of governance.

In this section, I discuss the role of the Adelanto staff as critical practitioners grappling with the dominant neoliberal frame. Through interviews and participant observation, it became clear that the staff were attempting to work as critical practitioners, that is, they were deeply committed to the development of their own critical consciousness and critically questioned their programming and messaging in the context of the neoliberal frame. In the following section, I explore the ways the staff demonstrated their critical practice and discussed the role of neoliberalism in their work and vision. I then examine the ways staff and program participants observed community division and intra-community violence, migration, and clientelism through a critical lens.

Critical practitioners and a neoliberal reality. In their 2012 article, Guevara-Hernandez and colleagues recognized:

while processes of participation may be promoted from below, any approach in the Mexican context that denies that macroeconomic development structures serve political interests in society runs the risk of divorcing larger social processes from the local realities they condition (Kamut, 2004; Morton, 2007). (p. 260)

I found that the staff of Adelanto acknowledge the reality of a neoliberal frame. The first key problem and strategy identified in the organization's strategic plan names neoliberalism and provides a strategy to overcome some of the local realities that the larger social processes condition:

Considering the rural poverty that farming communities in the region cope with as a consequence of the neoliberal system, an individual isolated effort is ineffective in improving the economic situation of these families beyond simply survival.

Strategic Proposal: To promote organized and solidary economic action with groups from the region that seek alternatives and work cooperatively.

The staff reflected on and added detail and personal perspective to this problem and strategy put forth in the strategic plan. For example, Leopoldo contextualized the problem and the approach in this way:

So, yeah, consider that all this learning and this knowledge that we've gathered over the years. That, for a few reasons, has collapsed. But I actually still hold it, and that has been an important element for us in the past few years, in the past few seasons, because we need to survive, and with the economic crisis that we're seeing right now, well, we have to unite ourselves more, and unite efforts to look for family development, or community development however it could be. But right now it's necessary because the neoliberal and capitalist situation is overcoming us, and every time we're more exploited, more isolated. So, in a way, right now, that learning that we attained in years past, we need to give it space again to get back, to continue, and to see if today we can do better work than we did before, not in a way that we would be repeating exactly what we've done in the past, but that we would look for a new way to develop a new type of work as a collective, or cooperative, however we want to name it. But it's a necessity in these recent years to work together because there's no other way, because right now we're pinned against a wall by capitalism. So, we need collectives that are formed by groups of people to create the work of moving forward, developing together and growing together, and getting out of this economic crisis that we're living together. It would come out of an exchange of experience, an exchange of production, an exchange of knowledge, and that, well, it's going to help, and it's going to help develop the families or the groups that we work with.
—Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Here Leopoldo provides detail that helps convey the ways that he believes the Organization may play a role, and adds his vision and perspective to the problem and effort described in the strategic plan. During our conversations, the staff engaged at an intellectual level about the creation of an alternative to capitalism, and the firsthand effects of the neoliberal regime in Chiapas:

I think that to say that we want to achieve a system that serves as an alternative to capitalism is very—a dream. It not something that is being achieved, nobody has a, no one in the world has an alternative to this system. And nevertheless, there are a lot of different experiences. And one of those experiences is that the role of women is important. The system that has—the capitalist economic system has been based in patriarchy. So, there's a tight relationship between a patriarchal system where the one who makes the calls is the male, and that has relegated the whole area of appearance to women. So, I believe that with the participation of women, we can move forward gaining different experiences, really different experiences, and because as women we have other types of relationships that aren't so—we're more in touch with the earth so it's not just about economic power, but the rights of the earth that the woman achieved in their communities. —Jimena, Adelanto staff

Well, what the women say is true, and the alternative system, we can't escape from economics, or as we say, to go against the system isn't the same as to escape from the economic system. And in reality, it's not possible to escape the system with this work

that we're doing. So, if you've seen the experience of the Zapatistas, that's a deeper effort, more serious, a bigger effort to escape the system, to create an alternative political and economic system and all that, but even they have to operate within the economy as it is right now, right? They have to make sales. If they're going to sell, they have to go to the market, which is within the capitalist system. So right now we don't have another system. It's the only system. The Russians attempted to make a different system but in reality, it wasn't a different system because it was based on the current system. So, I think that it's better to talk about certain values that the system promoted, for example, the basis in individualism, for example, profit over everything else, competition. For you to get ahead you have to make one side smashed against the rest so you can rise up, to say it briefly. So, for example, the value of money, the value of a person, the value of natural resources as a means to sell growth, not as a value of nature that you have to respect—so, in a way, all those values create a group of ideologies of the system, and it would be a little like working at the ideological level. For that reason our work is more than anything about education for peace, it signifies a certain type of work that opens the mind to different values, or alternative values to those of the capitalist system. And to create experiences that help you to understand that one day an alternative economic system could be possible, a more cooperative and people-centered system, more at the level of meeting people's needs and not so oriented toward profit and earnings. That would be it, more or less. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

During our informal conversations we discussed the role of microcredit in development. It was clear that the staff were familiar with the many arguments against microcredit as a viable development approach, and it was clear that they engage in critical reflection around their microcredit program and consider whether the program is harming participants and whether it is advancing programmatic and organizational goals. The staff expressed that, at the very least, they feel sure they are meeting a need of the people by enhancing access to credit. They also were conscious of the critique that microcredit brings peasants fully within and dependent upon a capitalist system and expressed their opinions of the critique. For example, Ramona shared with me that she believed it was a myth that these peasants didn't already fully operate within a capitalist system, and that at the very least, access to credit would give them slightly more equality in a vastly unequal system if they could use the credit to their advantage:

No—it's just, yeah, right now I see that the micro—or, like, look, talking about the question, for example, that a man told me 'it's just that I need some money to start this business, and I don't have it.' Or like, it's that, it's a necessity to have something to start-

up, and that doesn't mean that now, because of that they're going to become capitalists, or that you're in that. That's how I see it. Because, it's that it's seeing it from their perspective, because here is theory, and here are the ideals, and here the situation, and the reality, is that the people don't have money. It's that the people are in this capitalist world, so I understand what you're saying, and that the ideal is better, the cliché, that they don't use agrochemicals and all that. I mean, that's what we want, but in reality, the people have that need [for money], you know? So, the question becomes, how to make the most of it, right? I don't know if it's possible. –Ramona, Adelanto staff

I also attempted to provide space for program participants to engage in critical reflection on the nature and impact of the microcredit program. Some participants had difficulty with this, discussing only technical details such as interest rates and material benefits or logistical and practical difficulties with the program. Others reflected on the ways microcredit does or does not contribute to the development of their communities. For example, Salvador, of the La Vega municipality, saw the microcredit program as offering the opportunity to bring people together and exchange knowledge, in addition to providing access to credit:

But they don't tell us that we're only going to do this as a group of Catholics, or as Presbyterians, no. What we're going to do here, in line with the need, based in what they're living, we can bring ourselves together with others, whoever they may be. So I think that that's a form of teaching us, of helping us, so that among ourselves, whether we're of a common religion or not, that we consider ourselves to be brothers and sisters, that we see ourselves as brothers from that perspective. I feel that there is that relation from the microcredit program, because that's a way of connecting us, of creating community with the others. So, yeah, that's how I understand it. –Salvador, La Vega

Alternatively, Patricio explained how he believed that unless the people were offered education along with microcredit, and unless the people were psychologically ready to receive education for critical consciousness, that microcredit does not serve as a step in the process of concientization. Hearing him say this, I followed up to make sure I had understood him correctly:

I: You don't think that microcredit works as a step in concientization?

P: Well no, not right now. People aren't clear about that process—

I: We're talking about the microcredit that Adelanto gives, not the government—

P: Yeah, the microcredit program of Adelanto. No. I feel like no, the people don't get it [they don't understand it]. So because of that it doesn't help because most people right now are accustomed to receiving, that's all. And they don't think for themselves, as I said, [they don't think about] the future. Yeah, so with the microcredits, the conscious people who have struggled, who have come to know or understand, as has been in our case, as we've struggled and fought so much, we've seen all these processes. Well, for us, Adelanto's microcredit program has been a good path. Because if I wanted, as I said last time with Don Leopoldo, it would be to improve my small poultry production, to attend to the chickens more. So, there, there's no problem, but that's it, what I'm thinking with that detail, well, people aren't accustomed to think for themselves, or they think for themselves but they don't think about their children, that's the issue, and it's apparent in all of the countryside, in religion, in economics, in the social aspect, and in politics. – Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

The staff's ability to critically reflect on their work and their programs, and their constant desire for feedback and critique demonstrate their position as critical practitioners. Similarly, most of the participants had a critical perspective; through my conversations with them, they demonstrated that they are constantly evaluating their relationship with the staff and to the programs, and are thinking critically through their role as participants. The staff are conscious of the neoliberal frame they face, and they work along the boundary of opposing the neoliberal system and working within it, or in Octavio explained, escaping the system or resisting it.

Community division and violence as a symptom of oppression. Adelanto was borne as a response to community division and violence resulting from the low-intensity war between the EZLN, the government, and paramilitaries during the mid-1990s. As a result, many of the communities that Adelanto works in have endured a history of intra-community division and violence. Many of the participants in the study provided narratives describing violence and fighting in their communities, and the ill effects these had on their development can be read in their accounts.

Leopoldo described the ways that division and infighting, and alternatively, community unity and popular organization, affects the ways Adelanto must approach their work in communities, and influences the ability of program participants to engage in the work:

San Lázaro de las Sierras [and surrounding communities], they are communities that are more in the jungle [in an area where the Zapatistas have heightened influence], and they definitely have more training and are more certain [in their beliefs], and that has helped them to develop themselves in a collective effort. . . . That makes Adelanto's work a lot easier there. Because there isn't the need for you to be an organizer. You, just say, 'okay, you could do this, this could be better' and they do that for you. On the other hand in La Merced, people have different interests there because there is a lot of competition between businesses, of getting capital, earning money [because it is a tourist zone]. So, there it's more difficult to change people's mentality. As it's a tourist zone, that affects a lot because the people are focused on getting money from everyone that arrives. And they've lost their culture; they've lost a lot in that community. So all that is really different. It's really different [to work] with people who already have a clear consciousness and people who still want to advance themselves and move forward. That's really different. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

The staff described on numerous occasions the difficulty they encounter in working with people from La Merced because of the community's orientation toward tourism, as Leopoldo described. La Merced has been developed as a tourism zone, and many residents rely on tourism for their income, but very few tourists arrive in La Merced resulting in fierce competition between residents. Staff described similar difficulties working in the community of San Pedro de los Pinos which has long been divided along religious lines, and on the basis of government programs which privilege some residents over others.

Bienvenida, a 20-year-old woman from San Pedro de Los Pinos, described her experience learning to raise rabbits, and how her confidence had grown in raising animals, and then told me that community members had stolen her rabbits:

I had my little farm with my rabbits and chickens, but it didn't go well. They stole my rabbits. That discouraged me because they took away the thing that was going well. Really, after that I didn't want to continue on with the project, but, yeah, I'll keep working on my garden. –Bienvenida, San Pedro de Los Pinos

Diego from San Pedro de los Pinos, explained how he saw Adelanto as helping to resolve some of the division and violence that had been affecting his community of San Pedro de Los Pinos:

Yes. In any case, like we said, we came to work, more or less when Adelanto made recommendations to us, like this community. It wasn't united like it is today. Everything had always been divided, so [the Adelanto staff] told us how we were going to do things. And well, we've had the same setbacks in the community; there were a lot of ruffians here. A group of ruffians set themselves apart from everyone else; they didn't respect authority. Authority didn't exist for them; they wouldn't go along with it. And the good thing is that, well, after that, we thought about it, and the community got together. Now the community is united, and everything we wanted to do here in the community is what we do now. It's an achievement because the people have come together. And well, in any case, like we said, now people have something—like the churches, for example. Some churches, or religion, as we call it—Catholicism. And there are other churches – Presbyterian ones and others—because before, they were all divided. But now that the community is united, it means that if we say that they need to cooperate or work together, people don't say that they're not willing to do so. They work together if they're told what to do. Yes. That is an achievement in the community. –Diego, San Pedro de los Pinos

The theme of community division based on religious beliefs arose repeatedly in my conversations with community members. The importance and value of overcoming religious divisions and moving toward community unity also emerged in many conversations. Octavio, a staff member in his seventies who had served as a priest for the Catholic Church in Chiapas for more than 30 years before joining Adelanto, described the work of enhancing community unity across religions:

In the community of San Pedro de los Pinos, we've worked a lot for religious inclusion there, because there are various religions. And that's made it so that the same people can strengthen that solidarity. It's not that we change their culture, the opposite, that's the good thing that they have from their culture, they have a good attitude; that when there's a party they invite everyone. If there's a wedding, everyone goes. They don't exclude each other. They could be from whatever religion, and they're free, so, if your religion prohibits you from drinking, no one will force you to drink. They have beer for those that want it, they have soda for those that don't want to drink beer, and they're really friendly there. When there's a sick person, everyone helps out, whatever family it is. So, that's what we reinforce in a way, and we think about that, it's also a form of education. – Octavio, Adelanto staff

Staff member, Leopoldo, a man in his sixties whose family is from San Pedro de Los Pinos, and who spent the early years of his life working under a *patrón* on the (now defunct) hacienda there, described the situation this way:

So, here [in this region], what also has really been a concern is the divisions on the basis of religion because religious groups think that everything comes from up above and that what we do doesn't have anything to do with it. And we [at Adelanto] aren't dividing people, we include everyone. And we [at Adelanto] think that there are people out there who are from different religions who understand what we're doing. But that's how it is, it's normal. You and I could be neighbors but I think one way, and you think another. And I'm with this [political party] and you're with that [political party]. Normal. That's how we live in the communities, including within families, within couples, that there's a husband who is with one [party] and the wife is with a different [party]. Within the same house, it could be the same with their kids. All divided because that's what the system likes. Divide and conquer. That's their motto, right? And that's succeeding because it's what is happening most commonly right now. With the crisis of low yields, and the crisis of the drought, and the natural resource crisis, the people are going crazy, you know? And they don't know where to turn. So whatever comes to them [in the form of government assistance], it's all good. It's mostly a gift, no matter that it's invalid, you know? That it's demoralizing. It's a gift, and the people welcome it. They like it. For us, this is the work that we're doing, trying to help people. We're not against them receiving [government assistance], but the work that we're doing is aimed to help them know how to manage these things so that they don't sell their dignity for these gifts that usually don't even work, that are rotten. But, yeah, it's normal that within the community, or within a household, we're divided. We all think differently. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Here, Leopoldo also explained the problem of clientelism, and the role of political parties in dividing communities. The role of politics and clientelism in contributing to community division, and providing impediments to development in the same sense that Leopoldo described here, came up in various discussions with community members and organization staff. It appeared that the staff used the example of community division to help participants gain perspective on systems of oppression that had divided their communities. This served as an entry point for discussions related to critical consciousness.

Migration as a symptom of oppression. Migration was another theme staff used to introduce conversations about critical consciousness. They employed migration as an example of injustice that results from oppressive systems. In Chiapas, out-migration to the United States, Mexico City, and the tourism-dense areas of the Caribbean and Pacific coasts is often identified as damaging to the social and economic structure of indigenous communities. Migration may be taken as evidence of the impacts of entrenched systems of oppression that have resulted in limited economic viability of traditional livelihoods in the context of a neoliberal regime.

Many of the participants of this study recognized migration as evidence of oppressive forces, demonstrating their position in the process of critical consciousness. During informal conversations with families, many mentioned that their relatives were working in the United States, upon discovering that I was an American. Many young people aspire to go to the U.S. and several people told me that they felt like children were sitting in school dreaming of the day they would go north, rather than imagining a future at home. Another common theme was a lack of choice or opportunities at home that forced people to head north. Although, migration and its effects on communities did not arise as an issue for most of the program participants with whom I spoke, the staff see it as a major issue they are aiming to address.

Gloria, an Adelanto staff person, summarized themes I had heard from many (both program participants and staff) over the course of our conversations:

Now, one more thing, it's important to consider, what if there had been a way to possibly find a job that didn't require that everyone go to the U.S., or to Cancun, or to Mexico City to work for their survival, but rather what if there had been the possibility of something there, in their own home, in their own house that would allow them to live a more dignified life. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

Leopoldo, another staff member, who is about 60 and grew up in San Pedro de los Pinos, explained the problem, as he sees it:

One more detail; right now, the issue of the migrants, and the migration that has increased a lot in the past few years, that affects a lot because now all the youth aren't thinking about change, they're not thinking about improving their lands, about cultivating the land. Right now youth are thinking about how to make money, that's it. Their minds are on the United States, Cancun, Mexico City, where there's money. And for them the land isn't interesting. Only my generation is thinking about planting, cultivating, having parcels in cultivation, but, presently, other generations aren't thinking like that. That's what's splitting up society, because everyone that migrates brings different cultures and they lose the culture of their community, and that's not helping to develop a work ethic. Now they don't think that fieldwork is realistic for us, not anymore. They don't think so. So, because of that, there are many ways of thinking, and there's a different feeling or vision that they have about their lives. And we're few, those of us that are still thinking about cultivating the land. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

The notion of migration changing the societal composition of Chiapas's rural communities is important to the context in which Adelanto works. Octavio adds to this context by explaining the level of desperation that drives people to the north for work. Later in the same interview, he echoed Gloria's comment, as he explained how he sees the work of Adelanto working toward an alternative:

In general, that's the situation of the *campesinos* here, that many go to the United States. Chiapas didn't have so many leaving, but right now, yeah—So, maybe the church, at first, said 'don't go,' but it's absurd to tell them not to go. If they have a need, and they can't meet their need here, they have to find a means elsewhere. So, Adelanto isn't against those who migrate, nor is it against those who receive projects from the government. Why? Because hunger forces them to do all that. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

So, what we want to say, with the few that want to work together, is that we can achieve something. It would be showing that there's an alternative. A small alternative to improve, a little bit, their situation, so they have something to eat, so they don't have to go to another country. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

Implications of clientelism for participation and the development of critical consciousness. The culture of clientelism in Chiapas is pervasive and complex, and has evolved rapidly as the government has used clientelistic programs as a counter to the Zapatista movement. In Chiapas, clientelistic government programs have been used by political parties to solicit votes and to divide and pacify disenfranchised groups to quell civil unrest. The staff

explained that clientelistic government programs have major negative impacts on the ability of their organization to carry out their programs. Leopoldo described it this way:

And now I will explain what we are doing here, that here you won't see someone who's going to manage it alone, but we will manage together. So, someone says 'I'm interested, with my group I'm going to enter into the collective.' So, you go along finding people who still have that spirit of struggle, of change, of searching for a new livelihood. They exist. But it's true that not all of the groups are going to believe what we believe. We have to land in different areas where, there's an area that's really productive, and there's another area that won't produce anything, and there are areas that more or less produce just a little, but that's okay. We'll keep moving forward with energy, we'll move forward with faith that we're going to succeed in something. As I said at the beginning, the system we're living in is really strong. It can cut off all your programs. It can make your programs less effective. It'll make it so there's no path to follow, because [government assistance programs] come with everything and don't ask for anything in exchange. They don't ask them to do anything, just eat and live and that's it. But it's a shame because people are learning to make themselves dependent on them, you know? They get used to just eating, but they don't teach them to think about what to do to live better, and more healthily. So for me, yeah, that's something. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

The staff see the government as 'buying out' the consciousness of the people, and that the government seeks to dominate or control people's minds with money. Gloria told me "it's as if [the government has] found the perfect model to buy the consciousness of the people, and as long as the government is giving people money, I think it will be difficult to mobilize." Ramona told me "the government seeks to dominate minds using money. . . . Once the people start following the path of government assistance it's hard to turn around." These quotations reflect a recurring theme from interviews with NGO staff: that clientelism makes it difficult for them to carry out their work of promoting self-sufficiency and alternative livelihoods in rural communities.

In the following quotation, Leopoldo identified a loss of dignity that he associates with clientelism, and the stagnation that accompanies an influx of government support into the communities where Adelanto works:

That's what we've done most in the communities, we're not against them receiving [government assistance], they can receive it, but how can they improve their lives with what they receive. And with that, work to make their life's work bigger in the community, in their family, so they don't just resign themselves to what the government gives, but rather make an effort to show that we can do it. Because it would be really sad if we're just provided for [by the government]. For me that's painful, I would feel ashamed that I'm just waiting here for them to give me something to eat. That's what I've explained to people, and a lot of people have liked those exchanges of experience, and they say, 'no, well, you are right, it's better to work so we're not just waiting. If something comes, well, great, welcome—but it's not because we were waiting for it, rather, I have my own project for my life's work.' That's what we've achieved in those exchanges of experience, because the people lose energy and they don't know where to start. And think, with this support [from the government], with the support that they give you, you could improve your life, and the people aren't doing it. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Adelanto staff person, Gloria, described the discord between the methods and objectives of the government and Adelanto in this excerpt:

Political parties saw people as politically profitable. I mean, they only worked for people who are profitable, whether politically or religiously. At least that was our point of view, you know? One must spend time with those who suffer most, but not to profit from them in any way just because they're the complaisant ones. Because they are the complaisant ones on one hand, yes. For others, they were that way because of a universal God—and on the other hand, also because of culture. They're the basis of society, the roots themselves. So in a way, for us it was incredibly important for these people to not get used or taken advantage of for personal benefit, but rather they needed to take a few steps forward or they would never say anything with awareness—with awareness of class, with personal awareness, and with empowerment. So, I think that part of this is why it's said that we can't work with someone else if we don't respect their integrity as a person. It's absurd because it would be like using someone for personal benefit, but not giving them their dignity back. —Gloria, Adelanto staff

Leopoldo discussed the “competition” between those who are seeking grassroots change, and those who use clientelism and manipulation to reinforce their power:

Unfortunately, right now there is a strong co-optation of the big leaders, the big shots in the communities that do this type of—that have this type of knowledge. And right now, the system that we're living in, what it wants is to divide us, and to follow them manipulating all the power with the people. That's what isn't helping us. So, that's a big impact that we're up against right now, that there is competition between those of us who are looking for a change, and those who are manipulating the people with the power of money, with political power. That doesn't help much. There are very few conscious people who still want to blaze a new path in the same sense as before. The vast majority

are coopted by the government, they've been sold out. Now their community, their people don't interest them, they're happy and live well. So that affects a lot of the work we do here at Adelanto. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Octavio explained how dignified people become beggars, and the importance of tackling the root causes of poverty, rather than telling people not to beg. This quote characterizes the efforts of Adelanto related to self-sufficiency and clientelism:

As we've discussed with Leopoldo, it's that the social context is what determines a lot of things, right? So, the social context is that of economic crisis, right? So, people that had dignity for 20 or 30 years, and really strong, a strong sense of self-confidence, confidence in their work, in their own capacity, every time they face a more difficult situation, they become a beggar. But that happens everywhere, in every country, you know? So, I believe we can't just say to the people 'don't accept anything,' because we're not going to be able to resolve that hunger. So, I think that the situation that they're living in is the root of it, and the root of the way the people are. So what we can do, if we're being critical, is say if it the government were different, instead of giving out bread, they would look for a different way to solve the problems that create this situation, you know? – Octavio, Adelanto staff

Program participants also noted government programs, clientelism and the severity of poverty and lack of opportunities as impacting Adelanto's programming. It was clear that these government programs also have direct effects on the way people conceptualize their relationship to the government, their communities, and to Adelanto. During interviews, I asked participants to compare the intentions of the government's use of assistance programs to the work of Adelanto, acknowledging that both the government and the NGO claimed that their programs were oriented toward goals of community development. Participants noted several distinctions in the programs and in their intentions.

Some participants focused on technical and organizational differences between the programs. For example, Bienvenida of San Pedro de Los Pinos explained that, in contrast to Adelanto's programs, government projects don't need to be paid back, but that they also don't come with technical assistance, they often aren't well planned, and are occasionally

inappropriate for the context. Bienvenida offered an example of the government providing a breed of chickens that needed intensive management that was incompatible with the management capacity in the community, resulting in the death of all of the new chickens. In a group discussion in Nueva Tlaxcala, the women told me that government assistance comes with conditions because women have to attend meetings and cannot miss them, and have to do tasks like pick up trash, which can be difficult for women running households and attending to their children.

Several participants described their perception that government projects divide the community because they give a project to some and not to others, sparking competition and distrust among community members. For example, Salvador of the La Vega municipality told me that he believes government assistance makes people more individualistic, that the government does not provide assistance so that people could improve and overcome their situations. He believes government programs, because they advantage certain families over others, are designed to instigate infighting to divide the community, rather than as a gesture of solidarity.

Many participants explained that there was a lack of follow up on government projects. Although the structure and organization of these projects and their management appeared to be shifting toward more oversight (based on my conversations with participants), historically, according to participants, the government would provide community members with money for a project, but would not follow up to verify that the funds had actually been used for their intended purposes. This meant that funds might have been diverted away from projects that benefited the whole community, to benefit individuals with more political power, causing further damage to the social fabric of a community.

While I didn't specifically ask participants if they received government assistance, at least three participants volunteered that they did receive assistance (the vast majority of study participants were in opposition to government programs and told me they did not take advantage of government programs). The participants that told me they did accept government assistance shared that the programs help them to pay for their children's education. In one interview with two women in San Pedro de los Pinos, the women told me that they liked the government projects because they are 'free' (*gratis*) because they don't need to be paid back.

The vast majority of the study participants, however, emphasized the negative components and malicious intentions of government programs. Two participants for example, explained how the projects aren't truly 'free' because of the conditions the government imposes. Salvador was skeptical of the intentions of the government, noting that people's acceptance of government projects gives the government more power in the communities:

I think that the intention of the government is to take advantage, not so much of innocence, but we're not going to be stupid about it either. Like we say, the people themselves do know that the projects and all of that are available under certain conditions, under the condition that what the government says, goes in the communities; they know this well, already. But because they need money, they accept the project; they accept the project out of sheer need or in order to grow. I don't know. Every family already knows why they get what they get. —Salvador, La Vega

Patricio went further and expressed worry that the government is acting deceitfully and that projects that appear free are actually indebting recipients to the benefit of wealthy capitalists.

And another thing is that we feel really strongly about the government [assistance] is that it's conditioned—very conditioned. Because what we know—I don't know how much can be truly understood or believed, but what we think is that, upon giving us money—Well, we're acquiring debt. So even though they don't collect on that debt, even though they say it's from the [stimulus fund]—Let's suppose they don't collect from us, but it shows that we received some amount of money—So the shame that causes us here as a family collective, is that later, when we go to a bank, an office branch, we have that debt.

So that's their new entry point, the new *latifundistas*⁷, the new *latifundistas* in the state [of Chiapas], in the [other] states of Mexico and in the entire country, it's their new entry point, to give out money, indebting the people. And it makes it easy for them to get in, if in the *ejido*⁸ there's a mine, there's a river, or there's some kind of resource to be exploited. So that's a clear example of where our lack of trust comes from. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Mauricio of San Pedro de Los Pinos told me that the intention of programs is that “we never wake up.” Desi of San Lázaro de las Sierras explained the intention of the government is to dominate, to make people believe that everything is easy, that everything is okay, to not wake up: “The support that they give, presumably it's political. It's about changing the mind to believe that everything is easy, that everything is okay, that everything—or, like, to not see, to not wake up. To close us up.” Desi also told me that government programs take away the value of work. Patricio, Desi's father, told me that the intention of government programs is “to trap us”. Many participants used language of domination and control to describe government programs and their intentions, for example;

Because we have to look at the past, history, the slavery of the past. We have to look at that, how it was, how they got out of it, how our grandparents were fighting, struggling to become more or less free, and not in the hands of a *patrón*. That then, we have to look at that. And we have to look at the present, for us the present that we're living, how they want to dominate us again, how they're dominating us, and how they want to enslave us again. We have to be really attentive in this path so that there is a future. A future, more or less, with alternatives, freedoms, so that boys and girls, youth can make their own life with their work, with their land, with their things, well, with whatever there is, with what we have. So those are the differences, because the people now, what we see in reality we can see that they're not looking at the past, they're not looking at the future. They're in the present. That's it; they're staying in the present. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

⁷ *Latifundista* translates literally to ‘landowner,’ but in Mexico *latifundista* is generally used to reference large colonial, neocolonial, and/or capitalistic plantation owners.

⁸ The Mexican *ejido* is a communal landholding collectively managed by a community. The *ejido* system was introduced as part of agrarian land reform during the Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s which reorganized *latifundista* holdings into collectively-owned peasant holdings in the form of *ejidos*.

On the other hand, with a governmental institution, they're programs that are managed without the interest of the development of the people, all they're interested in is that the people are controlled. –Joaquín, La Merced

So, the difference is that [Adelanto] makes a—but it's really different than what the government does, they are about controlling with their programs. Controlling everyone with their programs so that we're dependent on the government. The government doesn't like there to be a social-political organization. They don't like there to be a movement, the government doesn't like all that. Nevertheless, we say, it's necessary. –Sebastián, La Vega

I say, the [purpose of the] government [programs] is to distract us, to have us be pacified and calm, so that we don't say anything. –Sebastián, La Vega

It's all wrapped together, for that reason the government always gives out projects to control. Not to develop communities, that's a lie. Not anymore. Also, because the *campesino* has proven himself to be skilled and clever [through the Zapatista movement]. So, with all that now, not anymore. The government will have none of it, no, they'll give you more paternalism, because we're waiting for daddy to come. That's what we don't want. –Sebastián, La Vega

So we've been on this path these past ten years with all this effort to see that we can move forward this *inquietud*⁹ that we've been dreaming of. Unfortunately, for us there is a really strong obstacle right now because the government, or, the system of government that we're living in right now has been really strong for us, because all they do is implement programs to control people, give out gifts to have them under their control, or under their political will. And that, together with the economic crisis that we're living out in town, or in the indigenous communities, well, these government gifts are very welcome. So that's hurt us a lot, to not be able to put in place, or launch a stronger or better type of development in the communities so that we can move forward in the face of this crisis. It affects our programs, that the people are dependent on the government. Because there are a ton of government programs. Not just one. There are various programs that they're implementing in the indigenous or peasant communities to have them under their control in the political electoral sense. So, in that way, we feel that it's a really slow effort that we're pushing forward, and with very few people who continue to have the *conciencia* of still making a change in the system that we're living in currently. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Another theme related to clientelism that I followed throughout the interviews was the 'value of work.' This theme was salient because many participants indicated they believed the intention of Adelanto was to help promote education for self-sufficiency as the primary objective

⁹ *Inquietud* can mean a restlessness or a curiosity.

of development (so individuals don't have to leave to find work outside of their community), whereas the intention of the government's programs was to diminish the value of traditional agricultural work (making it more difficult to establish viable rural livelihoods). For example, Desi told me:

What does the government want? They want us to know nothing. For that reason they give assistance in whatever form. So that we align ourselves with them. And Adelanto they give us assistance, but it's not free. We have to work. And as we're accustomed to working, we don't have a reason to be on bad terms. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Desi linked her economic independence from the government and her self-sufficiency to a feeling of freedom:

On the other hand, with Adelanto it's more difficult [than with the government assistance], there's more commitment and obligation, but because we're people that know how to work, we're people that know how to meet our own needs—cause I've said, myself, as a mother, I've compared myself with other mothers, why don't they have what I can have, as I've said to my husband, sometimes they hate me, they talk about me, that I'm this, or I'm that. But I say, it's something I have in my mind, it's something I have inside me that no one can take away, they can say what they say. I know what I am doing, and I don't take any assistance from the government. I feel happy, I feel free. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Desi's father, Patricio, told me government assistance breaks the collective processes of work, of struggle, and of communication because government assistance is “easy” and it's given as a gift. Francisco from Nueva Tlaxcala shared his perception that the government diminishes local knowledge about traditional agricultural practices to improve yield, like saving seed and breeding plants, by giving out seed and fertilizer, which would make self-sufficiency more difficult. Several participants reaffirmed Francisco's claim. For example, Patricio told me:

And in the manipulation of communities through these perks, well, the community gets used to it. They are accustomed to expecting these gifts to come. Now we don't have to think, we don't have to analyze, to sit as a family and think, what are we going to do, what are we going to plant, what are we going to grow to have food. People are forgetting that, because they know their government assistance is coming. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Joaquín and Marcela shared the sentiment that government assistance programs prevent people from determining and designing their own paths for development, affirming the idea that government assistance contradicts goals of self-sufficiency. Joaquín explained;

The difference is in way they manage politically, for example, when a person, it's really their desire to do what you want, they want to support you, to see your development, well, they tell you the truth. On the contrary, with a governmental institution, the programs that are managed in a way they're not interested in the development of the people, but rather, they're only interested in seeing that the people are under control. That's the major difference. For that reason, one might opt to search for their own development instead of waiting for them to come to give it to you, in a way, it's not something secure, yeah, like a government program, it could be that they give you something, or they don't give you something, whether you succeed or you don't succeed, because we're, the majority, we're waiting for that. –Joaquín, La Merced

Marcela compared the work of the government and Adelanto, noting that Adelanto invited participants to design their own development projects, while the government does not:

As I was saying, we've been with them for five years, and the meetings that we've had have always been with the intention of bettering ourselves—how we're going to work, how we're going to progress. I think that Adelanto is good, yeah. Because with the government, we never have conversations about how we're going to live, how we're doing, and how we're going to grow, for example—No. But with Adelanto, we do. –Marcela, La Vega

Gabino also contrasted the goals of the government with the goals of Adelanto:

So Adelanto, well, as the situation is right now where the people have so much need for cash, so, it's a little like Adelanto resists this more than the government. The government sends projects from the [stimulus fund], and on top of that administers other projects, for example, food assistance programs. But it's kind of like the government makes people dependent on itself. And here with Adelanto it's the opposite, it makes people independent. It fights for that. It's more difficult, but we believe it's better to be independent from the government and self-sufficient with everything. –Gabino, La Vega

Because Adelanto actively seeks program participants the staff believe to have at least some level of *conciencia*, which Adelanto staff associate with being in resistance to government clientelistic programs, the views of interview participants are not likely to reflect those of the general public. I would expect the general public to be more in favor of government handouts

than the program participants. In the following excerpt Octavio explained Adelanto's process for recruiting program participants, and his ideas of the ways participants consider Adelanto's programs:

What we've seen is there are so many poor people, and so much need, that it is impossible to attend to all of them. We have privileged those that have a little more restlessness (*inquietud*) to move forward, and those who have a minimum of awareness to value effort, their own work, and to not want to be completely dependent. So, it doesn't interest us to work with those who are just interested in 'what will the government give me, or what will they give me like this, or what are they going to give me there, or what will this political party give me.' So, for that reason we haven't promoted this [microcredit] program much, but rather, we wait for the people to come. He who is interested comes and asks, and we give him the information. We're not so stupid that we say that people understand or believe everything we tell them. It could be that they don't. It's possible that the people are only interested in saying 'here they give out money, here they loan money at this interest rate,' as you saw yesterday, '[within the community, community members] loan us money at 10%, if you're going to loan us money it's at 4.5%, great, we'll work with you.' So we say, it's possible that they're listening, but probably it's not entering into their head. So, because of that, we're don't have full faith that this method people will advance and move forward. But, we are convinced that we are serving a real need of the people. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

Conceptualizations of Empowerment

Embedded in study participants' narratives are diverse and varied descriptions of empowerment, including descriptions of different types of consciousness and of economic empowerment. Program participants and staff engaged in discussions on the transfer of power due to changes in economics and knowledge. Participants described experiences of being 'woken up' or having their 'mind opened.' I paid close attention to any descriptions of power shifts within the narratives and created codes to aggregate descriptions of coming to consciousness, of economic empowerment, of personal change and emotional development and to highlight interesting use of language related to power shifts.

Descriptions of critical consciousness. I identified participants using different language that I related to critical consciousness. Words and language that I perceived to indicate aspects of critical consciousness included describing an experience of ‘to wake up’ (*despertar*), ‘to realize’ or ‘to become aware’ (*darse cuenta*), and ‘to open the mind’ (*abrir la mente*) or ‘to open the eyes’ (*abrir los ojos*). I also paid careful attention to language that described shifts of power, such as ‘to empower’ (*empoderar*), which was a word that some of the staff used when describing goals of their programs, and a word I found referenced as a goal related to work with women’s groups in the organization’s strategic plan. Lastly, I studied participants’ use of the word *concientizar* or *conciencia*, which literally means ‘to make aware’ or ‘to raise awareness,’ but that I found to have a spectrum of definitions in practice, ranging from a type of neighborly conscientiousness, to something more closely aligned to Freirean ideals of critical consciousness.

To describe critical consciousness, Freire (1970/2010) used the Portuguese term ‘*conscientização*.’ *Conscientização*, as Freire used it, does not have a direct English translation, as it remains in its original Portuguese in English translations of his books. However, *conscientização* does have a Spanish cognate in *concienciación*. In Spanish, *concienciación* is not exclusively linked to critical consciousness; it translates to “awareness-raising” or “consciousness-raising.” I found that participants did, however, employ *concienciación*, (as well as its other grammatical forms, *conciencia*, *concientización* and *concientizar*) to reference forms of consciousness that were more closely aligned with Freire’s critical consciousness. When I heard participants using these words in ways I understood to be relevant to critical consciousness, I asked them to elaborate on what they meant by the word.

When I asked Jimena, one of the staff members, to explain *conciencia* to me, she described two distinct forms of *conciencia*: *conciencia corporal* (consciousness of the body),

conciencia social (social consciousness). Her definitions were helpful; they allowed me to interpret *conciencia* in distinct ways, determined by context, and helped me to sort descriptions of corporal and social awareness from critical consciousness.

I've had *conciencia*. I discovered corporal *conciencia* as my area of contribution, of service. My professional field is in therapy. So, I set corporal *conciencia* apart. To have a corporal *conciencia* means to know what's happening to the body. Then *conciencia*—social *conciencia*—is, well, how I feel about what I want for my life in relation to the group, to the community. So social *conciencia* is a group *conciencia*—knowing that my group, the one to which I belong, the one with which I identify, has certain values. So for me, social *conciencia* is a clear sense of belonging to a group, to certain values—to certain, well, goals. –Jimena, Adelanto staff

Jimena described an example of the development of *conciencia corporal* from her experience, which was reiterated by many of the women I spoke with who had participated in the women's groups Jimena facilitates:

Well, it's just that there's an inherent relationship that I've seen in my practice. The woman who manages to have self-awareness achieves self-esteem. So for example, she empowers herself by taking charge of her body. So, for example, saying, thinking, 'I'm not my husband's property.' I mean, 'This is my body.' They themselves begin to realize that their body is their own, and just because they're married doesn't mean they belong to someone else, to the man – whenever he wants it and whenever he decides it is so. So there's this relationship. A woman who is aware of herself values herself. And she begins to pay attention to her rhythms. She begins to value her words. And she begins to value what others in the group say, you know? Because, well, that's what I've seen happen in the groups we're working with. –Jimena, Adelanto staff

Ignacio described *conciencia* like this, which for me provided an example of *conciencia social*, or a form of neighborly conscientiousness:

We take the word *conciencia* to mean if one is unable to work, we are going to work so that we can help that other person out. And one should be aware of what can happen. We plan for it first so that when it happens, it isn't something unexpected, but rather something for which we are ready. We know what can be done, what can happen. We know that it may cause a loss—that it can cause other things to happen. So we're prepared for it. –Ignacio, La Merced

Sebastián, a program participant, described two distinct forms of *conciencia* in the following quote. The first appears to be more closely related to Freire's definition of critical consciousness, and the second, to a social conscientiousness:

For us, *conciencia* means accepting what someone says, more or less. We understand each other, but here, we sometimes think that us poor people don't believe each other. If a poor man says something to another poor man, and that poor man believes it, then his *conciencia* begins to change—his ideas, his way of thinking. That, for us, is *conciencia*. Another thing: we see *conciencia* as, well, the affection that we have for someone. Like the love we have for them, let's say. I have a benevolent *conciencia* where I want to help that other person out. That's how we see it. —Sebastián, La Vega

Participants used many other words to indicate processes along a path of coming to critical consciousness. In comparing clientelistic programs of the government with those of Adelanto, many noted that the intentions of Adelanto were to 'open our eyes,' to 'open our minds,' or 'to wake us up.' Staff member, Octavio, described what he understands to be the notion of 'waking up' and 'opening one's eyes' in this context:

Waking up is when you live unaware or disconnected from all the problems with your social context. For example, a farmer, from the time he was little, has learned that the government is good; that dad is always right; that the parish priest is a representative of God; that the dominant political party is the one that should always be voted for and elected; that the economy is something that cannot be changed, and that whatever you were born into is what you have to deal with all your life. So that's what I'd call being asleep. Now you start to wake up when you begin to question everything in your reality. That's waking up: starting to open your eyes to a reality that has other reasons for things than the ones you've been told or believed. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

Staff member, Leopoldo, described the process of 'realizing' as a process of coming to critical consciousness:

P: Well, look, what we're doing is that in practice there are many ways of composting, of doing biofermentation, making insecticides, and we have *compañeros* within the groups where we work that have all that experience, and they have the knowledge. And they are trying to pass it on to others so that we all learn together and we can do this stewardship together, you know? It's a really important job, to take care of the land, and we always use three things to explain it to them, and to get their attention. When we begin to use a production system without chemicals, moving toward an agroecological system, an organic system, firstly, we're taking care of our own health because we're not poisoning

anyone with chemicals. That's the first thing. The second is that we're taking care of mother earth, and the environment, to not contaminate it, to not damage the land, and to work in a healthy way, right? The third is the economic savings, that we're not giving money to transnational corporations, to the giant agrochemical companies, but that we're making it ourselves. We're making our own fertilizers from our own work, and if we're not making it, we buy it from a *compañero* who made it, so we give some income to him. So, I think that's the way we're doing—

I: Correct me if I'm wrong, but from what I'm understanding, the essence of the way you work is to help them understand and realize this system?

P: Exactly. That's it. That's the main point. That the people realize who we're serving, right? Who we're making rich. Who benefits from everything we consume. Of course, right now we can't escape at all. Everything is contaminated, everything is made with chemicals. But in some way, what we're focused on most with the people is to say, well, yeah, we can say that everything is poisoned, but if we make raised beds, we have our little plots. Well, we can take pride in saying 'I'm eating something healthy.' As a man from La Vega says, everything we're eating is organic, from what we produce. La Vega is a really important base, and that's what we're trying to disseminate so that other people also realize, you know? And at this moment, there are lot of people who still have this spirit of going back to this change that we desire. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Participants' narratives included a diverse array of descriptors that may be linked with emancipatory learning and Freirean critical consciousness. While reviewing the transcripts I found descriptions of experiences related to 'waking up,' 'realizing' or 'opening the mind' to be important indicators of the type of education in which Adelanto engages. Staff descriptions of *conciencia* portray organizational goals for emancipatory learning, and demonstrate the ways that staff consider and conceptualize empowerment.

Economic empowerment and gender equality. In designing this research project, I intended to separate forms of empowerment related to economics away from forms of empowerment embodied by critical consciousness. Through data collection, I found this more difficult to do than I had originally imagined. Women, in particular, described the ways that Adelanto's microcredit programs had allowed them to gain a small but significant income of their own, and for them, this income was directly related to the amount of power they felt they had in their household and with their spouse. For example:

What's been useful to me—Well, I feel like it's helped me because it's like I motivate my husband. And it's as if he values me more, because I was seeing him do everything for me, I felt enslaved because everything was dependent on him. But with everything I'm doing now to give my share, well, I see that he's also rethinking things, and realizing that a woman is worth something, that a woman can do anything she puts her mind to. I mean, yes, she can too—not just a man. I see that it's helped me in this way, because he's been acting differently toward me. When we were living with his mom [in his mother's house], he was very different. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Men can't hit us anymore when we complain. There are so many more, because men can't tell us anymore that we can't go somewhere, for example. If we go to work for a while, it's our place to do so. And, well, they can't tell us not to go, because we could say the same to them. Because we're a couple, for example. Another example: if our husbands are going to earn money for the good of the family, what if we can work to earn some, too—give to the family. And maybe that's what we've been told; we can also work the little bit that we're able, because that would be for the good of the couple. –Betania, San Pedro de los Pinos

Staff member Gloria explained economic empowerment this way:

Well, for me, economic empowerment is where women handle their own money a little bit, where they don't have to depend on their husband to give them money to buy the things that they need. Because one way or another—Let's look at another example; I like examples. The coffee bean crop has been harvested. The husband leaves. He sells all the coffee. And he doesn't give his wife any of the money. He brings her everything [she needs] and he buys her everything [she needs]. But he only buys her food. And maybe he gives her just some little earrings, and that's it. So that [if] woman wants something; she doesn't have any money. And in addition, the man, when he travels to sell the harvest, could spend a night on the town, and even spend time with prostitutes; and that way, he could end up transmitting some disease to her. That's how it is. And so the woman—Well, she can't do anything about it. She can't even go back to her parents. She can't even go out because she doesn't have any money. She can't even say, 'To hell with it. Fine. I'm going back to my family [my parents' house].' You know? Nothing! She has to do as her husband says. Every day, her husband brings his money here. But he won't give any of it to her. He's only going to give her what she needs, enough to eat and live. And he doesn't give her any money. He gives her stuff, things—you know? So that's what it is. If she worked the crop, too—If she also harvested coffee beans, if she also contributed to the process of drying them out and processing them, then I think she has a right to what she earns—not only to eat, but also to get a little extra so that she can go shopping or go out or do whatever she wants. That is to say, when women are happy—well, what does that mean? Well, it means that aside from her personal work, she doesn't have to work, she doesn't have to work the crop with her husband if her husband isn't going to give her anything. But if she has her own money from all that she does with her products, her hens, her piglets. And she decides if she wants to buy something for the house or if she wants to spend money on herself, that's what empowerment is for women. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

Gloria's description of economic empowerment coincided with the sentiments I heard from female program participants in the communities that Adelanto serves.

Economic empowerment, in this study, was characterized by women's perceptions of an increase in self-confidence and feelings of self-worth, as well as an increased willingness to speak up and share their opinions or to demand their rights. These changes are directly related to the practice of popular education and participation. Increases in self-confidence and a sense of voice are directly related to ability of these women to enter into and engage in a participatory space.

According to their strategic plan (and corroborated by the conversations I had with staff members), Adelanto is committed to shifting the power structure in the communities to achieve a more equal power distribution across the genders. Octavio and Leopoldo, the staff members who manage the microcredit program, but are not involved in the emotional development work with the women, described their ideals for the microcredit program related to gender equality and women's empowerment:

What we ask for is a promise that the project is for the women, and that the women are in charge. It doesn't matter if the group is mixed, it could be men and women, but at least it should have more women than men. And that they can work on parts of the project together, but the women need to have a place in the project, that it's not just the woman as a representative to us, but the man is who is managing the money. No, it has to be the woman who knows how to manage the project and the money, and that she also takes part in the business. We've had cooperatives of chicken producers, shopkeepers, goat producers, bakers, pork producers, where the women are working, or they have their own store. We have a cooperative of women that is still working, and now they're not working with us. We have pig farms that are still working that aren't with us anymore, but that they're still moving forward independently. So in that way, they've participated, and they've taken their space in the work groups. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

So of course, in this system the woman carries out a secondary role. The man is the one who will make money. The woman serves to maintain this level of exploitation on the part of the man, because if she weren't giving him his meals, working without pay so the man eats, well, then the man would have to make more money to be able to survive. So

within this system the woman is doubly exploited, triply exploited. So, to say that the woman starts to have the ability to have and manage her own money, of course within the house she's going to start feeling like she has more ability to say 'okay, why are you ordering me around like this? What are you yelling at me? Why are you reprimanding me? I am capable of making my own money!' So they give a—As a matter of fact, I worked here in the indigenous zone, nearby here, a little ways away, on the way to San Cristobal. There's a community where they sell handicrafts, and the women are the ones that make these handicrafts, and the women who manage the money. And the women there aren't—they're the ones who are making the orders. Why? Because they are managing the money. And they're the same Tzeltals who are in neighboring communities, but in the neighboring communities, the women are in a more dependent role because there the women don't have a way of making money. And the women who make money are the ones that have the possibility of being in charge, of making decisions. That's really important, yeah. So that helps a lot. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

However, male program participant, Sebastián from the La Vega municipality noted:

They talked about participation, even women's participation. For example, they've made attempts to get women to attend the meetings, and participate and talk, share their opinion. Nevertheless, that's stayed a little farther off in the distance; there have always been more of us men who have attended the meetings. —Sebastián, La Vega

I found Sebastián's comment to be accurate. In the meetings that I participated in over the course of three months, I noted that the vast majority of meeting attendees were male (for example, over the course of three meetings: six of eight participants were male, nine of 10 participants were male, and 12 of 12 participants were male). When women did come to meetings they generally did not speak up, and came either in place of their husband or father who could not attend the meeting, or were accompanied by their husband.

Linking Participation and Empowerment: Self-Mobilization and Critical Consciousness

For Pretty (1995), self-mobilization is the last rung on the participation ladder, where “people participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems” (p. 1252). Self-mobilization is characterized by people's control over resources, with support and technical assistance from partners such as governments or NGOs. Self-mobilization, by this definition, would require an emphasis on downward accountability that prioritizes the interests of

participants over those of donors, because the participants, rather than donors, must identify development goals, methods, and strategies, and must be responsible for identifying measures of success and assessing impacts. In Pretty's definition, "such self-initiated mobilization may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power" (p. 1252). For this study, I have defined intrinsic empowerment as increasing the power of the marginalized, allowing them to self-determine by taking control of their own development, their situations and their futures.

In analyzing interview transcripts, I found many examples of self-mobilization where participants took control over resources and development projects, using Adelanto staff as support when needed. The scope and scale of self-mobilization varied significantly. I found women's descriptions of self-mobilization efforts were generally on a smaller scale than those of their male counterparts. For example, 20-year-old Bienvenida described how she intended to 'keep up the struggle' and continue on with the work she had begun with Adelanto:

Continue fighting, you know? Yeah. No, I want a lot. And that they don't give up on me, but continue fighting for it. I won't take a step backward. And yeah, I want to produce a lot in my garden. And that's what I think about, about that. Also about my chickens, yeah. But right now, I just want the rabbits, not chickens anymore. But rabbits, yes. They can't rob me again. But yeah, I want to continue working on that, and also on whatever comes about from it. Everything is because yeah, we've been trained for this work, in case they give up on me for no reason, you know? –Bienvenida, San Pedro de los Pinos

Along similar lines, Natalia, a 20-year-old woman of La Vega, described the way she saw the work of Adelanto as motivating the participants to improve themselves:

Adelanto has also helped us a lot because, thanks to the talks we've had, as [my parents] have said, well, [the staff] haven't just come to give talks on [how to raise] chickens, or how to manage a store, they've also come to motivate us, as was said earlier. And, well, the truth is, the points [the staff] have made, yeah, they've given us the strength to keep moving forward, and thanks to God, we've succeeded. Now we have our house, and as [my parents] said, we want to keep advancing, improving ourselves, that's one of the goals we have as sons and daughters, we're studying, we want to get our degrees. That's our goal. And as my mom said, [one of our goals is] to not fall into debt again, but rather, to have some alternatives, or a way to make some income so that we can always cover our expenses and meet the needs that we may have as a family. –Natalia, La Vega

Hinting at self-mobilization, Fermina described the way that Adelanto's programs don't have an end; that they continue to grow and reproduce:

And Adelanto, on the other hand, or [another similar organization that works in the community], like you say—You asked a question of comparison. I think that Adelanto or [the other similar organization]—whatever part of either one—there, they—They give projects, but productive ones, ones that don't end. It's not like, here we pick up what's been sold or we make that project grow, and then it's over. Let's suppose they support us so that we can produce our vegetables. It's so that we can produce. And the good stuff, we sell it for something. Or keep it for our family, for food for them. But like I say, for me, it's been—I see that what [the other similar organization] or Adelanto gives benefits me more than what the government gives. Because what the government gives comes to you, and you care sometimes, and other times, it's not important to you. In a year, you have nothing again. But of those projects that do keep giving, like Adelanto, of course—Those are—They give you credit so you can start up your little project. It will be over time; you get a little something. Something is left for you from your work, from what you worked on. —Fermina, San Pedro de los Pinos

Further along the spectrum of self-mobilization, Joaquín received a microcredit loan and worked with Adelanto for several years before branching out on his own to form a coffee producers' cooperative within his community of La Merced. When I asked him if he had seen changes in opportunities or in the capacity of community members to engage in their own development, he explained the ways he has seen the confidence and capacity of community members develop:

Very much so, because we were very happy to know that we ourselves offer our own ideas, our own initiatives, in search of what we ourselves want. And we ourselves formulate decisions. And knowing what we achieved that makes us very successful, because we don't depend on anyone to tell us what we're going to do, but rather it comes out of our own needs and out of our very own ideas, from our own experiences. So every time you achieve that, you become specialized in that area, and you become competitive, too. Because, you know, you groomed yourself one way. And no one's giving it to you, but rather you yourself are. And to see that is going well for you, you feel, well, much better. Because yes, you believe in yourself now and you have confidence in yourself, and you feel capable of doing things well. —Joaquín, La Merced

One of the most salient examples of self-mobilization I noted in interviews and participant observation was the development of what was given the working title of 'the collective of collectives' (*el colectivo de colectivos*). This involved engaged participants from

each community where Adelanto works coming together to organize a network, or meta-collective to promote information and resource sharing across the communities. The idea for this initiative originated from an idea of two program participants as a way to take leadership and ensure that there would be added value to their partnership with Adelanto. Gabino, one of the originators of the idea, described his vision for the collective this way:

Well, that's being planned with the group—a group where the producers can take advantage of what they've done up to now. Like, for example, what they've achieved in their ecological work. Many people in the group are producing organically. But, well, that can only go so far, right? They have their land, and it's clean, but they continue growing the same crops. They continue cultivating the same crops, and they only grow for their own consumption. And they continue seeing an economic loss, so there isn't growth. So we were seeing that there's a need not only for us, but also for the communities that are associated with this group. So, precisely because of that, we thought we should build something similar to a association of sorts, where that association itself could provide knowledge about how or what product we can cultivate on certain pieces of land that are already fit for producing a totally clean product [free of agrochemicals]. So, through that—Well, families are also helping out economically. So that's where the idea that it's necessary to form an association that is registered came from, so that the association will later have the opportunity to be able to go further, and not just stay local. So, well, that's what's been happening with this group. –Gabino, La Vega

Octavio explained the formation of the idea of a collective of collectives to me, describing the organized collectives as a “pearl” of the work of Adelanto; his description demonstrates the evolving relationship between program participants and organization staff during a process of self-mobilization:

I: Well, I'd like to know your practice of arriving at a strategic plan, and the idea of the collective of collectives, but we're already 50 minutes in [to this interview].

P: In short, the idea of the collectives was not ours.

I: That's what I wanted—I wanted to know that story.

P: It was La Vega's—Gabino and Sebastián's. So, they said, 'it's just that the loans aren't really addressing the roots of our need. So what we wanted,' they said, 'is a way to get back to what we had done before—working together and all that.' And so it came from their intuition, right? But that was also the answer that we had been looking for. Well, at first, my worry was, okay, Adelanto has to be less like an institution. I had already told you this before—[the worry was] for it to be a boss who is handing out money, but more like a group of people who mutually support one another in order to move forward. So they proposed this to the rest. We said, that is an answer to—Well, I said, the idea aligns

with my perspective. So it's like I got them excited, maybe, because we tried it, and that idea of the collectives went on to become a reality. So, well, the good thing is that both Leopoldo and I had a certain fear that they wouldn't come about. But yes, Leopoldo immediately thought it was a good idea, because it's good for him, too, because he has his coffee production. So—And Gloria, since she wasn't as involved in this area, then no. So—But what they did say is that, we shouldn't administer it the same way as we're doing things with the loans; it has to be treated like separate aspect of the work. Another branch. So that also has to maintain itself. Even though we give the requirements a little less attention, we were able to be less demanding about the conditions that they have to meet in their ecological gardens and all that. They have to attend the meetings; the women have to participate as a group. That's probably it. We can make it easier, just talk about it. Not demand it as a requirement as we do for the microcredit recipients. For what? For whatever, they can take whatever aspects interest them from the microcredit program, and they benefit from that, the administration and everything else can follow. But the question about agroecology and the groups of women—It could be less demanding for them. And that work would continue with the collectives. So the pearl of Adelanto's labors would be the collectives, and another would be complementary—maintaining Adelanto, more than anything. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

The language Leopoldo uses when describing his vision for the work of Adelanto is aligned with a vision for self-mobilization of the participants where the organization is responsible for providing inspiration, encouragement and support to participants as they seek the best path forward in their own development:

For us, there's a big step forward that we have found in these first months of the year 2015, where we are trying to continue supporting and promoting and motivating all these groups, so that they can find the best way to carry out their projects and their work in the fields, utilizing their own efforts, finding resources within their own organization and their plan for bettering the quality of their work. And in that way, be able to obtain resources or earn a little bit of money, which will improve their economic earnings in their family or in their community. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study coalesce to form a picture of contextually-bound practical applications of a participatory approach to development, and the praxis of popular education and critical pedagogy. The findings captured here also serve to demonstrate the ways that participants may engage with a developing critical consciousness, and where participation and empowerment may or may not link.

Through conversations with participants, I was able to capture the role of the neoliberal frame in the orientation of the organization and the development of a critical practitioner. From their narratives, I examined the ways that religion, traditional gender roles and the recent memory of the Zapatista uprising inform the context for this case study. Lack of access to education, and program participants' perceptions of their own illiteracy also proved to be key contextual elements for the work of Adelanto. Lastly, and relatedly, participants' narratives combined to demonstrate how a pervasive culture of clientelistic government programs has major implications for the way Adelanto is able to carry out its work, and the way that participants are able to engage with the organization's programming.

After examining contextual elements, I explored the participatory approach as used by Adelanto and experienced by staff and program participants. Within this, I was able to isolate interactive participation, participatory learning and the role of partnership and solidarity as central components of the approach. The organization's staff and programs are strongly rooted in a participatory epistemology, as evidenced by the way staff and participants discuss their joint work.

The organization uses participation as means to provide popular education, including dialogic learning and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, to promote agroecology and self-sufficiency, and to inspire the development of critical consciousness together with program participants. I found that the organization uses a few key lenses as entry points for critical pedagogy to help participants come to recognize and name systems of oppression. These included, division and violence within communities, and migration as an injustice and a symptom of oppression.

The ways in which staff and participants envision and describe their learning provided insight into the ways they conceptualized critical consciousness and empowerment. I repeatedly heard participants use such language as “to wake up” (*despertarse*), “to become conscious” or “to become/make aware” (*concientizar*), “to realize” (*darse cuenta*), “to open our eyes” (*abrir los ojos*) or “to open our mind” (*abrir la mente*) and “to empower” (*empoderar*). I examined the ways participants used this language and described their experiences with the organization, and related it to larger themes of critical consciousness and empowerment. I also examined the role and meaning of economic empowerment and gender equality within this work. Lastly, I used my findings to link the concepts of participation and empowerment using participants’ examples of self-mobilization and critical consciousness.

The results of this thesis provides a rich and detailed example of the ways participation serves rural agrarians, and provides rich commentary on the ways participation and empowerment may be linked. This case study shows the emancipatory value of a participatory approach based on principles of solidarity, longevity and downward-accountability. This study also shows the potential of progress toward emancipatory goals using a form of participatory development that holds that empowerment must be evidenced by self-mobilization, the pursuit of critical consciousness, and a genuine shift in power toward the marginalized, that they may self-determine and take control of their development.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This ethnographic study provides perspective into the ways a non-governmental organization has encountered successes and challenges in applying participatory approaches toward the goal of emancipatory community development. Through this study, I attempted to examine and critically analyze the buzzwords ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment.’ In their 2005 article, Cornwall and Brock noted buzzwords, including participation and empowerment, are often used together as part of a ‘chain of equivalence’ or “strings of words that work together to evoke a particular set of meanings” (p. 1047). According to the authors, as words become commonly associated with one another within a chain of equivalence, “meanings that are consistent with other words in the chain come to take precedence over other, more dissonant, meanings” (p. 1047). Cornwall and Brock explained that participation and empowerment commonly exist as buzzwords alongside other buzzwords including ‘partnership,’ ‘accountability,’ ‘governance,’ ‘ownership,’ and ‘transparency’ (p. 1047). In carrying out this study, I have attempted to unpack and analyze the applications of these buzzwords in practice and to critically examine their linkages. My findings are multi-faceted, and diverse conclusions may be drawn from them.

Through this study, I intended to question the assumptions that undergird the participatory approach, and contribute perspective that might improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of applications of participation in development contexts. In undertaking this research, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms by which the participatory approach to development may pursue emancipatory social change to better people’s lives following the radical democratic roots of the approach.

In order to gain a clearer picture of these mechanisms, I chose as a case study, an NGO that appeared committed to the pursuit of social change using the participatory approach. I chose this organization, in part, because I believed it would be a case study of the ‘ideal scenario.’ Adelanto represents an ideal scenario because of its commitment to using an approach that fits the definition of participation I employ in this thesis; the staff, through their work at Adelanto, attempt to carry out interactive participation and self-mobilization, rather than paying lip service to participation while employing manipulative or passive participation (Pretty, 1995). In this sense, this organization was, in many ways, an ‘ideal’ case study. These qualities allowed me to identify certain elements that appeared to contribute to the success of the approach in this application. These elements included the commitment of the staff to engage, long-term, in a critical and solidary practice based on a foundation of mutual respect and trust.

My findings demonstrate that an understanding of the mediating role of cultural and historical context is essential to understanding participation and its application in the pursuit of community development and emancipatory social change. This includes practitioners’ understanding and appreciation of the social, economic, and macro- and micro-political contexts in which the participants and the work are situated. Participatory approaches to development are generally promoted as an alternative to an acontextual prescriptive approach. Despite a general understanding of the contextual nature of participation, my findings show that context plays a larger role in the ways a participatory approach can be carried out than most literature on participatory development indicate (e.g., Chambers, 1994; 1997). I also found that the ability of individuals to pursue and develop critical consciousness was inextricably tied to their historical and cultural contexts, as well as their individual experiences within these contexts.

This study also demonstrates the complex and context-dependent roles that NGOs take on in development. NGOs do not fit neatly in a single locus on a spectrum where one end represents NGOs that promote the neoliberal agenda, and the other end represents NGOs that pursue emancipatory social change. This study shows that a single NGO may fall on multiple loci across the spectrum depending on the context and the personal experience of program participants.

In this case study, the staff work in solidarity with their program participants. I draw an essential connection between this solidarity and their success in establishing trust and mutual respect, which is, in turn, relevant to their success fostering self-mobilization and critical consciousness-building with their participants. Solidarity, in this case, is exemplified by the staff's willingness to work without a salary, and the willingness to operate the organization on a shoestring with a casual attitude toward fundraising that allowed them to be completely downwardly accountable. Solidarity is also evidenced in the commitment the staff has to the region, as they have made the *Región Fronteriza* their home. Another element to which the organization's success may be attributed is the reflexivity and humility of the staff.

Even with this 'ideal' case, several challenges arose in considering the case in relation to the questions that steer this research. The first is the issue of attribution. My research question that asks to identify the mechanics and specific aspects of the approach that contribute to its success in achieving intrinsic empowerment requires a relationship of cause-and-effect. In carrying out the research, I was reminded that the unique experience and cultural context of individuals plays a defining role in how that individual is able to take in, interact with, and actualize critical pedagogy and participatory learning, to pursue their own intrinsic empowerment. In this sense there is no 'answer' to the question of mechanics of success for the participatory approach as different mechanics will experience different levels of success

depending on personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. My findings do suggest, however, that there are certain preconditions for success such as prior experience with critical thought, as some participants demonstrated through their experience with liberation theology or Neozapatismo.

The Mediating Effects of Cultural and Historical Context

My findings show that Adelanto staff have a thorough understanding and appreciation for the deeply embedded cultural and historical context in which their participants live, and that the staff orient the work of the organization to correspond with, build from, and compliment these contexts. My findings suggest that the unique ability of Adelanto's programming to be driven by the context of the participants is relevant to its success. The staff's experience in Chiapas has helped them to orient their programs to build from cultural norms of religion and gender and the collective experience of the Zapatista movement. My findings also show potential for the organization to embrace the high rates of illiteracy and low literacy as an opportunity to engage in education for critical literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987; as described in Morrow & Torres, 2002).

My findings show that as former religious servants, the staff are able to forge trusting relationships with participants, and use the practice and experience of liberation theology to form a guiding framework for their programming and interactions. As Mexicans, the staff, and in particular, the female staff who have been marginalized by the *machismo* norms, have a deep appreciation for the impact of *machismo* in their society. This shared experience appears to have allowed female staff to cater their programming to meet the shared needs of the women they work with. Lastly, all but one of the staff were in Chiapas during or shortly after the Zapatista uprising, allowing them to understand the violence and division communities faced in the 1990s

and 2000s, and allowing them to build from the positive changes the Zapatistas have spurred since their initial uprising in 1994. Lastly, one of the major contextual elements that I identified through my study was the role of illiteracy and low literacy among program participants.

I noted that staff, in large part, did not identify low levels of literacy as a major contextual element in their work. Staff did not appear to cater or adjust their programming to specifically serve, or even accommodate those that were unable to read or write, who, by my estimate, easily comprised at least half of their program participants. Here I'll argue that this is perhaps a missed opportunity for Adelanto, as achieving literacy was identified by Freire as an important element of critical consciousness. According to Morrow and Torres (2002), "Freire's understanding of the critical functions of literacy was developed as part of both a historical argument about the development of critical consciousness and an educational proposition about the relationship of 'reading the word' and 'reading the world'" (p. 117). Freire was principally concerned with the development of critical literacy and relates 'reading the word' with the capacity to "read the world," transforming literacy training into "cultural politics" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. viii). Freire and Macedo identified literacy as a construct that represents a "set of practices that functions to either empower or disempower people" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. viii). Freire and Macedo have also noted that literacy "is analyzed according to whether it serves to reproduce existing social formation or serves as a set of cultural practices that promotes democratic and emancipatory change" (p. viii). Indeed, Morrow and Torres (2002) pointed out that critical literacy forms the foundation for critical consciousness to break the "culture of silence" (p. 119), indicating the relevance of literacy acquisition to Adelanto's programs and goals. It appears that the lack of attention given to literacy development may be an area for growth within the organization.

The Diverse Role of NGOs in Development

The question of whether NGOs and participatory development practice surreptitiously promote neoliberal agendas arose throughout data collection related to Adelanto's microcredit program. As I discussed in the introduction and literature review chapters of this thesis, concerns that participation may become tyrannical or coercive abound (e.g., Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Schaaf, 2013). Likewise, NGOs have been accused of filling gaps left by a receding government based on neoliberal values that promote privatization of social services (e.g., Earle & Simonelli, 2000). Uncritical altruism and the unintentional creation of difficulties for communities by development organizations are broadly applied as critiques of development practice.

Although I did not find specific evidence of coercion or tyranny in my conversations with staff and participants, I question whether the mere existence of a microcredit loan program runs counter to the solidary approach based in popular education and participation to which Adelanto attempts to adhere. A microcredit loan program appears to situate Adelanto within the neoliberal frame, as it appears that many program participants view the loans as an alternative to conventional bank loans and government grants. This might suggest that Adelanto, in this context, is acting as a 'bridge' on the 'road to privatization,' as Earle and Simonelli (2000) described. Alternatively, some participants, including Francisco and Salvador, described the microloan component as being different than that of the banks or the government, in that it seeks to promote *conciencia*, self-sufficiency, and social learning. Additionally, the staff showed evidence that they were thinking critically about the microcredit program, and convincingly deflected arguments that they were promoting neoliberal agendas through their work. It became clear that the staff justified the microcredit program because they saw it as meeting an essential need of the communities they served, while allowing them to gain trust and build relationships

with participants to establish a framework upon which they could pursue the goals of promoting participatory learning and education for critical consciousness.

Literature on NGOs suggests that the values and intentions of NGOs fall across a broad spectrum. NGOs may be seen as neocolonial and palliative in that they stabilize underserved communities and suppress a desire for change (Hickey & Mohan, 2005). On the other end of the spectrum, they may be perceived as political organizations organizing for social change (Boglio Martinez, 2011), although perhaps with inadequate tools to address the larger social structures that contribute to inequality (Hickey & Mohan, 2005). My research suggests that one organization can fill roles across this spectrum, rather than fit neatly on one end or the other. Adelanto, like its programs' participants, is highly complex, and for different individuals and different communities, Adelanto may serve as a palliative at certain times, and may act as a political and mobilizing force at others. Adelanto is committed to a participatory approach founded in popular education; however, program participants were differently abled to participate and had different motivations for their participation.

Staff explained that participants in San Pedro de Los Pinos, for example, were originally interested and engaged in politically-oriented mobilization and participation with Adelanto. They explained that when clientelistic government projects became more readily available within San Pedro, many participants began to disengage with Adelanto. The microcredit program still functions in San Pedro, but according to staff, their work in participatory development and popular education has been less successful. In this instance, it would appear that Adelanto is closer to the palliative and stabilizing end of the NGO spectrum in San Pedro de Los Pinos. This was also true of their work in La Merced. Because La Merced is a government-sanctioned tourism area, government assistance and government grants are plentiful. Adelanto has long

operated the microcredit program in La Merced with the hope of organizing and mobilizing through popular education, but has been largely unsuccessful in this effort. On the other hand, Adelanto falls more closely on the radical and political end of the spectrum in their work with families in San Lázaro de las Sierras and in the municipalities of Nueva Tlaxcala and La Vega. There, participants have been receptive to popular education and opportunities for social learning, and they have engaged in political mobilization efforts in partnership with the staff.

Relatedly, I found many instances where staff and program participants discussed the value of work and self-sufficiency. The argument for self-sufficiency could be seen as aligned with the neoliberal stance that privatization and a free market can fulfill duties and services that were previously provided by the state. At the very least, valuing work and self-sufficiency may be seen as a coping strategy that excuses the state from its responsibility to its citizens. A Zapatista refrain that ‘another world is possible,’ for example, can also be seen as encouraging the construction of a parallel autonomous system of governance that absolves the state of its neglect of its citizens. As Adelanto staff acknowledge, their goal for their programming is not to escape the system, but to resist it, and to meet an immediate need of the people. I do not believe the government can be absolved of its responsibility to serve its most marginalized citizens, and I believe the staff of Adelanto would agree with me. The staff expressed in our conversations that because the state is, at present, failing to meet some of the most basic needs of its citizens. Staff and program participants noted that the government is engaging citizens in clientelistic relationships that program participants described as being associated with perceptions of indebtedness, pacification, and domination. Self-sufficiency, in this sense, is a small act of resistance or “the work of ants,” as Adelanto staff member Gloria described, but, in my opinion, is not a deliberate act of acquiescence to the neoliberal regime.

Development of Critical Consciousness

Patricio explained that microcredit in itself as Adelanto uses it at this time, does not build *conciencia* due to a lack of education and learning that accompanies the loan program. Indeed, my findings suggest that participants who had gained a background in critical thinking and consciousness building through their involvement with liberation theology, the Zapatista movement, or other *campesino*-led popular political organizations, responded differently to questions about the microcredit program than participants without similar experience.

Participants who had little access to education, who hadn't previously engaged in popular organizing, who had been marginalized on the basis of gender, or who otherwise hadn't had the opportunity to develop critical consciousness, spoke at length about the pragmatic advantages of partnering with Adelanto. They told me about lower interest rates, flexibility on loan terms, and the availability of technical assistance on business administration. The majority of these participants did not reflect on critical consciousness building, or the importance of mobilizing to oppose systems of oppression.

Alternatively, participants who had experience that had allowed them to develop their critical consciousness, for example participating in the Zapatista movement or engaging in practices of liberation theology, responded differently to the same questions. These participants focused less on the monetary and technical aspects of the microcredit loan program, and more on opportunities for social learning and mobilization that accompany the loan. This struck me as dichotomous.

The disparity among the responses suggests the importance of personal experience in the development of critical consciousness. It raises the questions of the micropolitics of critical consciousness, including where the development of critical consciousness begins and what

preconditions make it possible. It appears that although participants with limited capacity to critically engage with oppressive systems and participants that had more experience with critical thinking were offered the same type of programming and education, they engaged and interacted with it in very different ways.

From my conversations with staff, it was clear that they recognized the differences in starting points for individuals with whom they work. They adapt their programming, approach and language based on their perceptions of the level of engagement new participants were ready for. They also temper their expectations in communities that were deeply embedded in clientelism. The understanding and patience from the staff, and their willingness to play the ‘long game’ appear to contribute to their ability to build trust and solidarity with their participants.

An exploration of the micro-politics of critical consciousness also points to the important linkages between what I referred to in Chapter Four as ‘economic empowerment’ and the concept of intrinsic empowerment. Economic empowerment, and associated critical questions regarding conventional assumptions of gender roles is significant to understanding the micro-politics of critical consciousness. The program participants I interviewed for this study related experiences that led them to question traditional gender roles. They described linkages between their ability to operate an income-generating enterprise with feelings of heightened self-worth and self-confidence, as well a shift in power within their relationships with their families and their husbands. Though these shifts seem more immediately relevant to the concepts of economic and instrumental empowerment, they clearly have significant implications for the ways women are able to engage in a participatory space and enter a path for the development of critical consciousness, and potentially, intrinsic empowerment.

Linking Participation and Empowerment

My findings provide insight into the connections between a participatory approach to development and the empowerment of participants. As noted in the literature review chapter of this thesis, there are several common pitfalls to the participatory approach. Pretty (1995) noted a common pitfall stems from a combination of a perceived need or obligation for participation based on the expectations of funders or to better understand community needs, with an uneasiness with the participatory approach due to its perception as less controllable and slower than other processes that don't involve participation. According to Pretty, these factors, when combined, often result in token participation, which ultimately fails participants but may satisfy the pre-determined goals of development organization and their funders. For the purpose of this thesis, the token participation described above may be categorized as nonparticipation. Whereas, interactive participation and participation with a goal of promoting self-mobilization is a more genuine form of participation. I found that several critical factors and attributes of Adelanto and its staff converge to effectively facilitate interactive participation and self-mobilization.

In the introduction, I listed several components that characterized this type of participation: these included meaningful and systematic exchange between farmers and staff, and that these exchanges be aimed at addressing practical issues the farmers face. I also noted that the approach must include all who are affected by the process or outcomes of the research and learning, either directly or indirectly (Neef & Neubert, 2011, p. 187), and that the 'expert's' role is to assist others in carrying out their own research and learning processes toward their own objectives, with the overall goal of the approach being to gain improvements and advances in knowledge that can be validated as potential solutions by the stakeholders themselves. Lastly, I included Hellin et al.'s (2008) claim that the primary goal of the approach must be oriented

toward enhancing the capacity of participants to analyze problems and identify solutions (p. 82). I found evidence of all of these characteristics in the experiences described by program participants and staff. Together, these characteristics provide the conditions for effective interactive participation and self-mobilization, which in turn, set the conditions for intrinsic empowerment.

In defining empowerment, I noted that the term can be used to describe two divergent concepts, which Bartlett (2008) labeled as instrumental empowerment and intrinsic empowerment. In the following discussion, I reference only intrinsic empowerment, a form of empowerment rooted in social justice and a power shift toward marginalized and disempowered members of society. This type of empowerment is characterized by the ability of the empowered to self-determine and to control their own situations and futures. Although, the neoliberal regime currently precludes the marginalized from taking full control of their situations and their futures, and puts limitations on the ability of the poor to self-determine, my findings show that the participatory approach, with certain specific conditions and orientations such as a basis in solidarity and downward accountability, can facilitate a degree of empowerment.

The organization that served as the case in this study pursues goals of self-sufficiency and consciousness, which if attained, may allow the rural poor to exercise a greater degree of power and control over their situations and their futures, while acknowledging the existence and domination of the neoliberal frame. My findings show that a central element of the success of Adelanto has been the solidary approach of the staff in working alongside participants in developing their communities. In my conversations with staff, I often heard them refer to the expertise of their program participants in guiding their own development, and they made clear the value they saw in the exchange of knowledge between community members, and between

staff and program participants. My findings reinforce the criticality of trust, mutual respect, humility and solidarity to the practice of popular education. Although these characteristics are central to Freire's conceptualization of critical pedagogy, they are chronically underemphasized in literature that discusses participation, popular education, and empowerment.

Freire (1970/2010) emphasized the importance and value of solidarity in his discussion of critical pedagogy and critical consciousness, but the role of genuine solidarity does not feature as prominently in most discussions of participation in development. This case study has demonstrated the value of solidarity in creating trust between practitioners and participants, and, more broadly, the role of solidarity in contributing to the success of the participatory approach.

Adelanto is in a unique position to build the trust and solidarity that appears essential for success and lasting impact. The staff have committed their lives to work in this region, and as Mexicans, may be considered to more closely resemble 'insiders' than is typically common in development. Their legacy with the Catholic Church provides cultural capital and a basis for trust in the predominantly Christian communities that make up the region, and are comprised of mostly Catholic adherents.

Through this study, solidarity emerged as an essential element of participatory development. The solidarity of Adelanto's staff to the people they serve is evidenced not only by their longevity serving the region, but their willingness to work without a salary. Freire has told us;

solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture. If what characterizes the oppressed is their subordination to the consciousness of the master, as Hegel affirms, true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these 'beings for another.' (Freire, 1970/2010, p. 49)

The willingness of the staff to adopt a life of poverty demonstrates their solidarity. When working in the communities, because of a lack of regular transportation to and from the rural towns, the staff stay in program participants' homes and share meals with the families they serve, allowing the staff to gain further appreciation for the livelihoods and struggles of their program participants. The mutual respect between staff and program participants is evidenced in the way they discuss their partnerships. Freire (1970/2010) emphasized the importance of solidarity in his discussion of critical pedagogy. The narratives of the staff and the program participants have shown that the genuine solidarity of the staff has been instrumental to their ability to develop a trusting relationship with program participants, and to advance toward mutually defined goals of development.

The staff of Adelanto have, perhaps, more readily come into a trusting and solidary relationship with their participants because of their ability to be downwardly accountable, with little attention paid, or importance given, to upward accountability. The staff of Adelanto do not focus their energy on fundraising. They engage in some income generating activities, such as offering a microcredit program that may cover its own expenses, and the staff members that are trained as psychologists and social workers offer a fee-based private practice for the members of the public, with some of the income from the practice helping to offset the organization's expenses. Several individual international donors with personal relationships with the organization or its staff also support the organization without imposing conditions. Some funding comes in the way of larger grants, but the organization is careful to only accept funding from larger funding organizations that align with its mission. It appears that this casual attitude toward fundraising has been somewhat strategic and has contributed to the success of the organization

by allowing the staff to maintain their focus on downward accountability to the people they serve; a rarity in development work (Wallace, Bornstein & Chapman, 2007).

Another element that has been instrumental to the success of Adelanto has been the staff's ability to critically reflect and incorporate feedback on their programming. Demonstrating the importance of critical practitioners in this work, Freire (1970/2010) explained:

The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a 'circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side. (p. 39)

Here, we see that the practitioners' ability to embrace their own critical consciousness, a commitment to continually developing that consciousness, along with the attribute of humility, defines the radical who may carry out this work. In my conversations with the staff, I found that they exhibited their critical consciousness and openness to learning on numerous occasions.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

I intended this research to contribute to the growing body of work that questions the assumptions of the participatory approach and claims of empowerment. My research serves as a critical analysis of the approach, and identifies conditions for success in the pursuit of self-mobilization and empowerment. In the introduction of this thesis, I claimed that this study would contribute to the field of development by identifying the strategies within the approach that are promoting significant and sustained change for the better in people's lives. I also promised that this research would provide commentary on the ways participation either promotes or hinders participants' empowerment. Here I will discuss my recommendations for future research and development practice based on my findings.

Recommendations for future research. The practice of participation in development has been a topic of academic discussion for decades, and as such has been thoroughly researched and critiqued. Empowerment could be dismissed as a buzzword with a definition and theoretical grounding so vague that it does not merit in-depth academic research. However, as buzzwords still commonly used in development rhetoric and applied, with variable meanings and intentions, in practice, research on these themes is as relevant now as it was when they were first introduced and popularized.

This study examined the meanings and the micro-politics of participation and empowerment in a single, specific setting. A thorough examination of the meaning-making within, and the application of participation and empowerment in other settings is merited. Empowerment is claimed as a product of participation by small, local development organizations in the United States and across the globe, as well as by large, global or multi-national development institutions. A critical analysis of participation and empowerment in these contexts would enhance a more thorough understanding of the meaning and practice that exists behind the rhetoric and could serve to deepen the practice of development by helping organizations engage in theory-driven praxis rather than rhetoric-driven practice. Further, an enhanced understanding and critique of rhetoric has implications for development policy.

Second, this study demonstrates the importance of accountability in development practice. The organization that served as the case in this study is unique in that it does not actively seek financial support from donors, and the staff are unwilling to compromise their mission and vision in order to gain funding and be upwardly-accountable. This, however, is unrealistic for the majority of development practitioners and organizations. Research on the evaluation of intrinsic empowerment, particularly forms of evaluation that would satisfy

international donors, might help bridge the apparent disconnect between upward-accountability and emancipatory development practice without requiring a complete restructuring of the politics of development. These recommendations for future research hold implications for the future of development practice.

Lastly, through this study it became clear that experience with liberation theology and the Zapatista movement have a lasting impact on the ability of participants to engage in popular education and radical community organizing. The findings of this study did not reveal which specific components of these experiences are responsible for the lasting impacts that I observed on the capacities of individuals to develop their critical consciousness and engage more deeply in a participatory space. Further study that investigates which components of liberation theology and the Zapatista uprising set preconditions for conscientization and inspire the continued development of critical consciousness is merited.

Recommendations for future practice. Earlier in this work, I referred to Earle and Simonelli's (2000) cautionary comment of "how easy it can be to create unintentional difficulties in the midst of one's best efforts" (p. 98), and also that "the failure to develop a rigorous approach to helping the disadvantaged despite huge investments of resources may become a historical legacy of the past fifty years" (p. 98). I hope that the conclusions drawn from this work may help practitioners to critically consider the impacts of their approach to development, and may contribute to the reversal of the historical legacy of aid and development.

In working with Adelanto, I found that the solidarity of the staff was the most unique and critical condition that contributes to the success of the organization in pursuing their goals for self-mobilization. Their genuine solidarity with the people they serve is evidenced by their long-term commitment to the people of the region, their ability to prioritize downward accountability

and live in poverty as a result, their emphasis on mutual respect and trust, their humility, and their willingness to learn from their participants, share leadership, and to provide space for the open exchange of knowledge and ideas. This level of solidarity and several of these characteristics of solidarity are unique to a locally operated development organization.

This has implications for the role of international development organizations, as the staff of an international organization would have difficulty fulfilling many of these characteristics. The results of this study emphasize the importance of the role of local development organizations and the need for an eye for the long game beyond the expectations of most grants and the vision of most funders. Because of this, my recommendations for future practice are to:

- Temper expectations of the approach and what it may accomplish, and consider letting the participants themselves set these expectations;
- Emphasize downward accountability;
- Play the ‘long game’ to engage strategic vision over the long term ;
- Exercise caution in attributing empowerment to the participatory approach; and
- Provide space, resources and capacity for local organizations to lead this work.

Final Remarks

Through this study, I attempted to grapple with some of the uncritical assumptions that often guide the participatory approach and inform the rhetoric of ‘empowerment.’ Ultimately, this study has documented the experience of a small non-governmental organization that exemplifies the complexity of community development and brings life to the practice of participation to demonstrate how the pursuit of empowerment might be understood and carried out in practice. My hope is that the experiences the practitioners and participants shared with me, and that I drew upon in this work, may help to inform a more critical and self-aware approach to

community development that focuses less on pursuing grandiose claims and prescribed outcomes, and more on meeting the needs of participants and on the pursuit of emancipatory social change.

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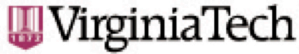
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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Compliance
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 23, 2015
TO: Kim Niewolny, Thomas Greig Archibald, Max O Stephenson Jr, Garland Anne Mason
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)
PROTOCOL TITLE: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development: An Ethnographic Case Study
IRB NUMBER: 15-465

Effective April 23, 2015, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7**
Protocol Approval Date: **April 23, 2015**
Protocol Expiration Date: **April 22, 2016**
Continuing Review Due Date*: **April 8, 2016**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix B: NGO Recruitment Script

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development: An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garlandm@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

NGO Email Recruitment Script for Participating in the Study

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Garland Mason. I am a student working toward a master's degree at Virginia Tech. I am studying in the Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education. For my thesis, the most important project of my program, I am focusing on the use of participatory action research in community development projects. I will study whether and how the use of participatory action research promotes or encourages empowerment of participants and promotes social change that benefit the participants.

I'm looking for a site to serve as a case study for this project. If you are interested in participating in this research, I will ask to participate in one or more semi-structured interviews and ask you to allow me to participate in your program meetings and events between May and August 2015.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can choose to be part of the study or not. You can also decide at any time to withdraw from the study. If you are interested to work with me and serve as the research site and case study, I will be happy to discuss the details with you further and answer any questions explain more of what I am developing the research project and explain the details. Feel free to contact me with questions at [**email address**].

Thank you,

Garland Mason

Appendix C: Verbal Recruitment Script for Semi-Structured Interviews

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development: An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garlandm@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

Study Participant Verbal Recruitment Script for Semi-Structured Interviews

Hello, my name is Garland Mason. I am a student at Virginia Tech. I want to find out if you're interested in participating in my research study. Through the study, I am trying to understand more about participatory approaches to community development. You're eligible to participate in this study because of your participation in the projects of [NGO]. I obtained your contact information from [NGO].

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in one or more semi-structured interviews lasting fewer than two hours. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. I'll give you a pseudonym and I will keep your identity anonymous outside the research team.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decide whether you want to be part of the study or not. If you would like to participate we can schedule a time for me to meet with you to conduct an interview. If you need more time to decide if you would like to participate, you can get in touch with me to let me know your decision.

Do you have any questions?

If you have any more questions about this process or if you need to contact me about participation, I may be reached at [**phone number**].

Thank you.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form for NGO Staff

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development: An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garland@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

I. Purpose of this Research Project

This study is designed to serve as a critical analysis of the concepts of participation and empowerment within community development practice. The purpose of this study is to gain further understanding related to two questions. The first purpose is to enhance understanding of whether and how the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serves the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve. The second purpose is to better understand how participants perceive the connections between specific components of the participatory approach and either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants' intrinsic empowerment.

This research project also serves as partial fulfillment of a master's degree. I will write a thesis based on the findings of this project, and will present the findings at one or more conferences, and through publication in one or more academic journals.

II. Procedures

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one or more semi-structured interviews lasting fewer than two hours. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Data collection will occur between May and August of 2015.

III. Risks

The risks associated with participation in this study are minimal.

IV. Benefits

No direct or financial benefits are associated with your participation in this study. Indirect benefits include potential gains in knowledge that may serve to improve community development practices locally.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The confidentiality of your identity, and any identifying information you provide, will be maintained. I will provide you with a pseudonym in stored and disseminated data associated with this project. Your name will be linked to your pseudonym in a code file stored on a password protected computer. Your consent form will be stored in a locked file box. All data will be kept for at least three years. Only the study investigators will have access to the raw data and to any identifying information.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

No financial compensation is associated with your participation in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study’s conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____
Subject signature

Subject printed name

(Note: each subject must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and signed by subjects.)

Appendix E: Verbal Consent Script for Semi-Structured Interviews with NGO Participants

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development:

An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garlandm@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

Verbal Consent Script for Semi-Structured Interviews with NGO Participants

Hello, my name is Garland Mason. I am a student in a master's program at Virginia Tech. For my master's degree I am doing a research project. The research project is designed to serve as a critical analysis of the concepts of participation and empowerment in community development practices. This research has two purposes. The first purpose is to enhance understanding of participatory approaches to community development. The second purpose is to understand whether and how practitioners and participants perceive that participatory approaches to development are effective and successful. This research project also serves as partial fulfillment of a master's degree. With the findings of this research, I will write a master's thesis. Also, I will present the findings in academic conference(s) and as publication(s) in academic journal(s).

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in one or more semi-structured interviews lasting fewer than two hours. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. I'll give you a pseudonym and I will keep your identity anonymous outside the research team.

Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no direct benefits and risks associated with your participation. You may stop participating at any time. If you do not agree to participate, or if you consent and then change your mind, I will not use any part of the interview for research. If you consent, you can change your mind at any time.

Do you have any questions before deciding whether or not to participate?

Do you agree to participate?

Appendix F: Semi Structured Interview Guide for NGO Staff

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community

Development: An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garlandm@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

Semi Structured Interview: NGO Staff, Board Members, Donors

Purpose	Question
<p>Gathering Demographic Information</p>	<p>Tell me about your background. How did you get involved in this work? What motivates you to do this work? How do you conceptualize your approaches?</p>
<p>Research Questions:</p> <p><i>How does the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serve the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve?</i></p> <p><i>How do power dynamics and group dynamics limit the effectiveness of participatory approaches and influence the capacity of the applied approach to facilitate participants' empowerment (as described by Cooke (2001) and Mosse (2001))?</i></p>	<p>Why do you use a participatory approach? How did you design your approach? How do you adapt your approach in practice?</p> <p>What are the key elements of your approach/practice?</p> <p>How do you think your work serves your constituents?</p> <p>How do you think your work has impacted the people you work with?</p> <p>How has your work impacted the communities you serve?</p> <p>Have you seen any differences in the community structure?</p> <p>How people work together or collaborate?</p> <p>Has there been a change in the opportunities available to you as a result of your work? What have they been?</p> <p>What is different in the way your organization runs compared to other development programs in this region?</p> <p>How do farmers come to work with you? How are they recruited? Who recruits them?</p> <p>How are meetings run? Tell me about how those meetings work. How do you make decisions/how are decisions made? Who makes decisions?</p> <p>[After-action interview] If social psychological behaviors described by Cooke (2001) have been observed (tendency to make riskier decisions, unconscious collusion and false agreement, groupthink, and coercive persuasion): How did you feel when that happened? How did that affect the rest of</p>

<p><i>Which components of a participatory approach do participants perceive to be directly tied to either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants' intrinsic empowerment?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do practices align with Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation?</i> • <i>How do practices and outcomes align with Bartlett's (2008) conceptualization of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment?</i> 	<p>the meeting/practice?</p> <p>What components of the programs do you think best serve the constituents? Why do you think that is?</p> <p>What components of the program or what projects were the most difficult? Why do you think that is?</p> <p>Which of the program's strategies work best? What strategies don't work as well?</p> <p>What are the best aspects of the way this NGO works?</p> <p>What are the worst?</p>
<p>Chain Sampling</p>	<p>Who else should I talk to?</p>

Appendix G: Semi Structured Interview Guide for NGO Participants

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development: An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garlandm@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

Semi Structured Interview: NGO Participants

As a semi-structured interview, I will enter the interview setting with a loose framework of introduction statements, a verbal explanation of IRB, a plan for (re)establishing rapport, and a list of questions to touch on. The interview will be co-led by the participant, I will allow them to interject other information or stories as they see fit. I plan to have more than one interview/conversation with certain participants. I will conduct second interviews with participants in cases where the first interview generated follow-up questions, or where I feel there is more to be gained from a second interview for more breath or for depth. Below is a brief framework that I will continually adapt and build as I carry out the research. It will be adapted to each interviewee, adding questions relevant to research questions, and omitting questions that are not appropriate or relevant for the participant or setting. I will build new questions into the framework based on what I learn about the setting and context, and I will take out or alter questions that I find to be inappropriate as I carry out the research.

Purpose	Question
Gathering Demographic Information	What types of agricultural activities do you engage in? Do you sell your products or are they consumed by you and your family? If sells products: what are your markets? How did you establish them?
Framing Involvement with NGO/Baseline of Experience	How have you been involved in the work of this NGO, what types of activities have you engaged in with them?
Research Questions: <i>How does the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serve the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve?</i>	How has working with the NGO changed the way you do things? How has it helped you? Can you give me an example? Do you think about things differently as a result of your work with the NGO? Have you seen any differences in the community structure? How people work together or collaborate? Has there been a change in the opportunities available to

<p><i>How do power dynamics and group dynamics limit the effectiveness of participatory approaches and influence the capacity of the applied approach to facilitate participants' empowerment (as described by Cooke (2001) and Mosse (2001))?</i></p> <p><i>Which components of a participatory approach do participants perceive to be directly tied to either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants' intrinsic empowerment?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How do practices align with Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation?</i> <i>How do practices and outcomes align with Bartlett's (2008) conceptualization of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment?</i> 	<p>you as a result of your work with the NGO? What have they been?</p> <p>What opportunities are available to young people in this community? How has this changed since you were young?</p> <p>What other development project have you been a part of? Tell me about how those worked?</p> <p>Tell me about what you think of the practices of the NGO. How do you work with them? How is this different from the way other development organizations work?</p> <p>How are meetings run? Tell me about how those meetings work. How do you make decisions/how are decisions made? Who makes decisions?</p> <p>Have your ideas changed since you became involved with the work of this non-profit? How? What components of the programs have been most influential?</p> <p>[After-action interview] If social psychological behaviors described by Cooke (2001) have been observed (tendency to make riskier decisions, unconscious collusion and false agreement, groupthink, and coercive persuasion): How did you feel when that happened? How did that affect the rest of the meeting/practice?</p> <p>What components of the programs have been most helpful to you? Why do you think that is?</p> <p>What components of the program or what projects were the most difficult? Why do you think that is?</p> <p>Which of the program's strategies work best? What strategies don't work as well?</p> <p>What are the best aspects of the way this NGO works? What are the worst?</p> <p>Have your ideas changed since you became involved with the work of this non-profit? How? What components of the programs have been most influential?</p>
<p>Chain Sampling</p>	<p>Who else should I talk to?</p>

Appendix H: Verbal Consent Script for Participant Observation

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development:

An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garlandm@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

Verbal Consent Script for Participant Observation

Hello, my name is Garland Mason. I am a student in a master's program at Virginia Tech. For my master's degree I am doing a research project. The research project is designed to serve as a critical analysis of the concepts of participation and empowerment in community development practices. This research has two purposes. The first purpose is to enhance understanding of participatory approaches to community development. The second purpose is to understand whether and how practitioners and participants perceive that participatory approaches to development are effective and successful. This research project also serves as partial fulfillment of a master's degree. With the findings of this research, I will write a master's thesis. Also, I will present the findings in academic conference(s) and as publication(s) in academic journal(s).

If you agree to participate in this research, I will participate in the meeting, event or conversation to see how you work, and how you approach community development. I also ask permission to take notes and record portions or moments during the meeting / event / conversation. I'll give you a pseudonym in my notes if I refer to you. Also, I will keep your identity anonymous outside the research team.

Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no direct benefits and risks associated with your participation. You may stop participating at any time. If you do not agree to participate, or if you consent and then change your mind, I will not use any part of your meeting / event / conversation for research and will remove myself from the meeting, event or conversation. If you consent, you can change your mind at any time.

Do you have any questions before deciding whether or not to participate?

Is it okay that I observe, take notes, and recorded during your meeting / event / conversation?

Participant must provide affirmative verbal consent to enable participant observation and note taking during this encounter. If participant has provided affirmative verbal consent, sign below.

Researcher Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Appendix I: Participant Observation Guide

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community

Development: An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigators Garland Mason, garlandm@vt.edu

Co-Investigators : Kim Niewolny, niewolny@vt.edu; Tom Archibald, tgarch@vt.edu; Max Stephenson, mstephen@vt.edu

Participant Observation Guide

I will introduce myself and explain my presence and purpose at the gathering/meeting/event. I will request consent verbally and ask permission to take notes. Where it is appropriate, possible, and necessary, I will ask permission to audio record. After participant observation, where appropriate and possible, I will select participants for after action interviewing. These interviews driven by a combination of the participant observation guide (Appendix X) and the interview guide (Appendix X) and will generally be no more than thirty minutes in length. After action interviews will be used to fill in missing information, gather individual perspectives on certain questions or issues, or to follow up for more information on a specific occurrence or question.

Broad Theme	Question
Descriptive Information	Where is this? What is the setting? Describe the room/space. How many people have attended? Who are they? Are there any other factors that contribute to potential idiosyncrasies (e.g., weather, other community event, contention, etc.)?
Background: Involvement with NGO	What is the role of the NGO in this setting? What is the experience of participants? What are the affiliations? What is the explicit purpose of this gathering/meeting/event?
Research Questions	
<i>How does the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serve the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve?</i>	What are the NGO's theories of change? How is this reflected in practice? How is this reflected in the way they communicate their work to grantors and to the public? What do they employ as indicators or parameters of success? How do proposed or documented practices align with Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation? How would the level of participation be classified according to Pretty's (1995) ladder?
<i>How do power dynamics and group dynamics limit the effectiveness of participatory approaches and influence the capacity of the applied</i>	Are specific behaviors described by Cooke (2001) (tendency to make riskier decisions, unconscious collusion and false agreement, groupthink, and coercive persuasion) manifesting in meetings and practice? If so, how are these behaviors affecting meetings and practice?

<p><i>approach to facilitate participants' empowerment (as described by Cooke (2001) and Mosse (2001)?</i></p>	<p>Who is talking? Who is not talking? What is the tone? How is the conversation relating or not relating to the explicit/stated purpose of the gathering/meeting/event? How are people arranged (e.g., circle, speaker standing, etc.)? How are speakers determined (e.g., going around circle, interrupting, loudest gets priority, etc.)? Are potential decisions or proposals being presented? By whom? Are decisions being made, agreed upon, if so, how?</p>
<p>Power Dynamics</p>	<p>Who is talking? Who is not talking? What is the tone? How is the conversation relating or not relating to the explicit/stated purpose of the gathering/meeting/event? How are people arranged (e.g., circle, speaker standing, etc.)? How are speakers determined (e.g., going around circle, interrupting, loudest gets priority, etc.)? Are potential decisions or proposals being presented? By whom? Are decisions being made, agreed upon, if so, how?</p>
<p>Impacts</p>	<p>What is the general mood, feeling? Do people seem engaged/invested? What types of issues or concerns are coming up (if any)? How are they addressed? Who addresses them?</p>

Appendix J: *A Priori* Propositions and Research Questions

Proposition	Supporting Literature	Research Question
Participatory approaches to development are superior to conventional training and visit and technology transfer in facilitating enduring social change.	Participation can lead to both increased efficiency and empowerment of stakeholders, with the additional benefits of greater transparency, enhanced cost-effectiveness, and “strengthened capacity of people to learn and act” (Pretty, 1995, p. 1251); participatory extension aims to enhance local capacity to analyze problems and seek out solutions (Hellin et al., 2008)	How is the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serves the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve?
Participatory methodologies, when used in an effective ways and with intrinsic empowerment as a key objective, can help the rural poor take control and be better positioned to withstand shocks, stand up against injustice from government or corporations, harness their natural resources in sustainable ways, and value and build upon their local and experiential knowledge.	Conscientization and liberation from oppression can only be achieved through dialogic popular education Freire, 1970/2010, 1974/2013; Pretty (1995) indicates that participation can lead to both increased efficiency and empowerment of stakeholders, with the additional benefits of greater transparency, enhanced cost-effectiveness, and “strengthened capacity of people to learn and act” (p. 1251).	Which components of a participatory approach are directly tied to either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants’ intrinsic empowerment?
Participation and empowerment may be linked, but participation is not inherently empowering, more research is needed to determine how they are linked.	Participatory approaches require farmers to operate within pre-determined confines dictated by outsiders (Bartlett, 2008); “while participatory technology development has without doubt proved a sound way of enhancing the relevance of agricultural technology for the participating farmers, its wider impact on reducing rural poverty is less clearly documented” (Friis-Hansen, 2008, p. 507); there is a dearth of empirical evidence that serves to demonstrate the “long-term effectiveness of participation in materially improving the conditions of the most vulnerable people or as a strategy for social change” (Cleaver, 2001, p. 36).	Which components of a participatory approach are directly tied to either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants’ intrinsic empowerment?

<p>Power dynamics and group dynamics limit the effectiveness of participatory approaches in empowering participants.</p>	<p>Participatory methods can serve to propagate the beliefs and assumptions of those who already hold power within a community, while further marginalizing those who hold the lowest ranks (Mosse, 2001, p. 19); participatory approaches have the potential to significantly impede community development efforts due to inevitable negative processes of group dynamics and social psychology (Cooke, 2001, p. 102-121)</p>	<p>Is the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serves the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve?</p>
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Appendix K: Logic

Construct	Proposition	Supporting Literature	Research Question
Participation	Participatory approaches to development are superior to conventional training and visit and technology transfer in facilitating enduring social change.	Participation can lead to both increased efficiency and empowerment of stakeholders, with the additional benefits of greater transparency, enhanced cost-effectiveness, and “strengthened capacity of people to learn and act” (Pretty, 1995, p. 1251); participatory extension aims to enhance local capacity to analyze problems and seek out solutions (Hellin et al., 2008)	How does the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serve the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve?
Empowerment	Participatory methodologies, when used in effective ways and with intrinsic empowerment as a key objective, can help the rural poor take control and be better positioned to withstand shocks, stand up against injustice from government or corporations, harness their natural resources in sustainable ways, and value and build upon their local and experiential knowledge.	Conscientization and liberation from oppression can only be achieved through dialogic popular education Freire, (1970/2010, 1974/2013); Pretty (1995) indicates that participation can lead to both increased efficiency and empowerment of stakeholders, with the additional benefits of greater transparency, enhanced cost-effectiveness, and “strengthened capacity of people to learn and act” (p. 1251).	Which components of a participatory approach are directly tied to either the promotion of, or the inhibition of, participants’ intrinsic empowerment?
Participation & Empowerment	Participation and empowerment may be linked, but participation is not inherently empowering, more research is needed	Participatory approaches require farmers to operate within pre-determined confines dictated by outsiders (Bartlett, 2008); “while participatory technology development has without doubt proved a sound way of enhancing	Which components of a participatory approach are directly tied to either the promotion of, or

to determine how they are linked.	the relevance of agricultural technology for the participating farmers, its wider impact on reducing rural poverty is less clearly documented” (Friis-Hansen, 2008, p. 507); there is a dearth of empirical evidence that serves to demonstrate the “long-term effectiveness of participation in materially improving the conditions of the most vulnerable people or as a strategy for social change” (Cleaver, 2001, p. 36).	the inhibition of participants’ intrinsic empowerment?
Power dynamics and group dynamics limit the effectiveness of participatory approaches and may influence the capacity of the applied approach to facilitate participants’ empowerment.	Participatory methods can serve to propagate the beliefs and assumptions of those who already hold power within a community, while further marginalizing those who hold the lowest ranks (Mosse, 2001, p. 19); participatory approaches have the potential to significantly impede community development efforts due to inevitable negative processes of group dynamics and social psychology (Cooke, 2001, pp. 102-121)	Does the participatory approach, as used by a small, local NGO, serve the interests of the rural agrarians it is designed to serve?

Construct	Method	Questions
Participation	Primary Source Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the NGO’s theories of change? How is this reflected in practice? • How is this reflected in the way they communicate their work to grantors and to the public? What do they employ as indicators or parameters of success? • How do proposed or documented practices align with Pretty’s (1995) ladder of participation?
	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has working with the NGO changed the way you do things? • Do you think about things differently? • Have you seen any differences in the community structure? How people work together or collaborate? • Tell me about village life before the NGO. Has there been a change in the opportunities available to you?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities are available to young people in this community? How has this changed since you were young?
	Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the NGO's theories of change? How is this reflected in practice? • Which of the program's strategies work best? What strategies don't work as well? • How do meetings and practices align with Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation?
Empowerment	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about what you think of the practices of the NGO, how are meetings run? • Tell me about how meetings work. How do you make decisions/how are decisions made? Who makes decisions? • Have your ideas changed since you became involved with the work of this non-profit? How? What components of the programs have been most influential?
	Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who talks most at meetings? Who talks least? Who proposes ideas? • Who validates or invalidates proposals or ideas? • How are action steps determined? • How is progress made and defined? • How do meetings and practices align with Freire's (1970/2010, 1974/2013) conceptualization of popular education? • For agroecology projects, how does the practice align with Altieri's (2002) and Uphoff and Pretty's (2002) conceptualization of agroecology and sustainable agriculture as learning processes?
Participation & Empowerment	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What components of the programs have been most helpful to you? Why do you think that is? • What components of the program or what projects were the most difficult? Why do you think that is? • Which of the program's strategies work best? What strategies don't work as well? • What are the best aspects of the way this NGO works? What are the worst?
	Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do meetings and practices align with Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation?
	Primary Source Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do proposed or documented practices align with Pretty's (1995) ladder of participation? • How do proposed or documented practices align with Bartlett's (2008) conceptualization of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment?

Participation & Empowerment [Continued]	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about what you think of the practices of the NGO. How are meetings run? Tell me about how those meetings work. How do you make decisions/how are decisions made? Who makes decisions? • Have your ideas changed since you became involved with the work of this non-profit? How? What components of the programs have been most influential? • If social psychological behaviors described by Mosse (2001) and Cooke (2001) have been observed: how did you feel when that happened? How did that affect the rest of the meeting/practice?
	Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are specific behaviors described by Mosse (2001) and Cooke (2001) manifesting in meetings and practice? • If so, how are these behaviors affecting meetings and practice? • Who is talking? Who is not talking? What is the tone? • How is the conversation relating or not relating to the explicit/stated purpose of the gathering/meeting/event? • How are people arranged (e.g., circle, speaker standing, etc.)? How are speakers determined (e.g., going around circle, interrupting, loudest gets priority, etc.)? • Are potential decisions or proposals being presented? By whom? Are decisions being made, agreed upon, if so, how?

Appendix L: Master List of Codes and Themes

Commentary on Programs

- Creative Resolution of Conflicts
- Critique/Program Failure
- Food Security
- Learning Organization
- Microcredit
- Systemic change/Theories of Change

Symptoms of Oppression

- Asistencialismo/Clientelism
- Division/ Violence (intra-community)
- Lack of Health/Resilience
- Lack of Self-Esteem
- Migration
- Paternalism
- Pobreza/Scarcity
- Quality of Life

Context Codes

- Community Dynamics
- Consumerism
- Education (formal)/Literacy
- Gender Inequality
- Human Rights
- Individualism
- Individualism (lack of)
- Justice
- Liberation Theology
- Politics
- Religion
- Role of Church
- Systems of Inequality
- Livelihoods/Community Structures
- Zapatistas/EZLN

Aspects of Empowerment

- Autonomy/Resistance
- Community Unity
- Conciencia Social/Social Consciousness
- Critical Consciousness/ Conciencia Critica
- Despertar/Darse cuenta/Abrir la mente
- Dignity
- Economic Empowerment
- Emancipation

Grassroots Change
Libertad/Freedom
Personal Change/Emotional Development
Progress
Salir Adelante
Self-confidence/Auto-valoracion/Confianza en si Mismo
Self-Determination
Solidarity
Solidarity Economy
Superar
Value of Work
Women's Power/Women's Rights/Women's Voice
Women's Work

Aspects Participation*

Decision Making
Imponer
Interactive Participation
Leadership
Learning (peer-to-peer, nonformal, experiential)
Object/subject (of program/of development)
Participation for Material Incentives
Partnership
Passive Participation
Self-Mobilization
Technology Transfer
Trust Building

* Using Pretty's (1995) ladder as a guide, the following codes for participation appeared in my original codes list but I did not find excerpts in the transcripts that exemplified these codes:

Manipulative Participation
Passive Participation
Participation by Consultation
Functional Participation

Appendix M: Original (Untranslated) Quotes

Cultural and Socio-Historical Context of Participation (p. 98)

The role of religion and liberation theology in the region. (p. 99)

So there were times back then when I would say to my co-workers that the peasants...

Entonces, pero en algunas ocasiones, hace tiempo pues yo les decía a los compañeros que sí la gente campesina, indígena, es profundamente religiosa, quieras tu o no quieras. Y entonces como que también tendremos que manejar esa dimensión en el trabajo no, no relacionado con ninguna instancia religiosa sino algo que fuera como fortaleciendo una mística de trabajo, una mística de, por ejemplo, lo que es la justicia, lo que es los derechos humanos pero como algo que es, pues, es algo—es como te comentaba estilo de lo que hacía la lucha contra el racismo del Estados Unidos. Y lo que hacía por ejemplo Mandela, en Sud África contra el apartheid, todo eso. Yo creo que es lo que se conoce aquí como la teología de la liberación es una corriente, pues una corriente de pensamiento que tiene también como en análisis de Marx en el sentido de las clases sociales, de la explotación, o sea de las raíces de la situación de pobreza que no es algo que si tú lo dices con palabras religiosas no es algo que dios lo quiere y lo permite, ¿no? No es algo que va en contra del plan de Dios, bueno, según la interpretación religiosa. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

On the other hand, religion brings us together, and we're used to that. So we can really...

Por la otra parte es que también nos hace hermano la religiosidad, que nos acostumbramos, pues así. Entonces, pues allí vemos muy claro lo que es de nuestra clase, y lo que es la clase las dos pues. La clase dominante, y la clase social que lucha, que busca, la clase pobre. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Ever since I was a young boy I've worked in the church—the Catholic Church. At almost...

De que desde muy joven me trabaje en la iglesia, en la iglesia católica. Casi que yo desde mis 16 años empecé a participar en la iglesia, yo ya pasé muchas áreas de la iglesia. Por ejemplo fui catequista de niños, enseñe a los niños, el catecismo, que es primer paso, fui catequista de comunidad, después fui representante de jóvenes, de animar a los jóvenes, en la iglesia, fui representate a nivel sureste de todas las parroquias, ya de nivel diocesano, yo llegaba a la diócesis, nos reunimos con Don Samuel y como era un obispo muy—un obispo que él su trabajo era también de mucho ayudar en la sociedad. Pues allí nos hablábamos mucho de las cosas, que hay que hacer por los demás y los servicios y todo, y allí me fui preparando. —Francisco, Nueva Tlaxcala

It's not like that, I mean, there are things that I can't deny. For example, I can't renounce...

Y no es así, o sea, hay cosas en que son irrenunciables como por ejemplo yo no puedo renunciar mi bautismo, ni puedo renunciar un sistema de creencias que traigo desde muchos años atrás. Allí esta. Se abrió no está activo porque no los estoy viviendo como lo viví de ir todos los días a misa, de hacer todo los sacramentos, no. Ya no. No es así. Pero no por eso renuncio, y puedo dejar de mirar esa parte mía. Es una parte mía que esta allí. Y que tampoco estoy peleando con ella. No puedo. —Gloria, Adelanto staff

Religion comes to play a social role as part of the ideology—it can be in favor of the system...

La religión viene a jugar un papel social como parte de la ideología, puede estar en favor del sistema sosteniendo, manteniendo el sistema, fortaleciendo el sistema o puedes tener un trabajo de contestación o de protesta ¿no? –Octavio, Adelanto staff

In fact, I have the experience from the church. From my work with the church, having...

De hecho, yo tengo la experiencia en la iglesia, en el trabajo de la iglesia, de haber hecho un trabajo de empoderamiento de los campesinos, pero a partir de la misma reflexión de la biblia, a ver Jesús con quien andaba, quienes eran sus amigos, quienes eran sus enemigos, porque eso puso a ellos. Entonces el cuestionar por ejemplo al poder, cuestionar, por ejemplo, a los autoridades, las leyes, eso hizo Jesús, ¿no? Cuestionó muchas leyes, muchas—entonces en realidad, ya si vas a fondo, pues, inclusive criticar a la misma iglesia, la misma religión, a partir de lo que de esa reflexión, ¿no? Es valioso para los campesinos que son creyentes y que son muy religiosos, descubrir que Jesús estuvo con ellos y que ellos tienen dignidad ¿no? Y que ellos pueden oponerse a un gobierno cuando es injusta a la ley o lo que sea. Y que ellos tienen derecho a la tierra, tienen derecho a la vida, tienen derecho a un trabajo digno. Tienen derecho a un salario suficiente, entonces, todo eso, se puede trabajar también desde un aspecto ideológico, y la religión tiene un papel muy fuerte ideológico puede ser muy ambiguo, puede ser a favor del sistema dominante, para mantenerlo, para darle más cohesión o en contra para cuestionar, para dar más reflexión a la gente en contra de esa situación, eso es lo que se— Y puede ser igual en la familia, puede ser igual en la escuela, puede ser igual en la comunidad, ¿no? –Octavio, Adelanto staff

Working from within the church, from the very first training, we did not want the people to be...

Al trabajar desde la iglesia, desde la primera formación, no queríamos que la gente fuera objeto. Sino se hablaba de la necesidad del empoderamiento para que las personas fueran sujeto de su propia historia –Gloria, Adelanto staff

The lens of gender and gender equality. (p. 103)

Yes, it has benefited us, because maybe we don't have guidance, you know? But there...

Sí nos ha beneficiado porque quizás nosotros no tenemos una orientación pues. Pero allí sí nos dan una orientación como debemos de trabajar nosotros de mujeres porque siempre nos han dicho que también que como mujeres tenemos ya ese derecho. Antes nosotros quizás nuestros papás nuestros mamás antes no tenían un derecho. Una mujer no podía hablar, no podía decir que siente una mujer, no puede trabajar por si sola. –Betania, San Pedro de Los Pinos

A little bit, because we didn't have a say before—we couldn't say anything, or at least we

Un poquito porque nosotros más antes no teníamos la palabra por decir no podíamos decir nada porque en ese sentíamos porque somos mujer y no podemos decir una palabra pero ya uno de nosotros pues ya podemos hablar porque ya también nosotros ya nos habían enseñado pues ya un poco de eso. –Betania, San Pedro de Los Pinos

Yes. For example, say something that seems wrong to us. We can say what we think now...

Sí por ejemplo decir algo que miramos mal, pues ya podemos decir porque es lo que quiere uno porque salga pues de la palabra de una mujer es lo que nosotros vemos, porque sí nos escucharon pues lo dijeron por cualquier cosa veamos pues podemos decir, entonces que son ciertos pues podemos decir porque sí el derecho de la mujer por ejemplo de nos maltratan nuestros esposos, pues ya también nosotras ya no vamos a quedar calladas, podemos decir pues y que nos tomen en cuenta que la mujer vale. Dejamos que nos pegue. –Betania, San Pedro de Los Pinos

Well, in my way of thinking, a lot. Yes. Like I'm saying, I was really different. I wasn't...

Pues mi manera de pensar quizás, mucho. Sí, como le digo, yo sí era muy diferente, no tenía el valor de decir lo que yo siento, de lo que yo pienso, pues decía no, no, me atrevo porque no me atrevo o pues, era tímida, me daba pena, la verdad. Me daba pena hablar, y si lo pienso pues yo me lo quedo porque no tenía las fuerzas más bien el ánimo. Pero ahora, sí ya, sí, he aprendido a participar porque en esas talleres hace enseñar como debemos que hablar, como imprentarnos, como quitar el miedo y sí con esa taller sí yo quité mucha la pena porque sí era una pena que daba en hablar pero ahora sí ya no. – Bienvenida, San Pedro de Los Pinos

Well the truth is, they explained to us how we could work. What we didn't have, maybe...

Quizás nosotros pues la verdad nos contó cómo se trabaja, lo que no tenemos nosotros pues quizás formas como con un dinero que nos dan, y quizás con la explicación de él también de cómo debemos de trabajar como un dinero que nos dan pues lo vamos a trabajar y para poder pagar, pues podemos hacer un trabajo pues que nos resulte. Y así la familia podemos mantener con lo poco que nosotros podemos ganar de los proyectos principalmente nosotros de mujer lo que manteníamos son los pollos y nos dan del dinero y compramos nuestras gallinas. Nos daban los pollos, daban huevos también para que con nuestros hijos podemos mantener y apoyar nuestros esposos también. –Betania, San Pedro de los Pinos

It's that, I think it's as if there are two levels. One well, okay, it's the same, you know?...

Es que, yo siento que esta como a dos niveles, uno pues, bueno, y que es lo mismo ¿no? La salud emocional, que es uno de los retos ¿no? Que para que haya esa confianza entre ellas, y con ellas mismas, pues puedan lograr salir mejor con sus proyectos, y se acaben los chismes, las—o sea porque ya hay más confianza porque ya conozco tu vida, mi vida, ese es uno de los retos, también, hemos pensado que—o yo pienso que mientras, no se vea lo del género mientras, no se trate—de que saber que no es normal, que es normal el golpe, que no es normal tanto trabajo, solo para las mujeres, ¿no? Que no es normal el servirles a los hombres, o sea que sí, sí hay que compartir el trabajo, hay que compartir, pero que mientras no nos demos cuenta de eso, pues no, no va ser. Y yo digo que eso también tiene ver con el conocimiento de sus derechos para que los pueden exigir.— Ramona, Adelanto staff

I think that same right is an example to women, too. What's happening? Why aren't...

Yo creo que también ese mismo derecho esta por ejemplo a las mujeres, ¿Qué pasa? ¿Por qué no hay una equidad? Que ha pasado en siglos de alguna manera desde su ser indígenas, porque ellas forman más machos, porque ellas a la hora de criar los niños le dan ciertas tareas al niño y ciertas tareas a la niña, que van a impedir después que hay una equidad de género. Y es así, más o menos desde ese lugar, de irse haciendo preguntas, no preguntarle al otro, no juzgar al otro, sino cada, cada uno, y cada uno, y se están preguntando qué está pasando aquí. Como le hago. Como funciona mi automático. – Gloria, Adelanto staff

So, then—how can it be understood that the indigenous woman, because she's an...

Bueno pero entonces, como entender que la indígena por ser indígena es triplemente aplastada. Entonces, como entender que si el hombre valora más a su caballo a su ganado que a su mujer, la mujer está buscando de alguna manera, auto-estima. Aunque, autoestima le cueste más trabajo de que ya de por sí tiene todo los días. Pero allí lo que falta para mi es el que ellas abran los ojos y se den cuenta. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

My brothers we're more the ones who were taught and trained, my brothers and I, as...

Como que mis hermanos fueron más los que se capacitaron, mis hermanos y yo como solo somos dos mujeres, como que yo me dedique más a la cocina, y por eso me dedique a la costura. Porque no tenía yo mucho, o sea como que yo era pues sola, mi familia, mi mamá, como siempre viene mucha gente en nuestra casa pues, su casa mi papá. Entonces que yo le veía que mi mamá se atrasaba, y como yo era yo la única, por eso me dedique más allí, la casa, fueron mis hermanos que tuvieron como más libertad y yo no conozco mucho afuera, pero sí tengo más—como le digo nos capacitamos, entramos en la misma escuela, entonces tenemos todos la misma educación, la misma mentalidad. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

I, as a mother, I've just barely been married three years, but as a mother, I've realized a...

Yo como madre, como apenas tengo tres años de casada, pero como madre me he dado cuenta de muchas cosas. En ponerme en lugar de otra igual que yo. ¿Por qué? Porque ese mismo trabajo, o esa misma posibilidad nos obliga a desarrollar nuestra mente, nuestras capacidades. Porque yo decía, si yo tuviera conforme con lo que ya me dieron supuestamente, no estoy pensando devolverlo o cosas así. Estaría yo tranquila. Tranquila pero en este caso no, no estoy tranquila porque por eso me obligo a trabajar y eso para mí eso es lo que quiere Adelanto como esforzarnos más, aprender más de lo mismo e ir desarrollando más nuestra familia porque conforme trabajemos es como nuestros niños también van desarrollando su mente yo lo veo con mi niño, como platicamos con mi esposo. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

The experience of Neozapatismo. (p. 106)

To make a long story short, I came back in '95. I get here at the end of '95. And I start...

Total que me regreso en '95, llego acá en finales de '95. Y empiezo a trabajar en la zona fronteriza, que era uno de los municipios más sobresalientes del nuevo gobierno Zapatista. Era el municipio X, y de alguna manera al empezar a trabajar yo lo que hice—lo que me di cuenta es que había un descomposición social muy grande entre familias,

unos, y otros están peleando muy fuerte y de algún modo empezamos a trabajar para que no sea aumentar la violencia, había muchísima impunidad en esos tiempos y allá realmente una descomposición social muy grande también había suicidios de parte de gente muy joven y por otro lado estaba la selva que parecía a Vietnam. Había muchísimos soldados verdes, azules, negros como toda la policía, tanto federal como estatal, metido en las comunidades, había también mucha violación de los derechos humanos y soldados que prostituían a las indígenas. Había mucha hambre porque no había manera como de trabajar las mujeres y niños, muchos estaban solos entre todo, mucha gente que se fue a las montaña por la guerra y otra gente que se iba a Estados Unidos, a Cancún, a Campeche y a otros lugares a trabajar para comer y para sobrevivir. Eso era una situación muy caótica. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

No. I think the Zapatista uprising left a mark that can't be erased. I mean, Chiapas will...

No pues yo creo que el levantamiento Zapatista marcó una huella que no se puede borrar. O sea, nunca va a ser igual Chiapas, después del Zapatismo como era antes del Zapatismo. Entonces, por ejemplo la conciencia indígena pues ha—o sea decir, 'yo soy indígena,' antes te daba vergüenza decir 'soy indígena,' tenías que agacharte, sentías que no tenías derecho, querías ser como los demás, mientras menos indígena parecieras, más contento estabas ¿no? Entonces, mucha gente ya ahora se reconoce indígena, se considera persona, antes no te consideraban ni persona muchos indígenas, pues. Entonces su cultura, su—y la recuperación de tierras, esas ya nadie se la va a quitar. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

Illiteracy and lack of access to education. (p. 107)

My mind is closed because I didn't study.

Yo soy muy tapadita de mi mente de por sí yo no estudié. –Marcela, La Vega Municipality

Because we didn't study we don't know things, we lack knowledge. As my father used to...

Sí pues. No nosotros por el falta de estudio, no sabemos, ni conocemos, como decía mi papá, estamos muy ignorantes en la vida. En casa aprendimos pues. Sí. Pero nos falta mentalidad tal vez. –Marcela, La Vega Municipality

Because of [our illiteracy] we don't have much capacity, on the other hand, the kids who...

Por eso no tenemos mucha capacidad nosotros en cambio los jóvenes ahora los que están grandes, los que están en la escuela, ya tienen un poco más de capacidad. –Teodora, San Pedro de los Pinos

But yes, I was able to send my children to school because with my work, I get a little bit...

Pero sí a mis muchachos, sí los pude dar estudio pues porque con lo que trabajo, y me sale un poquito, trato de darle tal vez no le doy no sé, riquezas, verdad, o como digamos, pero está dando lo mejor que son sus estudios, porque quiero que ellos sean alguien en vida, no que se queden—para decir que yo no tuve estudios, entonces, pues por eso a veces que pasa uno necesidades, pasa uno así, que a veces, que tenemos para comprar el maíz, el frijol, o no tenemos tierras donde trabajar para poderlo hacer. Entonces, y tener

un estudio, pues es mucho mejor, porque tienen un sueldo seguro, aunque sea poco pero tenemos allí seguro el sueldo. Pues en ese lado sí me ha ayudado, porque sí he sacado mis muchachos adelante, claro no solo con ese apoyo, porque yo también he trabajado, mi esposo, y los muchachos también, se van a la escuela y cuando regresan si tengo gente ellos me ayuden. –Graciela, La Merced

I'm of indigenous origin. I'm Tojolabal. My parents are Tojolabales. I didn't have any...

Vengo de origen indígena. Soy Tojolabal. Mis padres son Tojolabales. Yo no tuve escuela por la desgracia que mis padres eran mozo de los caciques en esos años. Entonces, de esa manera yo no tuve la oportunidad de ir a la escuela. Pero de edad de 14 años yo tuve oportunidad de formarme en otras escuelas, como en talleres y cursos. En esos cursos aprendí a leer y escribir aunque muy poco. Pero allí me dio como un paso para seguir mi vida hacia adelante. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Participation and a Participatory Approach (p. 109)

Interactive participation. (p. 110)

We've been with Adelanto for five years, and the meetings that they've had are always...

Tiene cinco años que estamos con ellos, y siempre las juntas que habido, es para ir mejorándonos, como vamos a trabajar, como vamos a progresar. Pienso que de Adelanto está bien. Sí. Porque con el gobierno nunca tenemos una plática así como vamos vivir, como vamos a hacerlo crecer. No. En cambio con Adelanto sí. –Marcela, La Vega

The way Adelanto works is that they give you something so that you work, they give you...

Y la forma de Adelanto es de que te da para que trabajes, te da un préstamo para que te ayudes con tu familia, y las familias que hay alrededor con los que queramos organizarnos, eso es la ventaja que hay aquí en Oranization A, entonces, cuando el ve que esta no está funcionando, o lo que ellos, el apoyo que nos están dando, no está funcionando en el grupo, buscan la forma de ver de que salgamos, que nos superemos, o que busquemos otro modo alternativo para salir de donde estamos, y el gobierno no. – Salvador, La Vega

Yeah, for us as Adelanto staff, we've really valued the participation of the people because...

Sí, para nosotros como [Adelanto staff], hemos valorado mucho la participación de las personas, porque nosotros no queremos ser como los sabidores de todo, o los concedores de todo, sino lo que queremos nosotros es que cualquier tipo de trabajo u algún tipo de proyecto que queramos realizar que sea convocada con la base con quien trabajamos y que digan ellos como lo ven, como creen que sea bueno, y así poder avanzar en un proceso de desarrollo juntos donde todos tengamos palabra y donde todos tengamos votos, y que todos podamos decir que esto sí, que esto no. Para nosotros como Adelanto, es muy importante ese paso. La cuestión participativa de las personas con quien trabajamos, eso nos da nosotros aliento para poder nosotros desarrollar mejor el proyecto que nosotros maneamos. Y si nosotros nada más decidimos, no hay participación de la gente, pues estamos siguiendo un sistema que estamos viviendo de por

sí. Entonces eso no da un cambio pues en el trabajo. Por esa razón nosotros, para nosotros es muy importante, eso de la participación de los compañeros. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

So one of the things that I've done is managed to exchange and connect with the...

Entonces, una de las cosas que he hecho pues es lograr intercambiar con la comunidad un poco más, tal vez no como debiera hacer, y pues solo, ¿no? Solo eso, no he podido hacer un plan, he querido intentar, he intentado a hacer, convocar, y eso, oír. O buscar algo del interés de la gente pero, pues sí. Aquí me doy cuenta que mi interés no es el interés de ellos, entonces, pues no es suficiente, tienen que ser algo que a ellos les importe, les necesite, les mueva su vida, y no, no doy el, bueno, pues aquí lo que veo es supervivir, vivir, o sea conseguir dinero porque ni se quiera el turismo les—sí les ayuda, ¿no? Pero, sí ellos mismos dicen que su vida ha cambiado mucho con el turismo, ha cambiado hasta su forma de vivir, o sea ya no siembran, es otro mundo, otro modo. Entonces, sí es como el punto encontrar eso, ¿no? ¿Cómo entrar en la comunidad desde lo que ellos necesitan? Y está difícil, para mí. —Ramona, Adelanto staff

Derived from the reality of the campesinos.

Desde su realidad, desde la realidad del campesino.—Ramona, Adelanto staff

What serves them is derived from them, what they seek, from what they ask for, without...

Que lo que sirve es que desde ellos, desde que ellos soliciten, desde que ellos pidan. Sino que, no imponer. —Ramona, Adelanto staff

Well, we thought when we designed this space, that's when we realized that you always...

Pues nosotros pensamos cuando diseñamos este espacio, es cuando nosotros nos dimos cuenta que la gente siempre le llevas una cosa, o le propones. A veces no le propones sino les impones una cosa a ellos. 'Mi proyecto es esto, así es, así es como, y ¿quieres participar, o no? Entonces, ya.' Pero creemos que eso no ayuda mucho para mejorar o no significa ayudar a las personas sino, no es lo mismo imponer, y proponer. Entonces, el cambio que hemos dado es que mejor, hay que proponer. Que deciden. Entonces, de allí diseñamos el trabajo que se necesita hacer. Pero porque ya estamos viendo que también la gente puede decir una palabra, y puede decir un punto de vista como lo ve el diseño que nosotros ya tenemos y con el que ellos piensan. Así nosotros lo manejamos ese punto.—Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

For example, we can't manipulate people into being leftist. It doesn't work. Or use force...

Por ejemplo, no podemos manipular a la gente a que sea fuerzas de izquierda. No funciona. O a que a fuerza sea católico. No funciona. Yo creo que las cosas tienen que ser con mucha libertad y al mismo tiempo entender que la gente tiene derecho a elegir lo que a él más le gusta. Entonces yo sí creo que la educación popular, mientras educación popular, sin fines, sin fines de co-optar cabezas o de llevártelas para agua para tu molino, yo creo que funcionan muy bien. Yo creo que ya cuando tú tienes la finalidad que haga lo que tu quieres ya no funciona. Allí no sirve. —Gloria, Adelanto staff

Leadership and decision-making. (p. 113)

It would be in the way it's carried out, I think, for me, how they're doing it now I think is...

Serian cuanto la manera de llevar, pues pienso que para mí, así como lo están haciendo lo veo que está bien porque, que ellos no van imponer nada a la comunidad, sino que la comunidad puede decidir qué es lo que va a hacer, en lo que quiere trabajar, entonces, es importante porque ellos no imponen pues. Sino que, o sea, que hay una libertad de decisión del grupo o de la comunidad que quiera trabajar con ellos. Entonces, para mi sería que siguieran trabajando así como lo ha manejado haciendo porque hay una libertad de los grupos de tomar su propia decisión. No ellos dicen 'no es que vamos, ustedes tienen que trabajar esto y esto,' no, es el grupo decide que quiere trabajar y –eso es importante, como que es bueno. Porque, y pues para mí, creo que sugerencia casi que, no, porque yo lo he visto bien su trabajo hasta el momento así vienen trabajando y sería como seguir trabajando así como lo han venido haciendo. –Francisco, Nueva Tlaxcala region

So we're working with them up to that point. But yeah, what I've felt is that they're more...

Entonces hasta allí estamos trabajando con ellos pero sí lo que he sentido que están más pegado a lo alternativo que otro proceso. Y siempre nos han dicho de lo más del colectivo que todos nos favorezcamos, que todos pongamos en nuestra parte, todos trabajemos, hemos organizados en esa parte. Es ese lo que hemos trabajado con ellos. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

One of the things that has helped us a lot—Well, women have started working now, too...

Uno de las cosas que nos ha ayudado mucho, pues las mujeres hasta ahora pues ya empiezan también a trabajar, y gracias a las reuniones de Adelanto pues allí se convive como es una convivencia, y todos participamos sin diferencia porque no hay líder, no hay uno que está mandando sino que hay claro que es responsables pero están recogiendo lo que avance, lo que va saliendo. –Mauricio, San Pedro de los Pinos

Well, the groups make decisions about the projects in the communities, the group decides...

Pero ya en el proyecto allá en la comunidad, ya lo decide el grupo, entonces, el grupo decide qué proyecto quiere trabajar y como le gusta trabajar. Entonces, nosotros avalamos y valoramos esa opinión, y esa opinión participativa las mujeres o los hombres que forman ese grupo. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Well, for me, leadership is something that you can accept or gain from a moral influence...

Bueno, el liderazgo para mí, es algo que se puede admitir o ganar por una influencia moral. No por autoridad. Entonces, el verdadero liderazgo es que tú ofreces un servicio que interesa a la gente. . . . Entonces en las comunidades los líderes son las personas que por su forma de relacionarse con la comunidad, con la gente, son aceptados y son valorados como personas que pueden aportar y pueden—que la gente los sigue. Pero no es que se va a imponer eso. Ni es—entonces, sí es—el liderazgo se puede ganar cuando tú estas en contacto con la gente, entiende sus problemas, propones algo que sí ellos les convence, les beneficia, entonces, te siguen. De otra manera, pues te mandan a volar aunque túles hables bonito. Así es. Bueno pero entonces, yo por ejemplo allá en la region de Nueva Tlaxcala, como vivía allá muchos años, me gané, digamos, un autoridad moral con la gente. No tanto por mi cargo sino por lo que trabajamos con la gente, no. Entonces

ahorita que yo ya no esté en la iglesia ni nada, pero ellos me siguen considerando como alguien que ha aportado para ellos, o sea que estoy con ellos, que me reconocen como uno de los suyos en ese sentido ¿no? –Octavio, Adelanto staff

That's what we see as the biggest difference between Adelanto and governmental credit...

Eso es lo que vemos la gran diferencia entre Adelanto y los créditos del gobierno Y aquí, en Adelanto, pues no me tiene que condicionar, no me tiene que decir, me tiene que, a lo mejor, me tiene que monitorear pero eso es necesario, es necesario y luego que es positivo porque si tiene una experiencia alguien de los asesores, alguien de los facilitadores, pues me dirá con mucho gusto me dirá. Esto lo va a hacer así porque no, no está bien en esta forma, eso serio como muy digno también para nosotros porque sentimos que no está a su interés, si no hay interesa de nuestro proceso de economía, de nuestro proyecto que queremos tener. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Partnership and solidarity. (p. 116)

And what is different about Adelanto is that we do our projects ourselves. 'Hey, look...

Y la diferencia de Adelanto es que nosotros hacemos nuestro proyecto. Mira, mira compa, mira hermano como sea que digamos 'aquí traigo este, que dice, me puedes apoyar.' 'Sí con mucho gusto,' es tu proyecto es lo que piensas hacer, eso es lo que vemos la parte como la parte solidaria. La parte de aquí nosotros nos tratamos de hermanos porque nos hemos conocido y más que nos hermana es la clase social de que parecemos lo mismo en todos lados, sí, somos los mismos sufridores por una parte. – Patricio of San Lázaro de las Sierras

So yes, what he was saying is that they won me over me as a participant. Why? Because...

Pues, sí de lo que decía él es, me ganó en la participación ¿Por qué? Porque en las reuniones de Adelanto pues es reflejado por una parte del escritura, pues sí allí se ve la diferencia lo que hablamos de anteriormente por ejemplo con lo del gobierno y con lo de Adelanto porque el gobierno nunca va a agarrar un tema bíblico para que nos ayude a madurar o a pensar, ¿no? Adelanto sí. –Salvador, La Vega

Because, yeah—Because the organization is well founded. I say that because they always...

Porque sí. Porque la organización que es bien fundado le digo porque ellos siempre nos van, nos visitan, siempre hemos participado donde quieren. Y eso yo sí le llamo, porque en cualquier cosa nos dan paso. Y se aprende más. Sí porque he visto otras organizaciones que a veces ha sido solo para ellos, y ellos no, comparte con todo. Por eso yo así lo llamo esa palabra. En cualquier cosa, sí, hemos participado. –Santiago, La Vega

I think what has been very useful is accompanying people in the work, along with this...

Yo creo que lo que ha servido mucho es acompañamiento con la gente junto con un pequeño recurso que eso es lo que la gente ha dicho que nunca habido un organización como Adelanto que no solo da dinero sino acompañan la organización y en el manejo del proyecto y que Adelanto tiene, es flexible en su manejo, y nunca se pone a discutir o pelear con la gente sino podemos entender la realidad de la gente, y si nos piden prorroga, pues también les damos prorroga. Entonces, eso es un componente que la gente le ha

ayudado y le gusta, pues, el programa que nosotros estamos manejando porque no nada más deseamos un poquito de dinero sino también ofrecemos un acompañamiento de proceso y en los talleres, y el modo organizativo, en reflexiones, en talleres, pues todo esto es lo que sí, creemos que sí, le ayuda. Y es este, es un componente que está ayudando a las comunidades y a los grupos. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

I lasted without any salary, well now, yeah, from '99 until around 2005, looking for a...

Yo dure sin ningún salario pues ahora sí desde el '99 hasta por el 2005, más bien buscando la manera de conseguir por todos para que hubiera un capital que pudiera sostener compañeros que estuvieron a tiempo completo. Entonces algún modo, bueno yo nunca considere que eso fue a suceder pero eso se sucedió y para siempre ha sido como un milagro el que sigamos vivos, el que se den esos pasitos con la gente, porque reconozco que nuestro trabajo es de hormigas, es un trabajo muy chiquitito y además si tú nos ves vivir, pues todos vivimos con nuestros recursos o sea nadie— Adelanto no es un lugar donde que sea para que nuestra vida tenga grandes riquezas, lo tenemos así bien asumido. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

Yeah, what motivates me in the work is that, well, always being with the people who...

Sí, lo que a mí me anima en este trabajo es que, pues, por estar siempre con la gente que menos puede, que menos tiene, y que soy valioso en su presencia de las comunidades, de los grupos. Para mí, esto me da un ánimo. Y valoro ese esfuerzo que he hecho para sentirme más pegado a mi gente, que me entiende, o que puedo hacer yo como su referente para poder ellos acercarse mejor y entenderlo mejor para hablar de nuestra situación económica, o nuestra situación del campo. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Actually, we've been changing and giving more shape to this work because we didn't...

Actualmente, hemos estado cambiando o dándole forma esta trabajo porque no quisimos nosotros parecer como un programa del gobierno. Como dando dinero nada más, y cobrando el dinero, pues eso para nosotros no es fundamental para los compañeros del campo o trabajadores campesinos. Para nosotros es necesario hacer un plan de trabajo que ayude a mejorar la calidad de vida de nuestros compañeros que año con año han venido sufriendo por no tener como la facilidad de tener préstamos bancarios. Entonces nosotros somos una organización que les apoyamos con un pequeño microcrédito para emprender un pequeño negocio o un pequeño trabajo productivo y que les ayuda a mejorar la calidad de vida dentro de la familia, dentro del grupo o la comunidad. Ese proyecto que manejamos pues no es con un interés de capitalizarlos como organización, sino más que nada es un servicio que damos con las comunidades, o con los grupos, con quien trabajamos. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

Consider what we had that here in the 1980s. In the 1980s, there was a split from those...

Fíjate que esa, tuvimos aquí en los años 80s, en los años 80s hubo a partir de esas corrientes que decíamos de los revolucionarios que había de cambio, había como la tendencia de que todo lo decida la base, y la tendencia de los líderes del motor de la revolución decían, los que van, un grupo de dirigente, una dirección. Pero nosotros lo que vimos es que no se puede dejar todo en las manos de la gente ni todo lo puede asumir una dirección, sino que si tú quieres realmente que la gente se haga dueño de un proceso, la

gente tiene que sentirlo como suyo. Pero tú puedes ayudar si te comprometes con la gente, no vas a ir a disponer a mandar ni a decidir, sino vas a estar con ellos y atender como es realmente lo que la gente piensa, lo que la gente sienten. Entonces en ese sentido la participación de la gente tiene que ser un poco también con—o sea, si tú eres asesor, tienes que acercarte a la gente, platicar con ellos, en una reunión puedes sacar las inquietudes que hay. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

But you, as an advisor, need to have the capacity to understand which necessity yields the...

Pero tú, como asesor, tienes que tener la capacidad de entender cuál necesidad te da como la posibilidad de iniciar un proceso. Entonces en ese sentido sí es importante tu experiencia y estar con la gente, o sea haber trabajado con la gente más tiempo porque allí se va aprendiendo también como es trabajo de educación popular. Entonces, no siempre la gente va por donde tú piensas que sería bueno que fuera. A veces la gente, y es bueno porque la gente te, a veces, te corrige o sea, en las reuniones es donde nosotros tenemos que perseguir como están la inquietudes, como eso que estuvimos, como esa que te dice, bueno, este hombre tiene los conejos, tiene los peces, entonces, que decir, te da la posibilidad de que hay un trabajo colectivo sobre estas cosas. Puede ser peces, puede ser los conejos, pero otras cosas parecidas. Entonces, él se puede organizar contra una cosa más familiar. Entonces es una inquietud que él tiene. Eso lo tienes que entender y no decirle ‘voy a decir que tú vas a hacer esto’ ¿no? En ese sentido no, es como un método dialógico, no solo él va a decir sino tú también, pero el también, y así. Y tú vas respetando un poco su—ahora cuando es una inquietud que no va a ayudar pues tú también lo tienes que decir. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

There’s a certain accompaniment in the process so that they can walk in stride with us in their...

Hay un cierto acompañamiento en el proceso para que ellos caminen junto con nosotros en su proyecto. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Participatory learning. (p. 120)

Here we’re all teachers. Here there isn’t anyone who doesn’t know anything, we all know...

Aquí somos maestros todos. Aquí no hay uno que no sepa, todos sabemos. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

In terms of tomato cultivation, this region is pure agrochemicals. But now with the work...

En el tomate toda la región es puro agroquímico, pero ya con el trabajo que con nos empujó Adelanto a hacer ese trabajo y ya nosotros mismos también fuimos descubriendo y dio fruto ese trabajo porque mucha gente también empezó a mirar que tenemos aquí en nuestra misma comunidad tenemos ese tipo de abono para abonar unas plantas. —Mauricio, San Pedro de los Pinos

As my father mentioned, to start, the most important thing for Adelanto is that our work...

Lo que comentaba mi papa, empieza como lo que tiene lo más importante que tiene Adelanto es que es un trabajo colectivo a empezar a promover nuestro propio trabajo a veces nosotros trabajamos por cada quien y con el no, empezamos a trabajar colectivo y aprender muchas cosas. —Mauricio, San Pedro de los Pinos

Well, I've seen, for example, that Adelanto comes to organize, and we're also open to the...

Pues yo he visto que por ejemplo Adelanto viene a organizar, y nosotros pues también estamos abierto a la organización, igual. Pues, sí hay alguna reunión fuera de Pasto, u otros lugares pues nosotros asistimos y participamos de esa forma, pues también brindando algunos pues conocimientos, algunas experiencias que nosotros hemos tenido con gusto también la brindamos, ¿no? Con los otros compañeros. –Gabino, La Vega

Yes, that's it. Together, we were given the training. And the other is that, if somebody...

Sí, eso sí, juntos recibíamos la capacitación, y lo otro que si alguna compañera necesitaba apoyo con sus animales, que si vacunación, algo, algún experiencia, sí nos apoyábamos. Y sí en cualquier talleres no solo nosotros del grupo, sino llegaban otras compañeras, o invitaban en la comunidad que desean asistir en ese taller, pero sí trabajamos así, en el grupo sí, unidas. –Bienvenida, San Pedro de los Pinos

I: But, how are they teaching? As a teacher and as students?...

I: Pero ¿así como enseñando, como maestra y estudiantes?

P: No, nada más así, como reuniones civil donde ellos daban su idea, y nosotros también estas experiencias o sea, algo así como platicar de lo que uno ya sabe, de lo que uno ya conoce, o lo que pretende hacer. Entonces era algo así como una reunión de amistoso. –Joaquín, La Merced

Well, because in the case of participation—Well, I know it's very necessary and very...

Pues porque en este caso de la participación, pues yo veo que sí es muy necesaria, y muy efectiva, cuando lo piensan, cuando alguno de los asesores en el caso de Adelanto da el lugar a que la gente piense, que la gente participe, que la gente vea lo que está pasando, o las necesidades que están viniendo, o los problemas que están sumiendo, esa forma de participar es, y en el compartir de experiencias yo creo eso ayuda mucho y es muy, pues un punto clave para Adelanto, porque junta la gente, por decir, por decir, un representante de cada sociedad, de cada colectivo, dan espacio, y dan así como, tiempos, para que uno puede decir lo que siente, lo que hace, en partir lo que logra, y lo que piensa. Pues como eso. Pues si yo siento que es, sí ayuda mucho la participación. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Recognizing and Naming Systems of Oppression (p. 122)

Critical practitioners and a neoliberal reality. (p. 123)

Considering the rural poverty that farming communities in the region cope with, as a...

Ante la pobreza campesina que se vive en las comunidades campesinas de la zona, como secuela del sistema neoliberal, es ineficaz el esfuerzo individual aislado para mejorar su economía familiar, más allá de una sobrevivencia. –Adelanto Strategic Plan

Strategic Proposal: To promote organized and solidary economic action with groups from...

Propuesta Estratégica: Promover acciones económicas organizadas y solidarias entre grupos en la zona, que busquen alternativas y trabajen coordinadamente. –Adelanto Strategic Plan

So, yeah, consider that all this learning and this knowledge that we've gathered over the...

Fíjate que sí, que todos esos aprendizajes o esos conocimientos que hemos logrado desde años, y que se derrumbaron por algunas causas, o por algunos motivos, pero que actualmente lo sigo teniendo que ese es un elemento importante para nosotros en esos últimos años, en esos últimos tiempos, porque necesitamos sobrevivir y con la crisis que estamos pareciendo ahorita, pues, necesitamos unirnos más, y unir fuerzas para buscar un desarrollo familiar o comunitario como se pueda. Pero ahorita es una necesidad porque nos está sobre-llevando, sobre-viniendo cosas del neoliberalismo, del capitalismo que cada vez más estamos más explotados, más aislados. Entonces, de alguna manera ahorita, ese aprendizaje que obtuvimos en aquellos años, necesitamos otra vez de nuevo darle un espacio para volver a continuar y ver si hoy podemos hacer un trabajo mejor de lo que hicimos antes, que el pasado ya no lo repetamos sino, busquemos una nueva forma para desarrollar un nuevo trabajo en colectivo o en cooperativo a como le queramos llamar. Pero es una necesidad en estos últimos años trabajar en conjunto porque ya no otra salida ahorita como estamos encorralados ahorita con el capitalismo. Entonces necesitamos grupos de grupos de gente hacer un trabajo para irnos desarrollando juntos, y crecer juntos y salir juntos de esa crisis económico que estamos viviendo, desde el intercambio de experiencia, desde el intercambio de productos, intercambio de conocimientos, y eso, pues va a ayudar y a desarrollarse las familias o los grupos con quien trabajamos. – Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

I think that to say that we want to achieve a system that serves as an alternative to...

Yo creo que al decir que queremos lograr un sistema alternativo al capitalismo pues es muy—un sueño. No es un algo que ya se esté logrando, nadie tiene una, nadie en el mundo tiene una alternativa a este sistema. Y sin embargo, hay muchas pequeñas experiencias diferentes. Y una de esas experiencias es que el papel actual de las mujeres es relevante. El sistema se ha—el sistema económico capitalista, se ha basado en el patriarcalismo. Entonces, hay una relación bien estrecha entre un sistema patriarcal donde el que manda es el varón, y se ha relegado toda esta parte de la parte de las mujeres. Entonces, yo sí creo que con la participación de las mujeres, se puede ir logrando experiencias diferentes, experiencias muy diferentes, y porque las mujeres conservamos otro tipo de relaciones que no son tan—estamos más relacionadas con la tierra, estamos más relacionadas con la tierra entonces no solo es el poder económico, sino también el derecho a la tierra que las mujeres están logrando en estas comunidades. –Jimena

Well, what the women say is true, and the alternative system, we can't escape from...

Pues es cierto lo que dicen las mujeres, y el sistema alternativo, no podemos salirnos de la economía, o sea eso que decimos, ir en contra del sistema, no es salirse de la economía, y en realidad, no se puede uno salir del sistema con este trabajo que estamos haciendo. Entonces, un poquito si tú has visto la experiencia de los Zapatistas, ese es un esfuerzo más profundo, más serio, más grande para salirse del sistema, para crear un sistema alternativo por la política, la economía, todo eso, pero aun ellos tienen que estar dentro de

la economía que está actualmente ¿no? Ellos tienen que vender, si van a vender, van a vender a un mercado, que está dentro del sistema capitalista, entonces ahorita no tenemos otro sistema, es el único sistema, los Rusos intentaron a hacer otro sistema pero en realidad no era otro sistema porque se basaba en lo mismo que el sistema actual. Entonces, creo yo que más bien se habla de ciertos valores que el sistema promueve como la base por ejemplo el individualismo, por ejemplo la ganancia por encima de todo, la competencia, para que tú subas, debes estar hacer un lado aplastado a los demás para que tú puedes subir, en fin, entonces, el valor del dinero más de que la persona, el valor de los recursos naturales como medio para vender crecimiento, no como un valor de sí de la naturaleza que hay que respetar, entonces todos esos valores en cierta manera forman el conjunto de la ideología del sistema, y un poquito sería trabajar a nivel de la ideología, por eso nuestro trabajo más que nada es educación para la paz, significa cierto trabajo que vaya abriendo tu mente, a valores diferentes, o alternativas a los valores del sistema capitalista. Y hacer unas experiencias que te ayuden a entender que algún día fuera posible una economía alternativa, más cooperativa, más centrada en la persona, más a nivel de satisfacción de las necesidades sino tanto con afán de lucro o de ganancia, eso sería más o menos. —Octavio, Adelanto staff

No—it's just, yeah, right now I see that the micro—or, like, look, talking about the...

No—es que, sí, además ahorita yo veo que los micro—o sea es que mira hablando en la cuestión de que por ejemplo un señor me decía 'es que necesito un dinero para empezar este negocio, y no tengo.' O sea, es que, es un necesario tener algo para empezar, algo para, y no quiere decir ya que por eso van a ser capitalista o que estas en ese, yo así lo veo. Porque, es que es verles desde la gente porque aquí es la teoría y aquí son las ideales y aquí son las cosas y la práctica es que la gente no tiene dinero. Es que la gente está en este mundo capitalista, entonces yo entiendo eso que tú dices y también es algo mejor lo ideal, lo tópico, lo que es lo de los que no usen químicos, y todo eso. O sea eso es lo que queremos, pero en la práctica la gente tiene esa necesidad, ¿no? Entonces, allí la cuestión es aprovechar, ¿no? No sé si se pueda. —Ramona, Adelanto staff

But they don't tell us that we're only going to do this as a group of Catholics, or as...

Pero no nos dice solo lo van a hacer como Católicos o solo lo van a hacer como Presbiterianas, no. Lo van a hacer aquí, de acuerdo la necesidad, desde lo que están viviendo podemos aglutinarnos con los demás que sea. Entonces siento que es una forma de educarnos, de ayudarnos, para que entre nosotros, sea de la misma religión o no, seamos hermanos, nos veamos como hermanos desde allí, siento el, que hay esa relación del microcrédito, porque es una forma de relacionarnos, de hacer comunidad con los demás, bueno es, como yo lo entiendo. —Salvador, La Vega

I: You don't think that microcredit works as a step in concientización?...

I: ¿Usted no piensa que los microcréditos sirven como un paso para concientización?

P: Pues no. Ahorita no. A la gente que no está clara de este proceso—

I: Como los microcréditos que dan Adelanto, no del gobierno?

P: Sí, como los microcréditos de Adelanto. Pues, no. Siento que no, porque no tienen en ese, no tienen ese espíritu de pensar por sí mismo. Por su familia. No tienen, la gente no tienen. Entonces por eso no ayuda tanto la concientización porque la mayoría de la gente

ahorita está acostumbrada a recibir nada más. Y no pensar por ellos mismos, como decía en el futuro. Sí, entonces, por los microcréditos, para gente consciente que ha luchado, que ha conocido como en el caso de nosotros que hemos luchado tanto, y hemos visto todo los procesos. Mucho de los procesos, pues para nosotros, es un buen paso el microcrédito de Adelanto. Porque si quisiera, como les decía otra vez con Don Leopoldo, sería mejorar mi granjita de pollos, atenderlos más. Si allá no hay problema, pero eso es, yo lo estoy pensando, es ese detalle, pues, la gente no está acostumbrada pensar por ellos, o piensan por ellos pero no piensan por sus hijos, ese es el asunto, y se está mirando en todo campo, en lo religioso, en lo económico, en lo social, en lo político. –Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Community division and violence as a symptom of oppression. (p. 127)

In San Lázaro de las Sierras, they're communities that are more in the jungle...

En San Lázaro de las Sierras son comunidades más metidas en la selva y que ellos de por sí traen una formación más clara, más convencida, y eso les ha ayudado a realizar y a desarrollarse más en conjunto. . . . Facilita mucho el trabajo de Adelanto allí. Porque ya no hay necesidad de que estés organizando, ellos están organizado. No más, les dices, 'bueno, falta esto, falta esto' y ellos te lo hacen. En cambio en La Merced allí pues es otros los interés pues allí, porque allí existe la competencia de negocio, de capital, de dinero. Entonces, es más difícil allí para cambiar la mentalidad de la gente. Afecta mucho porque, como es zona turística, la gente se enfocó en sacarle dinero a todos los que llegan. Y han perdido la cultura, han perdido muchas cosas esa comunidad. Entonces, todo eso es muy diferente. Muy diferente con la gente que ya tiene una consciencia clara y que todavía quiere seguir adelante. Eso es diferente.

I had my little farm with my rabbits and chickens, but it didn't go well. They stole my...

Tuve mi pequeña granja con los conejos y mis pollos, pero me fue de malas, mi conejo me lo robaron, mi coneja pues me desanimó porque lo que estaba logrando me lo quitaron. De plano ya no quise seguir con eso ahorita pues sí voy a seguir pero con las hortalizas también. –Bienvenida, San Pedro de Los Pinos

Yes. In any case, like we said, we came to work, more or less when Adelanto made...

Sí, de todas maneras como decimos de que pues, hemos nosotros, como pues venimos trabajando, más o menos cuando Adelanto nos aconsejaba como esta comunidad, no estaba unida como esta hoy. Estaba todo dividido, siempre cuando también pues nos orientaba que como íbamos a hacer. Y pues ya con los mismos tropezones de lo hemos tenido entre la comunidad había ya mucho maleante pues, digamos aquí en la comunidad. Se apartaron un grupo de maleante que digamos, ya no respetaban ya la autoridad, ya no había pues autoridad para ellos, ellos no andaba. Y lo bueno, pues, después de eso lo pensamos y se unió la comunidad. Ahora la comunidad está unida y todo de lo que pensamos que hacer aquí en la comunidad es la que se hace. Es una ganancia pues porque ya se unió la gente. Y pues, de todas maneras como decimos, ahorita la gente pues que como decimos todos tenemos algunos, por ejemplo las iglesias, algunas iglesias, o sea, pues la religión que le llamamos, la religión católica, pues es de las otras iglesias, presbiterianas, otras, porque pues antes todo aparte estaban pero ya ahora de que se unió

la comunidad quiere decir que ahora sí mencionamos que se va ser alguna cooperación, la gente no dicen que no van a cooperar. Cooperan todo de lo que se diga. Que se va a hacer, sí eso es la ganancia que hay allí en la comunidad. –Diego, San Pedro de los Pinos

In the community of San Pedro de los Pinos, we've worked a lot for religious inclusion...

Porque en la comunidad de San Pedro de los Pinos, hemos trabajado mucho por la inclusión de religiones allí, porque son varias religiones allí. Y eso ha favorecido que la misma gente fortalezca esa solidaridad. No es que nosotros le cambiamos su cultura, no el contrario, es lo bueno que ellos tenían de su propio cultura, tenían ya de por sí, esa buena actitud de decir cuando hay una fiesta, todos se invitan, si una boda van todos, no se excluyen entre ellos. Sea de cualquier religión, y quedan libres. O sea si tu religión no te permite tomar, pues no te obliguen a tomar. Ponen cerveza para el que quiera, ponen refresco para el que no quiere tomar cerveza y son muy amistosos allí. Cuando hay un enfermo todos se apoyan, sea de cualquier familia que sea. Entonces eso nosotros lo reforzamos en cierta manera, y reflexionamos sobre eso, es un trabajo también educativo. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

So, here [in this region], what also has really been a concern is the divisions on the basis...

Entonces, también aquí lo que ha afectado más es las divisiones religiosas ¿no? Porque, las sectas religiosas pues ellas, creen que todo viene de arriba y que nosotros nada que hay que hacer ¿no? Entonces, este. Y eso nosotros pues no estamos separando gente sino nosotros abarcamos todo. Y creemos que hay gente de ese tipo que son de otras religiones pero que también están entendiendo lo que estamos haciendo ¿no? Pero así es, es normal, que tú y yo podemos ser vecinos pero yo pienso diferente y tú piensas diferente. Y yo estoy con este color y tú estás con este color. Normal. Así se vive en las comunidades, incluso entre familias igual, entre parejas igual. Hay gente que es de un color, y la esposa es de otro color y el esposo de otro color. Dentro de la misma casa los hijos igual, todo. Todos divididos porque el sistema es lo que le gusta. Divide y vencerás. Eso es su lema ¿no? Y eso lo está logrando. Porque ese es lo que más están haciendo ahorita. Con la crisis de la baja de productos, con la crisis de la sequía, con la crisis de recursos, pues, la gente ahorita está enloquecida ¿no? Y no sabe por dónde, y lo que caiga para ellos, todo es bueno, mayormente sí es un regalo, no importa que sea como el caducado ¿no? Ya para echarse a perder, pero es un regalo y la gente bienvenido. Le gusta. Nosotros es un trabajo que estamos haciendo para ayudar a la gente, que no estamos en contra de que lo reciban, pero como hay que saberlo manejar ese tipo de cosas. Y que no vendan su dignidad por ese regalo que a lo mejor ya no sirve, ya es echado a perder. Pero sí es normal eso de que dentro de la gente en una comunidad o en una casa, estamos divididos. Y todos pensamos diferentes. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Migration as a symptom of oppression. (p. 131)

Now, one more thing, it's important to consider, what if there had been way to possibly...

Ahora, otra cosa, la importancia de mirar que la había salida posible hacia un trabajo que no tenían que irse todos a Estados Unidos, o a Cancún, o a México a trabajar para que sobrevivir sino que había posibilidades de algo allí en su propio hogar, en su propia casa que les permitiera una vida más digna. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

One more detail; right now, the issue of the migrants, and the migration that has...

Otra detalle que ahorita con la cuestión de los migrantes, y la migración que ha aumentado mucho en estos últimos años, eso también afecta mucho porque eso ya todo la juventud ya no está pensando por el cambio, no está pensando por mejorar las tierras, por cultivar las tierras, ahorita la juventud está pensando en de ganar dinero nada más, y están su pensamiento en Estados Unidos, en Cancún, en México, donde hay dinero. Y para ellos la tierra ya no es la que responde. Solo la clase de mi generación estamos pensamos pensando de sembrar, de cultivar, y tener los cultivos, pero ya las otros generaciones actuales ya no están pensando igual. Eso descompone mucho a la sociedad, porque todos esos que migran pues traen culturas diferentes, y pierden la cultura de las familias y eso ya no ayuda a desarrollar el trabajo, y ya no sienten que el trabajo del campo es lo real para nosotros, ya no. Ellos ya no creen eso. Entonces, por eso ahorita existe muchos modos de pensar y ya hay un sentido diferente que le dan ellos a la vida y somos pocos los que estamos todavía pensando por cultivar. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

In general, that's the situation of the campesinos here, that many go to the United States...

Ese es la situación general de los campesinos aquí. Que muchos van a Estados Unidos, Chiapas no tenía tanta salida pero ahorita, bueno entonces, la situación está como rebasando todo los trabajos así aislados son rebasados por la situación que se vive. Entonces, quizás la iglesia, al principio decía para que no migren, pero pues esa es absurdo decirles que no vayan. Pues si ellos tienen, tienen la necesidad, no encuentran aquí pues tienen que buscar. Entonces, Adelanto no está en contra de los que migran, ni está en contra de los que reciben proyectos del gobierno, ¿por qué? Porque el hambre los obliga a todo eso. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

So, what we want to say, with the few that want to work together, we can achieve...

Entonces, lo que queremos decir, si con estos pocos que quieren hacer un trabajo juntos, se puede lograr algo, pues sería como mostrar que hay otra alternativa. Una pequeña alternativa, para mejorar un poco su situación para tener que comer, para no tener que ir a otro país. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

Implications of clientelism for participation and the development of critical consciousness. (p. 132)

And now I will explain what we are doing here, that here you won't see someone who's...

Y ahora le explicaré yo que es lo que estamos haciendo, que aquí no va ver quién va a manejar solo sino lo vamos a manejar juntos, entonces, dice ‘yo me interesa, yo con mi grupo voy a entrar en el colectivo.’ Entonces, vas encontrando gente que todavía tiene espíritu de luchar, de cambiar, de buscar otro nuevo modo de trabajar. Existe. Pero sí es cierto que no todos los grupos van a estar como los otros como creemos. Tenemos que caer en varios terrenos diferentes donde, en un terreno va a producir bien, en otro terreno no va a producir nada, y hay terrenos que más o menos va a ir produciendo poquito pero bueno. Nosotros seguimos con el ánimo, y seguimos con la fe, de que vamos a lograr algo que pues como te decía yo, al principio que el sistema que estamos viviendo es muy fuerte, y eso te corta todo tus programas, te mocha todas tus programas, no te dé el

camino para seguir, porque pues ellos llegan con todo, y sin pedirle nada cambio, sin pedirles nada que hagan, si nada más que coman y que vivan, y ya. Pero este es una lástima pues porque la gente lo está educando hacer dependientes de ellos. ¿No? Y que se acostumbren a comer nada más, pero no les enseñan a pensar que hay que hacer para sobrevivir mejor y tener algo mejor sano. Entonces, para mí esto sí es algo. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

It's as if [the government has] found the perfect model to buy the consciousness of the people...
Como que encontraron el modelo perfecto para comprar la conciencia de las personas, y las personas mientras les den dinero, creo que va a estar difícil que se movilicen. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

The government seeks to dominate minds using money. . . . Once the people start following...
Que ha logrado lo que querido, a través—dominar. Dominar las mentes. A través del dinero. . . . pues porque mucha gente, si ya abrió el camino, ya no se regresa. Ya no se regresa. –Ramona, Adelanto staff

That's what we've done most in the communities, we're not against them receiving...
Eso es lo que más hemos aplicado en las comunidades, que no estamos en contra de que reciba, lo pueden recibir, pero como mejorar con eso que reciben, y con lo que trabajan hacer más grande el proyecto de vida en la comunidad como en la familia y no estar conformes de que porque nos dan, sino como hacer un esfuerzo de que nosotros también podemos. Porque es una tristeza que nada más estemos mantenidos. Eso para mí eso es doloroso, y me da vergüenza que yo estoy esperando nada más que me den de comer, eso lo que les he explicado a la gente y esos intercambios de experiencia mucha gente le ha gustado y dicen 'no, pues, tiene razón es mejor trabajar y no que estemos esperando, y si algo llega pues bienvenido pero eso no es lo que estoy esperando, sino yo tengo mi propio proyecto de vida de trabajo' eso es lo que hemos logrado nosotros en los intercambios de experiencia porque la gente se le va la onda y no entiende ya en qué rumbo va. Y piensa que con los apoyos, con las ayudas que les dan, ya se va mejorar la vida, y no. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Political parties saw people as politically profitable. I mean, they only worked for people...
Los partidos políticos tomaban a la gente como rentabilidad política, o sea, solo trabajaban para la gente que tiene rentabilidad sea política o sea religiosa, desde la visión que nosotros traíamos, no. Hay que estar con los que más sufren pero no para sacar rentabilidad de ninguna especie. Simplemente porque son los consentidos ellos, porque son los consentidos por un lado sí para los otros eran los consentidos de dios del universo, y por otro lado, también por cultura, pues son las bases de la sociedad, son las raíces mismas. Entonces de algún modo para nosotros era importantísimo que esta gente no sea usada, u utilizada para beneficio personal, sino realmente los pocos pasos o nada que diera que le dirá como conciencia, con conciencia de clase, con conciencia de persona y de empoderamiento. Entonces, yo creo que parte de eso es esta historia de decir no podemos trabajar con el otro si no respetamos su integridad de persona. Es absurdo porque sería como usarlo para fines personales pero no devolviéndole su dignidad. – Gloria, Adelanto staff

Unfortunately, right now there is a strong co-optation of the big leaders, the big shots in...

Todo lo necesitamos hacer ese tipo de trabajo, desgraciadamente que ahorita existe una cooptación muy fuerte de grandes líderes, de grandes personajes que hay en las comunidades que hacen ese tipo de—tienen ese tipo de conocimiento, y que ahorita el sistema que estamos viviendo, lo que quiere es dividirnos y seguir ellos manejando todo el poder con la gente. Eso lo que no nos está ayudando, entonces, un impacto muy fuerte que nos está pegando ahorita es que hay una competencia entre los que estamos buscando un cambio y con el que está manejando la gente con el poder del dinero, con el poder de las políticas, eso no ayuda mucho. Quedan muy poca gente consciente que todavía quieren emprender un nuevo caminar en el mismo sentido de antes. Pero la gran mayoría están cooptados por el gobierno, ya son personas que están vendidas y que eso ya no les interesa su comunidad, no le interesa su gente, ellos ya están felices y viven bien. Entonces eso afecta mucho al trabajo que nosotros hacemos como Adelanto. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

As we've discussed with Leopoldo, it's that the social context is what determines a lot of...

Lo que hemos comentado con Leopoldo es que el contexto social es lo que determina muchas cosas, ¿no? entonces el contexto social es de crisis económica ¿no? Entonces gente que tiene dignidad hace veinte o treinta años, y muy fuerte, una postura muy fuerte de confianza en sí mismo, en su trabajo, en su capacidad propia. Cuando viene cada vez, una situación más dura, pues se convierte en limosnero, pero eso es en todas partes y en todos los países, ¿no? Entonces lo que yo considero es que no podemos nosotros decir a la gente 'no recibas' algo porque el hambre no la vamos a solucionar nosotros. Entonces yo considero que la situación que se está viviendo es la raíz de lo que está, de también como es la gente. Entonces lo que nosotros, si somos críticos, podemos decir que si fuera otro el gobierno, en vez de dar un pan, buscaría la manera de resolver los problemas que causan esa situación ¿no? —Octavio, Adelanto staff

I think that the intention of the government is to take advantage, not so much of...

Yo creo que las intenciones del gobierno aprovechándose, no tanto de la inocencia, pero tampoco nos vamos a ser tarugos, como decimos, ya la gente de por sí sabe que uno dan los proyectos y todo eso estamos bajo condición, bajo condición del gobierno de lo que él diga es lo que hacemos en las comunidades, ya bien lo sabe. Pero como también tienen necesidad de dinero, entonces, se recibe proyecto, se recibe el proyecto para las mismas necesidades o para construirnos, no sé, ya, allí cada familia sabe porque lo reciben. — Salvador, La Vega

And another thing is that we feel really strongly about the government [assistance] is that...

Y la otra parte también que sentimos nosotros de parte del gobierno muy fuerte es que, es condicionado. Muy condicionado. Porque lo que sabemos no sé qué tanto, se pueda entender o se pueda a creer, pero lo que creemos nosotros que al darnos dinero, pues nos estamos endeudando. Y entonces aunque no nos cobre, prácticamente aunque digamos es un proyecto del fondo perdido, vamos a suponer. No nos cobra, pero sin embargo, parecemos que recibimos tanto de dinero, entonces la pena que nos da en eso, nosotros aquí como familia colectivo es que después aparezcamos en un banco, en una

dependencia con esa deuda, y entonces cual es su entrada ahorita, los nuevos latifundistas, los nuevos latifundios en el estado, en los estados de México y en el país completo, es nuevamente entrar con esa forma de dar dinero, de endeudar a la gente, y tengan facilidad de entrar, ya sea que en el ejido haya una mina, haya un río, haya algo de riquezas que pueda tomar. Entonces es eso nuestra desconfianza, más claro así. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

The support that they give, presumably it's political. It's about changing the mind to believe...

El apoyo que da, supuestamente es política. Es de como cambiando la mente de que todo es fácil, de que todo está bien, de que todo—o sea, no ver, no despertar. Cerrarnos. —Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Because we have to look at the past, history, the slavery of the past. We have to look at...

Porque tenemos que ver el pasado, la historia, el pasado, la esclavitud, de antes, tenemos que ver eso. Como fue, como salieron, como fueron luchando los abuelos, los abuelitas para llegar más o menos hacer libres no en manos de patrón, eso pues, tenemos que ver eso, pues. Y tenemos que ver el presente, a nosotros al presente que estamos viviendo como nos quieren dominar otra vez, como nos están dominando y como nos quieren otra vez de esclavizar. Tenemos que estar muy atentos en ese paso para que haya pues un futuro. Un futuro más o menos con alternativas, libres, que puedan los niños, las niñas, los jóvenes, hacer su propia vida con su trabajo, con su tierra con sus cosas, pues, que hay, con lo que tenemos. Entonces es la diferencias que hay, porque la gente ahora lo que vemos en la realidad que vemos, no están mirando lo pasado, no están lo futuro, están lo presente. Nada más, allí se está quedando en lo presente. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

On the other hand, with a governmental institution, they're programs that are managed...

De lo contrario, con un institución gubernamental, son programas que manejan donde no le interesa el desarrollo de la gente, sino le interesa nada más que la gente esté controlada. —Joaquín, La Merced

So, the difference is that [Adelanto] makes a—but it's really different than what the...

Entonces, la diferencia es ellos hace—pero es muy distinto que el gobierno, lo que trate es de controlar con sus programas. Controlar todo el mundo en sus programas para que dependamos solo de él. El gobierno no le gusta que haiga un organización política social. No le gusta que hay un movimiento, todo eso no le gusta el gobierno. Sin embargo nosotros decimos, es necesario. —Sebastián, La Vega

I say, the government is to distract us, to have us be pacified and calm, so that we don't...

Ya digo, el gobierno es para entretenernos, es para tenernos calmaditos, es para, para no decir nada. —Sebastián, La Vega

It's all wrapped together, for that reason the government always gives out projects to...

Todo está metido, por eso que el gobierno siempre da proyectos para controlar. No para desarrollar las comunidades porque eso ya es mentira. Ya no. Porque también ya se hizo mañoso el campesino, todo ya, ya no. Que el gobierno no va a tener, no, te da más

paternalismo. Porque estamos esperando que venga de papá. Eso no queremos.—
Sebastián, La Vega

So we've been on this path these past ten years with all this effort to see that we can...

Y estamos caminando estos diez años con todos estos esfuerzos de ver para poder sacar adelante esta inquietud que nosotros hemos soñado. Desgraciadamente que para nosotros en este momento es un reto muy fuerte porque el gobierno o sistema del gobierno que estamos viviendo en estos momentos pues ha sido muy fuerte para nosotros porque ellos nada más implementan los programas para controlar a la gente, regalarles para tenerlos bajo su control o bajo un condición política, y eso pues con crisis económica que está viviendo el pueblo o las comunidades indígenas, pues es muy bienvenido esos regalos del gobierno. Entonces, eso nos ha perjudicado mucho de no poder encajar o emprender un desarrollo más fuerte o más mejor en las comunidades para salir adelante con esa crisis. Nos afecta mucho los programas que están dependiendo del gobierno. Porque son un montón de programas, no es uno solo. Hay varios programas que están implementando en las comunidades indígenas o campesinas para tenerlo bajo su control en el sentido político electorero. Entonces, de esa manera sentimos que es un esfuerzo muy lento que vamos dando y con muy poca gente que va teniendo esa conciencia de todavía hacer un cambio sobre el sistema que estamos viviendo en este momento. —Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

What does the government want? They want us to know nothing. For that reason they...

El gobierno, ¿Qué quiere? Que no sepamos nada. Por eso da apoyo de cualquier forma. Para que estemos allí atenedos con el gobierno. Y Adelanto, nos da apoyo, pero no gratis. Tenemos que trabajar. Y como estamos acostumbrados a trabajar, no tenemos por qué quedar mal. —Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

On the other hand, with Adelanto it's more difficult [than with the government assistance] ...

En cambio en Adelanto, que es más difícil, con más compromiso, pero porque somos personas que también sabemos trabajar, somos personas que también sabemos resolver nuestra necesidad, porque le decía yo como madre, me he comparada con otras madres, porque no tienen lo que yo puedo tener, y como yo le decía a mi esposo, a veces me odian, hablen de mí, que soy eso, soy el otro. Pero le digo, es algo que tengo en mi mente es algo que tengo dentro de mí y nadie me lo puede quitar, nadie me lo puede sacar, aunque me digan lo que me digan, yo sé lo que hago, y no recibo apoyo de gobierno, me siento feliz, me siento libre. —Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

And in the manipulation of communities through these perks, well the community get...

Y en el manejo de las comunidades de las regalías que hace el gobierno, pues la comunidad se va acostumbrando. Las gentes vamos acostumbrando de que ya viene, ya viene el regalo, y ya dos, tres meses ya viene el regalo. Ya no tenemos que ocupar, no tenemos que pensar, no tenemos que analizar, no tenemos nosotros la obligación de sentarnos como familia, pensar que vamos a hacer, que vamos a sembrar, que vamos a cultivar para tener comida. Eso se no estamos olvidando, la gente se le estaba olvidando. Porque tiene seguro sus regalos, su dinero. —Patricio, San Lázaro de las Sierras

The difference is in way they manage politically, for example, when a person, it's really...

La diferencia es en la política que se maneja, por ejemplo cuando una persona, es realmente su deseo de que quieres, de que te quiere apoyar, o quiere ver tu desarrollo, pues te dice la verdad. De lo contrario, con un institución gubernamental, son programas que manejan donde no le interesa el desarrollo de la gente, sino le interesa nada más que la gente esté controlada. Y eso es la gran diferencia, por eso, a veces uno opta pues por buscar su propio desarrollo en vez de esperar que te den porque de alguna manera no es algo seguro, sí, como un programa de gobierno ya sea te da o no te da si logras o no lo logras, porque somos, la mayoría, estamos esperando eso. –Joaquín, La Merced

As I was saying, we've been with them for five years, and the meetings that we've had...

Como decía, tiene cinco años que estamos con ellos, y siempre las juntas que habido, es para ir mejorándonos, como vamos a trabajar, como vamos a progresar. Pienso que de Adelanto está bien. Sí. Porque con el gobierno nunca tenemos una plática así como vamos vivir, como vamos a hacerlo crecer. No. En cambio con Adelanto sí. –Marcela, La Vega

So Adelanto, well, as the situation is right now where the people have so much need for...

Que Adelanto, pues como está ahorita la situación en que la gente tiene necesidad de dinero, entonces es un poquito como que más se resiste esta con Adelanto que con el gobierno. Y el gobierno manda proyectos a fondo perdido y además da otros programas, por ejemplo, la alimentación. Pues como que hace dependiente a las gentes de él. Y aquí en Adelanto es lo contrario, hace que sea independiente. Lucha para eso. Es más difícil pero pues también consideramos que es mejor, ser independiente del gobierno y autosuficiente para todo. –Gabino, La Vega

What we've seen is there are so many poor people, and so much need, that it is...

Y al otro lado lo que hemos visto es que es tanta la gente pobre y tanta la necesidad que es imposible poder ir a todos. Hemos privilegiado nosotros a las gentes que tienen un poco más de inquietud, de salir adelante, y que tienen un mínimo de conciencia de valorar esfuerzo, su propio trabajo, y no querer estar dependiente solamente. Entonces, no nos interesa trabajar con la gente que solo está interesado en que va me a dar el gobierno, que me va a dar así, o que me van a dar aquí, que me va a dar el partido. Entonces, por eso no lo promovemos así este programa sino que esperamos que la gente venga. El que tiene interés viene y pregunta, le informamos, decimos, tampoco somos tan tontos para decir lo que les decimos la gente lo entiende y lo cree. Puede ser que no. Posiblemente la gente solo le interesa decir aquí dan dinero, aquí prestan dinero. A tal interés como viste tu ayer; 'Aquí nos prestan al 10%, si usted nos van a prestar a 4.5%, pues qué bueno vamos a trabajar con ustedes.' Y lo demos que decimos, posiblemente están oyendo pero a lo mejor no entra a dentro de su cabeza. Entonces por eso nosotros pues no tenemos una plena fe en el método así decir con este método la gente va a salir adelante. Pero, sí estamos convencidos que estamos atendiendo una necesidad real de la gente. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

Conceptualizations of Empowerment (p. 142)

Descriptions of critical consciousness. (p. 143)

I've had conciencia. I discovered corporal conciencia as my area of contribution, of...

Yo he tenido la conciencia, descubrí la conciencia corporal como mi área de aporte, de servicio, mi área profesional es desde la terapia. Entonces, yo parto de la conciencia corporal. Tener conciencia corporal significa que me está pasando en este cuerpo. Después, la conciencia, la conciencia social es, pues, que pienso sobre lo que yo deseo para mi vida en el grupo, en la comunidad. Entonces, la conciencia social es una conciencia de grupo, de saber que mi grupo, al que pertenezco con el que me identifico, tiene ciertos valores. Entonces, pues, para mí significa un sentido claro de pertenencia a un grupo, a unos valores, a unas, pues, metas, la conciencia social. –Jimena, Adelanto staff

Well, it's just that there's an inherent relationship that I've seen in my practice. The...

Bueno, es que, una, hay una relación simultánea, yo, en la práctica que he visto, la mujer que logra auto-reconocerse, se auto-valora. Entonces por ejemplo . . . Va empoderándose sobre su cuerpo, entonces por ejemplo el decir, el pensar, 'no soy propiedad de mi marido,' o sea, 'este es mi cuerpo.' Ellas mismas van determinando que ese cuerpo es de ellas y que no por ser estar en un matrimonio le pertenece al otro, al varón. Cuando él quiere y cuando él decida. Entonces hay esa relación, una mujer que se reconoce, se valora. Y va como respetando sus ritmos, va respetando su palabra, y va respetando la palabra que dicen las demás en el grupo ¿no? Porque pues ese es lo que yo he visto de acuerdo a los grupos que estamos acompañando. –Jimena, Adelanto staff

We take it the word conciencia to mean if one is unable to work, we are going to work so...

Nosotros lo tomamos lo que es la palabra conciencia de que uno que no pueda trabajar nosotros vamos a trabajar para poder ayudar a la otra persona. Y uno debe estar sabedor que lo que puede pasar, lo prevenimos antes para que cuando suceda no es nuevo sino ya lo tenemos planeado que es lo que puede hacer, puede pasar, como puede ver perdida, puede ver otras cosas, entonces uno ya lo tiene planeado. –Ignacio, La Merced

For us, conciencia means accepting what someone says, more or less. We understand...

Para nosotros la conciencia quiere decir aceptar de lo que uno dice, a lo mejor, como se entender pero aquí a veces pensamos de que, entre pobres, no nos creemos. Si un pobre le dice a otro pobre, y este pobre cree, entonces, su conciencia va cambiando, su idea, su pensamiento. Eso para nosotros es la conciencia. Otro, la conciencia para nosotros, lo vemos como la, como dijera, el cariño que le tenga a una persona, como el amor que decimos de una persona. Yo tengo conciencia, buena, de ayudar a otra persona. Eso es el concepto para nosotros. –Sebastián, La Vega

Waking up is when you live unaware or disconnected from all the problems with your...

Despertarse es cuando tú vives inconsciente, o ajeno a todos los problemas que hay en tu contexto social, por ejemplo, el campesino desde que estaba pequeño aprendió a que el gobierno es bueno, a que mi papá siempre tiene la razón, a que el párroco en la iglesia,

pues es el representante de dios, a que el partido político dominante es el que hay que siempre votar, elegir, a que la economía pues es algo y que no se puede modificar, y que así como naciste, pues hay que aguantarse. Entonces eso es lo que llamaría estar dormido. Ahora empiezas a despertar cuando empiezas a cuestionar todo esa realidad que vives. Eso es despertar, empezar a abrir los ojos a una realidad que tiene otras causas de los que tú te han dicho o has vivido. Por ejemplo, tú como mujer, como esposa, tú no vives igual que una esposa indígena, o campesina, ¿por qué? Porque tú tienes otros conocimientos, otras actitudes, has vivido allá, has despertado allá a tus derechos como mujer. Aquí muchos no lo han hecho, ¿no? Es un ejemplo. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

P: Well, look, what we're doing is that in practice there are many ways of composting, of...

P: Ah, mira, lo que estamos haciendo es que en las practicas hay muchas maneras de cómo hacer las compostas, cómo hacer los biofermentos, cómo hacer los plaguicidas, y tenemos ya compañeros ya dentro de los grupos donde trabaje Adelanto que ya tienen todo este experiencia, tienen sus conocimientos, y ellos están ayudando a transmitir a los otros para que todos vayamos aprendiendo juntos y podamos hacer juntos ya este cuidado ¿no? Que es un cuidado muy importante y que siempre nosotros usamos tres cosas para decirles, y llamarle la atención a la gente, cuando entramos en un sistema de no químico, a lo agroecológico, a lo orgánico, pues, estamos cuidando principalmente nuestra salud nosotros porque ya no estamos envenenando unos con los químicos. Eso es el primer. El segundo es que estamos cuidando la madre tierra u el medio ambiente de no contaminar, de no hacer daño a la tierra, y trabajar sano, ¿no? El tercero es el ahorro económico, y que no les estamos dando el dinero a las transnacionales, a las grandes empresas agroquímicas, sino lo estamos fabricando nosotros. Lo estamos haciendo nosotros nuestro propio abono, nuestro propio trabajo, o si no lo hacemos, lo compramos con lo que está fabricando que es un compañero que lo fabrique entonces le damos los ingresos a él. Entonces yo creo que es una manera que estamos—

I: Corrígeme si estoy equivocada, pero, de lo que estoy entendiendo, es la esencia de tu manera es para que se de cuenta del sistema, por lo menos.

P: Exacto. Es eso. Eso es el punto principal es eso, que la gente se dé cuenta a quien le estamos sirviendo ¿no? A quien le estamos haciendo rico. A quien le beneficia con todo lo que nosotros consumimos. Claro que ahorita no, no nos escapamos de nada. Todo está contaminado, todo está con químico. Pero de alguna manera, lo que hemos enfocado más con la gente es decirle, 'bueno, sí, podemos decir que todo viene envenenado pero si nosotros hacemos las camas de hortaliza, tenemos nuestros pequeños tablonos, pues, tenemos el orgullo de decir bueno, pues, yo estoy comiendo algo sano, como dice un señor de La Vega, que nosotros estamos comiendo todo orgánico, de lo que nosotros producimos. Ese es ya una base muy importante, y eso es lo que tratamos de que se difunda y que salga a flotar con todos para que la gente también se dé cuenta, ¿no? Y pues en este momento hay mucha gente todavía que esta con ese espíritu de regresar en este cambio que estamos deseando. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

Economic empowerment and gender equality. (p. 146)

What's been useful to me—Well, I feel like it's helped me because it's like I motivate my...

Lo que me ha servido, pues, bueno yo me siento como que me ha servido porque como que yo le impulsa a mi esposo. Y como que él me valora más, porque yo lo veía yo cuando él por mi toda de su parte, como que también yo sentía más esclava, porque todo dependía de él pero ahora con todo lo que estoy haciendo es de mi parte, entonces, como que lo veo que él también como que ya retoma de que una mujer vale, de que una mujer puede hacer lo que aun piensa, o que sí puede—no solo el hombre. Yo veo que en eso sí me ha ayudado porque él ha sido muy diferente conmigo cuando estábamos con su mamá, era muy diferente. –Desi, San Lázaro de las Sierras

Men can't hit us anymore when we complain. There are so many more, because men...

Ya no nos pueden pegar los hombres cuando nos quejamos. Hay muchos, muchas más porque ya no nos pueden decir los hombres no te vayas por ejemplo si nosotros salimos a trabajar un rato que es de lugar pues no nos puede decir no vayas porque nosotros también nos podemos a criticar porque es por ejemplo la pareja, por ejemplo si va a ganar nuestros esposos para el bien de la familia y que tal también nosotros podemos trabajar y ganar también ese, dar para la familia y quizás es lo que nos han dicho también nosotros si podemos trabajar lo poquito podemos porque pase beneficio pues de lograr de la pareja. –Betania, San Pedro de los Pinos

Well, for me, economic empowerment is where women handle their own money a little...

Bueno, para mí el empoderamiento económico es el que las mujeres manejen un poquito su propio dinero, que no tengan de depender que el marido les dé para comprar sus cosas. Porque de alguna manera, vamos a poner otro ejemplo, a mí me gustan los ejemplos. Llegó la cosecha del café, el marido se va, vende todo el café, y el dinero no le da la señora nada. Todo le trae y le compra. Pero le compra todo lo que es para comer. Y puede ser que a ella le regale unos aretitos, y ya. Entonces, si la mujer desea algo, no tiene dinero. Y además el hombre a veces en esa área por la cosecha, puede pasarse una noche de parranda, y hasta estar con prostitutas, y así llegar e infectarla. Que es así. Y entonces la mujer pues no puede hacer nada ni puede ir a ver a sus padres, ni puede salir a pasear porque no tiene dinero. Ni puede dar un fregada, un chingadas, órale, ya y me voy a mi familia ¿no? ¡Nada! Tiene que conformar con lo que el esposo, cada día el esposo trae su dinero aquí. No lo va a dar. Va a dar lo que se necesita únicamente para comer y vivir, y no da dinero. Da las cosas. ¿Sí? Entonces, claro que eso es. Si ella trabajó igual en la cosecha, si ella también cortó el café, si ella también participó en la secada y en la despulpada, creo que tiene derecho a que se le dé no solamente para que coma sino para que se le dé un extra, para que compre o pasee o haga lo que quiera. Desde allí es decir cuando ellas están contentas, bueno, eso ¿qué quiere decir? Pues, quiere decir que la cosecha aparte de su trabajo personal ya no tiene que ir y trabajar con el marido que el marido no le de nada. Sino que ya ella, de sus productos, de sus gallinas, de sus cerditos, de todo tiene su propio dinero, y ella decide si quiere comprar algo para la casa, o quiere gastarse lo en ella. Eso es para ellas el empoderamiento. –Gloria, Adelanto staff

What we ask for is a promise that the project is for the women, and that the women are in...

Y les pedimos también que es un compromiso de que el proyecto debe ser para las mujeres y que las mujeres deben de estar al frente. No importa que sean mixto o que puede ser la mujer y el hombre, pero que por los menos no sea más el hombre, que sea

menos lo que la mujer. Y que pueden tomar parte juntos en el proyecto pero que le den un lugar a la mujer en el proyecto. Que no la mujer sea como la que representa pero el hombre lo gasta el dinero. No sino la mujer tiene que saber cómo se manejan el proyecto y el dinero y que ella también toma parte en ese negocio. Hemos cooperativo del pollos, de tienda, de borregos, de panadería, de puercos, de pollos, donde están trabajando las mujeres tienen su tienda las mujeres. Tenemos una cooperativa de mujeres que quedo funcionando ya no están trabajando con nosotros, tenemos granjas de puerco que están trabajando y que ya no están con nosotros, pero que ya quedaron caminando ellos. Entonces de esa manera, han participado y han tomado su lugar, los grupos en el trabajo. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff

So of course, in this system the woman carries out a secondary role. The man is the one...

Entonces claro que en este sistema pues la mujer desempeña un papel muy secundario, el hombre es el que va a ganar, y la mujer pues sirve para mantener ese nivel de explotación del hombre, porque si no estuviera la mujer dándole la comida, trabajando sin sueldo para que el hombre coma, pues el hombre tendría que ganar más para poder subsistir, entonces dentro de ese sistema la mujer pues es explotada doblemente, triplemente. Entonces, el decir que la mujer empieza a tener manejar su dinero, claro que en su casa ya va a sentirse con más capacidad para decir ‘bueno, porque me vas a mandar así, porque me vas a gritar, porque me vas a regañar. Yo soy capaz de ganar mi dinero.’ Entonces se da un, de hecho, yo trabajé aquí en la zona indígena aquí de Comitán, entonces, adelantito, esta una comunidad que es la que pasas tu para ir a San Cristóbal donde venden muchas artesanías, y las artesanías hacen las mujeres, el dinero lo manejan las mujeres, y allí las mujeres no son, son las que prácticamente las que mandan, ¿Por qué? Porque ellas manejan el dinero. Y son las mismas Tzeltales que están en las comunidades vecinas, pero acá en las comunidades vecinas, ellas están en una situación mucho más de dependencia porque allí ellas no ganan el dinero, y las que ganan el dinero son las que tienen la posibilidad de mandar o de decidir, eso es muy importante, sí. Entonces ayuda mucho eso. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

They talked about participation, even women’s participation. For example, they’ve made...

Hablaban de la participación pues ya hasta la mujer, por ejemplo, los intentos que se ha hecho es que las mujeres asistan a las reuniones y participen que hablen, que digan. Sin embargo, eso ha quedado un poco más lejos, siempre hemos asistido más hombres en las reuniones. –Sebastián, La Vega

Linking Participation and Empowerment: Self-Mobilization and Critical Consciousness (p. 149)

Continue fighting, you know? Yeah. No, I want a lot. And that they don’t give up on me...

Seguir luchando. Sí, no, yo quiero mucho. Pues no dan me por vencida sino seguir luchando hacia allá, no me dar atrás, y sí, quiero salir muy grande en mi hortaliza, y eso lo pienso en eso, también en mis pollos sí pero ahorita yo solo quiero los conejos, pollos ya no, conejos sí. Para la que no me van a robar. Pero sí, quiero sí seguir trabajando en eso, y sí en lo que caiga. Todo es que sí, hemos capacitados en esos trabajos por si me dan por vencida por nada. Sí. –Bienvenida, San Pedro de los Pinos

Adelanto has also helped us a lot because, thanks to the talks we've had, as [my parents] ...

También Adelanto nos ha ayudado mucho porque gracias a las pláticas como ellos habían dicho, pues, no solo venían a darnos pláticas de sobre los pollos, o como administrar la tienda, también ellos venían a motivarnos como habían dicho anteriormente. Y pues, las palabras que ellos nos decían, la verdad, sí nos daban fuerza para seguir adelante, y sí gracias a dios lo hemos logrado. Ahorita que ya tenemos nuestra casa, ahorita como ellos decían, queremos seguir avanzando, superándonos uno de las metas que nosotros tenemos, como hijos, y que estamos estudiando, es terminar la carrera, ese es nuestra meta, y también como había dicho mi mamá, ya no volver a caer pues en deuda sino tener alternativas o de donde conseguir ingresos para que siempre nosotros podamos solventar la necesidad de es que haya acá en como familia, eso es un poquito de lo que quería compartir. –Natalia, La Vega

And Adelanto, on the other hand, or [another similar organization that works in the ...

Y en cambio en Adelanto, o en [another que como usted lo dice, hiciste una pregunta de comparación, yo pienso que en Adelanto o [the other similar organization] cualquier parte de los dos, allí son, dan proyectos pero que sean productivos. Que no se termine, que no aquí lo agarremos los vendado, o que ese proyecto crezca, y que acabe, supongamos que nos apoyan pues para hacer las hortalizas, es para que lo reproduzcamos, y lo bien, lo vendamos para algo, o bien para nuestra familia lo que va a comer—pero como digo yo, yo ha sido miro que me beneficia más lo que dé [the other similar organization] o Adelanto y no lo que dé el gobierno porque lo que dé el gobierno aquí te viene ti importa o a veces no le tomas importancia al año ya no tienes nada, pero de esos proyectos que dan, que claro es como lo de Adelanto eso es de, es un crédito que dan, para formar tu proyectito, será el transcurrido de tiempo, te queda recuerdo, te queda algo pues del trabajo de lo que trabajas. –Fermina, San Pedro de los Pinos

Very much so, because we were very happy to know that we ourselves offer our own ...

Bastante, porque nosotros venimos muy contentos de saber que nosotros mismos ponemos nuestras ideas, nuestras iniciativas, en busca de lo que nosotros queremos. Y nosotros mismos proponemos decidimos, y al saber que logramos eso, nos da mucho éxito, porque no dependemos de alguien, que nos di a lo que vamos a hacer sino más bien, sale de nuestras propias necesidades, y de nuestras propias ideas de nosotros mismas, de nuestras propias experiencias, y entonces eso cada vez que tú vas logrando eso, te haces especialista en esa rama, y te haces competitivo también, porque no lo, te peinaste de un lado, ni te lo está dando nadie, sino más bien de ti mismo, y al ver que eso te va saliendo bien, te sientes, pues, mucho mejor, porque entonces sí, ya te crees en ti mismo, y confías en ti mismo, y te sientes capaces de poder hacer las cosas bien. – Joaquín, La Merced

Well, that's being planned with the group – a group where the producers can take ...

Pues, se está planeando ese con el colectivo. Un grupo donde los productores puedan aprovechar lo que se ha hecho hasta ahorita como por ejemplo se ha venido haciendo un trabajo de ecológico, mucha gente del grupo está trabajando orgánicamente. Pero pues este lo deja únicamente está allí, ¿no? Tiene su terreno, limpio, pero pues sigue

cultivando lo mismo. Sigue cultivando lo mismo y sigue cultivando únicamente para su consumo. Y sigue viendo ese rezago económico, no hay un crecimiento entonces. Pues estábamos viendo que es una necesidad tanto como para nosotros como para las colonias que están asociadas con este grupo. Entonces, precisamente por eso pensamos hacer algo como un canal donde ese mismo canal nos puede a proporcionar conocimientos de cómo podemos, o de que producto podemos cultivar en ciertas tierras que ya están pues aptas para producir un producto totalmente limpio. Entonces, a través de eso pues las familias también se van a ayudar económicamente. Entonces por eso salió la idea de que es necesario hacer una asociación que está registrada para que en posteriormente la asociación tenga la oportunidad de poder ir más allá y no se quede localmente. Entonces pues eso lo que se está viendo con este colectivo. –Gabino, La Vega

I: Well, I'd like to know your practice of arriving at a strategic plan, and the idea of the...

I: Pues, quise saber la práctica de cómo llegaron a tener el plan estratégico y la idea de los colectivo de colectivos, pero ya llevamos 50 minutos.

P: La idea de los colectivos, de una vez, no fue de nosotros.

I: Es lo que quise—quise saber ese historia.

P: Fue de los de La Vega, de Gabino y Sebastián, entonces ellos dijeron ‘es que los créditos realmente no están solucionando nuestra necesidad a fondo. Entonces, lo que quisiéramos,’ dicen ellos, ‘es como recuperar lo que habíamos hecho antiguamente de trabajar junto y todo eso.’ Y de allí surgió como la intuición de ellos, verdad. Pero eso respondía también a lo que nosotros habíamos estado buscando. Bueno, principalmente mi inquietud mía de decir bueno, Adelanto tiene que ser menos una instancia, ya te había comentado la otra vez, que sea un patrón que está repartiendo dinero, y no, un grupo de gentes que nos apoyamos mutuamente para salir adelante. Entonces, al ellos platearon esto, dijimos, eso responde a, bueno, yo dije, responde a mi perspectivita. Entonces, yo lo como que les anime, puede al que, lo intentáramos, y allí se fue allá como cristalizando ese idea de los colectivos. Bueno entonces, lo bueno es que tanto Leopoldo como yo tenía cierto temor de que ellos no lo hubieron, pero sí, Leopoldo inmediatamente le pareció bien porque también a le conviene porque tiene su café, entonces, y Gloria como que no se impulsó a este idea, no, entonces. Pero lo que sí ellos dijeron es que no lo que ya llevamos con los créditos, lo tiene que hacer como otro aspecto del trabajo. Otra rama. Entonces eso también tiene que mantenerse. Aunque se le dé como menos atención en cuanto a todos los requisitos que sea bien establecidos, entonces podríamos como hacer menos exigentes los condiciones de que ellos tengan su huerto ecológico y todo eso, que asistan las reuniones, que las mujeres participen en un grupo. A lo mejor eso. Con los créditos lo podemos suavizar, solo comentarlo, no exigirlo como requisito para el crédito. ¿Para qué? Para que lo que sea, lo que interese los créditos sea que ellos cubran, se benefician, eso sí la administración y todo lo demás, sí seguirlo. Pero, la cuestión de la agroecología y los grupos de mujeres, podía ser menos exigente con ellos. Y eso seguiría con los colectivos ese trabajo. Entonces, como que la perla del trabajo de Adelanto sería los colectivos, y el otro sería complementaria para el sostenimiento de Adelanto más que nada. –Octavio, Adelanto staff

For us, there's a big step forward that we have found in these first months of the year...

Para nosotros estos es un paso más fuerte que hemos estado encontrando en estos primeros meses del año 2015 que estamos emprendidos para seguir apoyando e impulsando y animando a todos estos grupos para que busquen la mejor salida de sus proyectos y de su trabajo del campo desde un esfuerzo propio buscando recursos desde su organización y desde su figura que ellos tengan para mejorar la calidad de su trabajo y así poder obtener un recurso o una pequeña ganancia que mejore sus ingresos económico dentro de su familia o dentro de su comunidad. –Leopoldo, Adelanto staff