

El Mundo Maya:
Socio-Cultural Field Research Seminar
January 4th – March 14th 2010

**Empowerment:
Raising our Voices through Social Organization**

By

Patricia “BG” Green

Senior Thesis
Department of Latin American Studies
Carleton College
Advisers: Jerome Levi & Silvia Lopez
2011

Abstract

This project aims to investigate the power of organization as a tool to enhance individual empowerment. Three different social organizations are studied, each of which specializes in working with women. The three organizations have different types of fundamental construction: “bottom-up” (grass roots), “horizontal” (the church), and “top-down” (NGOs and the government). The reason for this is to investigate the effect of structurally different approaches towards development and their correlation with individual empowerment. Each of the organizations focuses on women so there is a common trend uniting the three groups. This study will explore whether the union of people in mass in fact empowers the individual, and if so how?

Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been possible without the support and guidance of Professor Silvia Lopez and Professor Jay Levi. Silvia, my two-year advisor, has been a major influence in discovering my love of Latin America. Her dedication to high-standards pushed me to become an academically rigorous student who can take pride in her work. The context of and history behind this paper’s content is a product of Silvia’s guidance in truly understanding the different factors that affected my experience—historical, social, and cultural. My time spent in Guatemala and the subsequent impetus for this paper, is due to Jay Levi. Jay shared with me his love and knowledge of indigenous Guatemala. His enthusiasm for my research topic concerning empowerment, and constant advice on methodology allowed me to create a strong anthropological study. As our guide, Jay set an example by creating relationships based upon a humble attitude

and inquisitive nature. I attribute the success of the relationships within my study to the development of these characteristics, which are both invaluable and essential to any research. Thank you both for your constant dedication to my process of discovery.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	5
Review of the Literature	6
Situations of Emergency: Responding to Poverty	7
Modern Social Justice Climate of Guatemala	8
“New Feminism”	11
Empowerment	15
Individual Benefits of Organization	15
Organizational Structure	16
Methods	19
Ethnographic Results	23
Patrona’s Cooperative	23
The Women’s Group of Asamblea de Dios	26
Las Mujeres Mayas	31
Analysis & Conclusion	37
Bibliography	43

Introduction

In the ever-growing world of development there has been a huge push to generate the empowerment of individuals. This trend specifically applies to women, as they are generally exploited, while simultaneously playing a pivotal role in the process of development. Dating as far back as colonialism, women have been perceived as lesser than men in both the political and social sphere; yet on the whole, they are given great responsibilities in terms of familial accountability. Through capitalizing on this accountability, women must insist they be included in the processes of local development and global change. Individual empowerment is a means to these necessary changes. Ironically, one of the primary ways of creating individual empowerment is through the formation of organizations.

I applied the idea of individual empowerment to my case study which I conducted with three such organizations in Santa Catarina Polopó, Guatemala. Santa Catarina is one of twelve towns surrounding Lake Atitlán. The town spills off the mountain, crossing the one road which connects the town to its neighboring lake communities, and ends at the lapping water of the lake's edge. The rough population estimate is around 1,300 but given the town's rural setting it is difficult to get an exact number (Europa World Plus 2010:2). Women, wearing the characteristic blue *huipil* (indigenous blouse) shuffle, up and down Santa Catarina's streets speaking in Kaq'hikel. It is here in this closed indigenous community I chose to conduct my field research.

The first section of my paper examines several discussions raised by the prevalent literature. This includes an assessment of the origin of organizations, a contextualization of time and place concerning Guatemala, the values held by women's organizations, and

the subsequent structures of different organizations. In the second section I discuss the methodology I used to conduct my case study and also the means by which I gathered my results. The third section is an ethnographic account of the organizations and individuals with whom I interacted during my observations. The fourth and final section of my paper is a detailed analysis of my case study which links the theories addressed in my review of the literature to my own observations in order to generate some well founded conclusions concerning the empowerment of the individual women with whom I worked.

Review of the Literature

As Latin America develops, organization has become the popular response for women to turn to. Because the decision to organize has grown into a standard procedure, scholars have begun to examine this phenomenon. Their works explore the many facets of female community organization in order to understand the power that collective organization can generate. Scholars utilize the literature to answer the primary question why do women begin to organize? In response to this question, authors have cited several explanations ranging from poverty, the growing climate for social justice, and the sense of responsibility that Latin American women feel as mothers. The second theme that scholars have discovered is a new conceptualization of feminism which has emerged from the fundamental question of organization. Subsequently, as this “new feminism” is embraced and embodied by women’s organizations across the continent, authors must address the issue of outside influences on these groups. This theme specifically targets the influence of the Church and NGOs over community organizations.

Situations of Emergency: Responding to Poverty

The first response to the question of female organization can be viewed as a reaction to extreme poverty. A situation of emergency such as economic crisis can serve as the trigger for collective action. Francois Hainard and Christine Verschuur argue that organizations are created as a response to problems in development such as extreme poverty. In these situations women are “creative in community management; they maintain social cohesion...they organize themselves in order to upgrade their environment and security” (Hainard and Verschuur 2001:34). Not only is it the women who tend to act as organizers, but also as Lorraine Bayard de Volo points out, “to engage in collective action, [women] must not only feel aggrieved but also see collective action as a mode of resolving that grievance” (Bayard de Volo 2006:158). Additionally in his argument John Friedmann defines such collective action strategies as, “those responses to the crisis that involve some type of organization entity which brings together several people or groups around activities with a neighborhood focus” (Feijoó 1996:33). The literature is very much in agreement that in the context of extreme poverty women turn to community forms of organization as, “resistance to economic inequalities...based on survival needs” (Hallum 2003:181).

As the above authors have pointed out, this response to poverty grows through the catalyst of community geography. The neighborhood layout provides a closeness which women capitalized on in order to form their organizations. As Christine Bose explains in her book *Women in the Latin American Development Process* women “organize at a neighborhood level around a broad list of issues that they redefine as women’s concerns, such as running water or transportation for squatter communities” (Bose 1995:29). The

issues of the domestic sphere are prevalent to the neighborhood which generate participation because the community goals are tangible. Often times these women's organizations perform better than formal groups such as political parties and labor unions because they are closer to the problem. However, when women begin to organize, scholars cite increased government neglect towards these women's needs. The government relies on women to assume the role as a provider of social services. Unfortunately, when women take on these extra duties inside and outside of the family in order to support their family, they allow the state to remain absent in their local duties. This is a vicious cycle that the women of Latin America perpetuate because their responsibility towards their family as the mother figure is culturally ingrained in them from birth. As Lynn Stephen explains in her article *Anthropological Research on Latin American Women*, the women who organize are responding to conditions that make their gender designated routines difficult, and are therefore defending their rights as mothers, wives, and daughters to the resources necessary for their gendered roles.

Modern Social Justice Climate of Guatemala

While it is not disputed that women moving towards social organization is a response to the neglect and subsequent situations of poverty, this argument begs the question why now? Women have found themselves in situations of extreme poverty with inadequate resources to support their family since society's conception. So then why in Latin America is there now an exponential growth in the number of local women's groups and organizations. The answer to this question stems from the current political/social climate in some of the prominent countries within Latin America which has re-oriented

itself towards a goal of democracy and social justice. For example during the past two decades El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala all officially ended their struggles with civil war and began engaging in settlement discussions. This line of reasoning is especially true in Guatemala's development as the country works to support the agreements that were reached during 1990s.

The 1990s began with the United Nations declaration of the "Decade of Indigenous Peoples." This immediately focused attention on Guatemala as the country struggled to end her civil war and generate some form of appeasement between the guerilla forces and the government. In 1991 elected president Jorge Serrano began facilitating discussions between the URNG and the government. These discussion were closely followed by the presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize to Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan Maya-K'iche' woman and indigenous human rights activist, thus "focusing global attention on the perpetuation of human rights violations in the country, and also signaling the emergence of an increasingly organized Mayan, indigenous, popular movement" (Europa World Plus 2010:2). With "the goal of peace in Guatemala at the front of the international stage" both parties agreed on accepting the United Nations as a moderator for the peace discussions (Afflitto 2007:131).

The final accords were signed on December of 1996. The document was an acknowledgment of the many voices that emerged during the process of creating an agreement which recognized all players in the Guatemalan conflict. The most prominent activist group that materialized during the discussions were the leaders and supporters of the pan-Maya movement. The accords allowed for Mayans to surface from their "fragmented status at the margins of the nation to be recognized as constituting the

majority of the national population” (Warren 2002:150). During the accords process activists from the left and members of the pan-Maya movement came together as an advocate for the indigenous rights movement, later becoming recognized as the Assembly of Civil Society. The role of this society was to mediate and present ideas to the revolutionary party and Guatemalan government. One of the voices that the Assembly acknowledged was “a vocal women’s movement supported the efforts of a few high-ranking female URNG officials to put gender equality on the agenda of the peace negotiations” (Luciak 2001:55). With the discussion of women on the table the Assembly pushed for women’s rights to be included in four of the seven agreements created during the accords process. Written into articles twelve and thirteen the Guatemalan Government formally addressed the women of its country:

“Recognizing the insufficiently appreciated contribution of women in all spheres of economic and social activity, particularly their work in favor of improving the community the [signatory] parties recognize the necessity of strengthening women’s participation in economic and social development on terms of equality. To this end the government commits itself to take the specific economic and social situation of women into account in the strategies, plans, and development programs and to train civil servants in the analysis and planning based on this perspective. This includes; recognizing the equality of rights between women and men in the home, the workplace, production, as well as in social and political life and assuring them the same possibilities as me, in particular concerning access to credit, the awarding of land and other productive and technological resources.” [Luciak 2001:57]

Through the advocacy of groups comprised of the diversity within Guatemala, women became a focal point in the country’s incredible transition to peace.

The 1996 Peace Accords charged the Guatemalan government and citizens to abide by the agreements that had been reached and to uphold the acknowledgement of those who had been harmed during the civil war. While this applied largely to the rights and recognition of Guatemala’s indigenous population the government has also

“committed itself to eliminating all forms of discrimination, factual or legal, against women, and to make it easier [for them to] access land, housing, [and] credit and to participate in development projects. A gender perspective will be incorporated in the policies, programs and activities of the global development strategy.” [Luciak 2001:56]

This official recognition was the first time the discrimination of women had been formally articulated. It initiated a movement that spread to even the most rural parts of the country. Women began to band together under the common understanding that they deserved more. As stated by Roselyn Constantino in her article about the women’s response to this public affirmation,

“Guatemalan women are reformulating their roles, their participation, and their position in the relations and structures that affect their individual and collective lives on a daily basis. The circumstances are both familiar and new. Their challenges are as life-threatening as ever; their responses, however, have become empowering and life affirming.” [Constantino 2006:110]

This governmental endorsement that the injustices which women face are unmerited affirmed that women have the right to demand more. This change in the political/social climate of Guatemala generated a space for women to organize around a common understanding and create a united voice.

“New Feminism”

Although women now join together more readily, the notion of gendered roles is still a pervasive force in their organization. This issue has emerged as a central point in the literature’s discussion of such groups. In response many authors refer to the conception of the mother that stems from her responsibilities to her family as the premise for “new feminism.” It is important to understand how this idea of “new feminism” differs from the traditional definition of feminism. As Anne Motley Hallum explains in

her paper on the emergence of Pentecostalism and its growing effect on women's movements, the stereotype of traditional feminists is one that is "anti-men" and "critical of the centrality of motherhood" (Hallum 2003:170). This pervasive form of feminism encourages the woman to leave her home, fight for her rights in the form of protest, and carries strong radical undertones. In contrast, the literature on Latin America's "new feminism" defines itself by embracing the mother in the home and encourages her to demand the resources necessary to maintain her home instead of telling her to abandon her primary role as caretaker. This type of feminism has a place in Latin America, as it does not ask women to reject their gendered duties which are culturally valued and deep-rooted in their persons.

Scholars describe this innovative form of feminism as maternal and community based. Because of this, the culture of poverty in Latin America has accepted "new feminism" as a launching point for social justice. As Bose explains,

"poor women in Latin America have used their responsibilities as mothers and domestic workers not only to enter the formal and informal economies but as the basis for political demands. Their organizing and advocacy on behalf of the survival of their children and families have made them as potentially explosive as the former colonies in which they live." [Bose 1995:26]

By placing the importance of their struggles in the avocation for the survival of their children, women collectivize in social-change groups which place reproduction and the future of the state at their foundation. The organization of these women gives a voice to their demands for the resources necessary to carry out their gender roles based around supporting and raising a family. In this way, domestic life and familial survival become the pivotal arguments for change. Plainly put, "Latin American women...think that their roles as wives and mothers legitimize their sense of injustice and outrage, since they are

protesting their inability to carry out these roles effectively,” and these roles are fundamental to Latin American culture and society (Safa 1995:228). Helen Icken Safa continues her argument by explaining that this type of feminism works because

“these women never reject their domestic role but use it as a base to give them strength and legitimacy...in moving their domestic concerns into the public arena, they are redefining the meaning associated with domesticity to include participation and struggle rather than obedience and passivity.” [Safa 1995:234]

However, some authors see this redefinition as a point of contention in terms of the empowerment that it actually generates for women.

Even though the majority of the literature views organization as supportive of women’s roles and a stand against the state thus transforming gender roles; there are some authors who question whether glorifying the mother figure is the right strategy. A lot of these questions are based in the more common definition of feminism which demands a distancing from the gendered roles of women and, more specifically, a struggle against the subjugation of men. Since the type feminism that has emerged in Latin America promotes and values the gendered domestic life of women, some authors question whether or not organizing around these values is liberating. This “new feminism” does not confront the men of Latin America. It does not place any pressure on the duties of the father. Most importantly it does not challenge the machismo stereotype. This is ironic and characteristic of the paradox that exists in development. In her chapter on “Colonialism, Structural Subordination, and Empowerment” Bose explains, “development would not exist without underdevelopment, wealth does not exist without poverty, and the domination of men would not exist without the subjection and submissiveness of women” (Bose 1995:17). The argument stands that if women are

organizing around needs that are imposed on them by the gendered standards of society and are not required to confront them, how is this course of action helping their cause?

This question is entirely valid, yet the literature responds with concrete evidence from the source: the women themselves. Scholars turn to case studies and participant observation as proof of the strength in organizing around motherhood. Safa explains that, “[women’s groups] though based on traditional women’s roles, these clubs provide an additional organizational base from which women could challenge the existing order” implying that these base organizations are simply the beginning (Safa 1995:231). In mobilizing Stephen, adds that the women’s organizations commit to a unifying cause and as such a challenge to the subordination of women to men (Stephen 1997:2).

Additionally, the creation of a collective identity generates common goals and values, which unite women and produce a system of support. Stephen quotes Kata Moreno a leader of the Ejido Union as an example of the benefits in organizing: “I have learned a lot. I know that it is important to decide to do things, to make changes. I know what the problems in my community are and what needs to be done to fix them. I am not silent anymore” (Stephen 1997:26). This development of a voice, even if it were the only example of change for women, would be enough to confront the question of empowerment. However, more importantly, in the face of change the issue of feminism is not important:

“Shared experiences have provided women with a common set of questions regarding the various dimensions of inequality found within the class, gender, racial, ethnic and generational social relationships they participate in. These questions—rather than shared answers—provide some common outlines for their varied experiences... Whether or not all women agree that such questions are ‘feminist’ seems irrelevant. What matters most is their shared commitment to help one another improve their lives.” [Stephen 1993:148]

It is commendable that authors asks questions of the literature, but it seems that if solely through the evidence of individual experience, collective action at the community level is a means to empowerment for women in Latin America.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a difficult term to define. The United Nations defines empowerment as “giving disadvantaged people better opportunities to do something about their living conditions, and helping them—via counseling, proper training, capacity-building—to understand more clearly the context of their lives and work” (Hainard 2001:45). Whether or not this is the correct definition, Bayard de Volo reports that the women in his Nicaraguan case study participated in the Nicaraguan Widows Group “to develop [themselves] as people and to gain confidence” (Bayard de Volo 2006:162). Though they do not use the word empowerment, one would be hard pressed to deny the synonymous nature of these explanations. Therefore, participation in an organization generates feelings of empowerment which in turn prompts the continued active membership of individuals. This empowerment combined with the group feelings of solidarity is what drives the longevity and success of organizations.

Individual Benefits of Organization

Organizations present an interesting paradox namely because often being a member of a group does not guarantee the gain of concrete material benefits. Actually more times than not the material gains that a member receives are not synonymous with the effort that a member puts into their organization. Bayard de Volo describes this as the

“participation paradox” when the “individual costs of participation seem to exceed the instrumental benefit” (Bayard de Volo 2006:150). Why then do people, usually so driven by profit, continue to participate in organizations? Bayard de Volo answers this question by introducing the concept of “emotional in-process benefits,” or rather intangible, non-material benefits that are a product of group participation (Bayard de Volo 2006:154). The organization creates an emotional support community for the individual which generates a collective group identity. Within this identity the group focus changes from “‘I’ to ‘we’ and members [begin] to recognize themselves in each other” (Bayard de Volo 2006:160). This “we” requires an appreciation of such non-material concepts as “communication, shared understandings and practices, and the recognition of common goals and emotional bonds” (Bayard de Volo 2006:154). Because of these feelings, participation, though maybe not materially productive, is pleasurable. One these non-material benefits are feelings of empowerment.

Organizational Structure

The world of development is divided into a number of different types of organizations. These differences appear in the fundamental structure of the organizations and how they are created. The three central types that I have chosen to analyze can be characterized as “bottom-up,” “horizontal,” and “top-down.” “Bottom-up” implies a movement structured around grassroots or community driven organization. In this case Hainard states that these types of organizations are the definition of empowerment (Hainard 2001:46). Additionally William Fisher, author of “Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices,” points out that such community-based

organizations have local contact with local problems and thus are more adept at resolving them (Fisher 1997: 444). This is neither a bad or good thing solely a consequence of structural differences, as is the general trend when investigating this fundamental distinction.

One of the drawbacks of organizing at the community level is a lack of funding. The literature has identified two major players who respond to this problem. However, their support often brings very negative consequences. The first institution that reaches out to women's organizations is the Church.

In the case of this investigation the Protestant Church represents "horizontal" organizational structure. It is one step removed from the community in the sense that the group is a pivotal player within the community but also has strong connections to a larger network. The Church can be an asset to local groups because it is already well established within the community. Additionally, the Church has the means to donate funds and can provide a space for meetings. At a more fundamental level, it inherently aligns its values of the mother with those of women's organizations. However, there are significant issues with accepting the Church as a benefactor. While the institution may embrace the mother, it acts within the constructs of religion and that may not always be in the interests of a women's group. This is the ever-present double-edged sword of outside aid. Cecilia Blondet gives a concrete example of this when she explains the sudden responsibilities that one women's group had to face upon accepting help from outside institutions.

"They had to respond to the request of international agencies by participation in vaccination campaigns; to comply with the interests of the Catholic Church by forming catechism groups; to placate the feminists by learning about abortion and the need to take control of their bodies' and to satisfy the concerns of the political parties by attending marches and demonstrations." [Blondet 1996:83]

The reality is that institutions, like women's groups, have their own agendas and that is what will take precedent in their actions.

At the other end of the spectrum is "top-down" structure. This label implies an organization supported by the influence of a community outsider, for example an NGO or government agency. It is in this structure that development takes on a different face and acquires the potential to do more harm than good. Fisher opens his article with a quote from Henry David Thoreau who states, "if I knew someone was coming over with the expressed intention of doing good, I would flee" (Fisher 1997:439). The main reason for this fear is that one person's definition of "doing good" may in fact do harm, as they might not fully comprehend the situation or the consequences of their actions.

Additionally as Fisher notes, "top-down planning, top-down funding, and upward accountability negate participation" which draws the actual empowerment of the individuals within the organization into question (Fisher 1997:455). Women's organizations are then forced to make a difficult decision: compromise their values to receive the funding they need, or potentially succumb to the real pressures of economics.

Frequently once an NGO becomes a player in development their influence overshadows the women's group and they impose their own regulations. For example, NGOs will demand that professional liaisons replace community members in positions of leadership. While the NGO may believe having professional training will benefit the group, really they are negating the empowerment that had been created through a position of leadership and placing an outsider in a setting where they do not have direct experiential understanding. In many ways scholars view these impositions as crippling for the construction of women's collective action. Alvarez sums it up nicely when she

states that some organizations have, “inverted the classic slogan—‘think globally, act locally’—and seemed instead to be ‘acting globally’ and ‘thinking locally’” (Alvarez 1998:315).

The existing literature of women’s organizations has focused on their development, foundation, and growth. Scholars cite situations of poverty and current socio-political climates as the main causes for social organization. From these beginnings authors address the creation of a new feminism and individual benefits as key values for these organizations. However, the literature makes apparent that to survive women’s groups must learn to juggle their own values and goals with the influences of outside support. These perspectives then allow authors to hypothesize the future path of these community based groups and the potential power they represent. With this background understanding of organizations and the role they play in individual empowerment, my investigation examines this dynamic under the lens of diverse organizational structures.

Methods

My field research aimed to investigate the strength of organization as a tool of individual empowerment. The project began under the premise of creating contacts with three structurally different organizations. My conception entailed researching a “grassroots” group founded by members within the community, a group founded by an organization one step removed from the community, such as the church, and thirdly a group directed by an outsider of the community, namely an NGO or government organization. These three types of organizations demonstrate certain categories or means of development, which I then respectively labeled “bottom up,” “horizontal,” and “top

down.” However, in constructing this investigation I needed some sort of constancy between the three organizations. Understanding that there are numerous types of organizations in the world of development, I chose to focus solely on women’s groups. In doing this I created a general trend in my investigations so that I had not only the demographic constants of race, location, and language but also gender in order to make my comparisons.

With these parameters in mind, I began to select the organizations that I thought would best suit my criteria. I chose to work with a local weaving cooperative based in Santa Catarina which was founded Patrona Comez, one of our host mothers. This group was to be my example of a grassroots organization. For my “horizontally” structured organization I needed a women’s group founded by the church. Patrona’s daughter, Carolina, introduced me to the Pastor of the Evangelical Church who hesitantly gave me permission to work with the women’s group of Asamblea de Dios. One of the older sisters in our host families, Lidia Cumez, informed me that she was a member of the first legalized women’s group of Santa Catarina: Las Mujeres Mayas. Although this group did not exactly fit my definition of “top-down” structure, I soon learned that they were sustained by the interests of outside organizations such as the government or NGOs; therefore this group met my criteria pertaining to a “top-down” organization. With my focus turned inwards to Santa Catarina I began my investigation in earnest.

I decided to examine the concept of empowerment through two different levels of perception. First I looked at the institution of the organization, asking to what degree do different types of social organizations empower individuals and how? This question focused on the goals of the organization and how they work as collectives. The second

question examined the internal level of an organization and asked how individuals are empowered through their own participation in an organization. I hoped that by observing and interacting with members of these separate groups, I would try to measure the success of these organizations through an examination of their structural differences. That is to say, how does a group formed from motivations within the community differ from a group created by a community outsider? With this in mind, my goal after three weeks was to be able to answer the above thesis questions and make a conclusion that showed the integral importance of organizations in reference to individual empowerment.

To answer these questions I began meeting with the leaders of the respective organizations to establish an understanding of my project and my perceived relationship with them for the next three weeks. While IRB approval was not required for the program, it was imperative that I obtain informed consent before I began my study. As such, I spoke with each group leader. I debriefed them on the purpose of my study, the content of my final paper, and gave them the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. After meeting with the leaders on these matters, I repeated the process with the individual groups as a whole and then with individuals whom I interviewed. Additionally, I did not interview any minors, as I was working with adult women and no deception was involved in my study.

After clearing my case study and subsequent research with all involved, I began my work in the field. This entailed a combination of participant observation and one-on-one interviews. Often times I would attend a group meeting and observe the functioning of the group. Once I was well established within the group and familiar with a majority of

the individuals, I was able to commence my interviews. To begin with, I conducted interviews with these leaders constructed around the following questions:

- How/Why does a group or organization form?
- What are the goals and value of this organization?
- What are the benefits of being part of a/this group or organization? (social, economic, identity)
- To what degree do members gain empowerment?
- Have there been any big changes/accomplishments for your organization
- What were your goals in creating an organization? Were they met?
- Can you define empowerment?
- Do you feel empowered? How and why?
- Does the group give the individual a voice?

The greatest difficulty I encountered was using the word “empowerment,” as Spanish does not have a direct translation of the word. Instead I was forced to come up with examples of similar words such as *fortalecer* (to make stronger), *poderoso* (powerful), and *poder personal* (personal power). I began each interview with these loose translations and several of my own examples in order to proceed with a relatively clear understanding of empowerment. I learned about the history, purpose, goals, and values of each group and the personal experiences of their leaders. From there, having established my relationship with their leaders, I was introduced to the respective organizations. During these group meetings, I met active members of the group and conducted participant observations to flesh out my understanding of the groups. This time was also utilized to accustom the organization to my presence and develop relationships with some of the members. After coordinating with the leaders, I began to conduct interviews with members who either felt comfortable talking with me in Spanish or through a translator.

These interviews were based around the following questions:

- Why did you join this organization?
- What are the goals and value of this organization?
- What were your goals in joining an organization? Were they met?

- What are the benefits of being part of a/this group or organization? (social, economic, identity)
- Have there been any big changes/accomplishments as a consequence of joining the organization?
- Can you define empowerment?
- To what degree do members gain empowerment?
- Do you feel empowered? How and why? Is this a change from your experience before joining the group?
- Does the group give the individual a voice?
- Why do you continue to be a member of this group?

Having collected the results of these interviews and observations, I began to contemplate my conclusions. The data I had gathered was purely qualitative and therefore much of my research and conclusions were based on what Kathleen and Billie Dewalt refer to as “hunches” (Dewalt 2002:189). Hunches develop into hypotheses and predictions that facilitate the creation of trends and themes. Combining my hunches the prior information I gathered from my literature review I was able to highlight the similarities and crucial differences within my research. As I predicted, the structural differences of the organizations played a significant role in the empowerment of their members. However, still more interesting, were the thematic trends which emerged as constants in each organization. The results of my ethnographic research showed the central themes of leadership, non-material gains, solidarity, needs, service, and gender bias as imperative to level of empowerment felt by the women of Santa Catarina.

Results

Patrona’s Cooperative: The “Bottom Up” Organization

Patrona Comez is her own *dueña* (owner, boss) and the *dueña* of the six women who work for her. Her authority is apparent in the slight downward tilt of her head as she watches people stroll down the cobbled street outside her storefront. Her store, which she

created eight years ago, is a cool refuge from the Guatemalan sun while its open front windows allow for constant interaction with the life of Santa Catarina's only street. The walls of Patrona's store are hidden behind a plethora of blue and green threads woven in the shape of *huipiles* (indigenous blouses), *cortes* (skirts), *fajas* (cloth belts), table clothes, and scarves. At first glance the array of merchandise seems to blur together as my eyes struggle to discern the differences between the varying shades of Santa Catarina's colors and styles of *traje* (dress). But as I wait for Patrona to bring down a pot of overly sweetened coffee and some *pan dulce* (sweet bread) I begin to see varying stylistic differences. With close inspection I can see small distinctions in the embroidery patterns that reveal animals or the waves of the lake, artistic decisions that the weaver deliberately chose and go unnoticed to the tourist eye. I move into the side room, my eyes still fixed on the walls of fabric, and jump as my stare falls across dark shy gaze of a Guatemalan woman. She sits low to the ground, her legs folded on a mat as she stares back at me never stopping the swift flight of her hands through the threads strung across her back-strap loom. Just as I start to question her Patrona reappears, metal coffee kettle in hand, and motions me over to the ledge under the broad front window. When I look back into the corner I see the woman has disappeared back into the soft dark of the fabrics.

Patrona Comez began her weavers cooperative eight years ago because of her reservations with the quality and the market of the street. Looking straight into my face she tells me that, "My weavings are for memories. Tourists..." Here she pauses seemingly trying to decide if I, after my weeks of walking up and down Santa Catarina, still qualify as a tourist. "Tourists, buy without understanding. Each *tejida* (weaving) is a

memory and each memory is a story. If the purchase is only about the price the story gets lost in the haggling.” So, Patrona took matters into her own hands and began selecting women whose weavings displayed talent and potential. After talking to the women and giving them a few suggestions Patrona invested in quality thread, which she then dispersed to six women. These women make up her weavers cooperative and produce works that Patrona then sells in her store. As the *dueña* of the organization Patrona takes twenty percent of the sales. However, the women know that they are free to ask for an advance whenever they are in need. Patrona explained that the women work in this group because it gives them power and control over their trade. They know they have a market for their goods in Patrona’s store and will receive a fair price. Patrona explains that these women have a sense of solidarity because instead of the tourists determining the prices, the prices are set by one of their own. Patrona has watched the lives of these six women improve under the common goal of good quality work and fair prices that do not exploit the worker. Her leadership has created a safe place for these women. Her store is now a space where even shy Carmen, the woman who sat quietly in the shadows of cloth, feels her presence is respected.

Carmen has been working for Patrona for the past six months. She smiles cautiously as she reports that joining Patrona’s weaving cooperative has greatly changed her lifestyle. Carmen explains that before she was working full time in one of Santa Catarina’s hotels, but now because of Patrona she is able to work half days in the hotel and spend the other half working on her weavings. Carmen started working with Patrona for the security of a monthly paycheck and the ability to ask for money when she is in need. She explained to me “everything has a price. You don’t suffer if you have money,”

and working for Patrona makes her feel like she has a little more control over her own life. Her matter-of-fact tone seems at juxtaposition with her body language, as she sits in her usual spot shrouded by the dark comfort of her weavings. However, inside Patrona's store, Carmen has gained a voice. She says Patrona's role in all this is to help those in need, making their life a little easier. Additionally as Carmen needs Patrona, Patrona needs Carmen for her weaving skills. For this reason Carmen feels her voice is respected within the group the Patrona has created. As I wrap up my interview with Carmen Patrona bustles into the room, the many folds of her *corte* produce the muffled swish that I have become so accustomed to during my time in Santa Catarina. Patrona's authority washes over our duo and as she begins to ask me about the interview. Carmen, visibly relieved to be out of the spotlight, returns her gaze to her loom. I feel uncomfortable as Patrona drills me on the content of my interview with Carmen. However as I answer her questions I notice a trend in her line of inquiry; Patrona is trying to gauge the sentiments of her employee and her own success as a leader. Given the honesty of Carmen's statements I have no trouble assuring Patrona that the creation of her cooperative has been a true success for the women she employs. It has turned their lives around and empowered them on an individual level through the creation of a community and a secure space.

The Women's Group of Asamblea de Dios: A "Horizontal" Organization

With the sun beating down on my head, I clamber up eroded paths behind the surefooted steps of Carolina. I can see how even just the climb to the Santa Catarina's Evangelical church could make you feel closer to God. The church is a welcome relief as

its low ceiling and cement walls provide a cooling shade for the small circle of Guatemalan women. The women's eyes flick over me and quickly back to their laps as I try to huff soundlessly behind the Carolina's frame. Carolina's voice, usually strong and independent, quietly mumbles the explanation of my presence to someone in front of her. Poking my head around Carolina's shoulder I see Pedro Salamòn Kiche, the director and pastor of Santa Catarina's Evangelical Church. Plastered on Pedro's face is the warm grin that he gives every one of his church members. However, when directed at me his smile seems false and it does not quite reach his eyes. I had talked with Pedro earlier in the week about my study and desire to work with the church's women's group. From the first he was suspicious of my study and me. It took my explanation and the help of Patrona to convince him to let me at least propose my study to the group. I return Pedro's stare with the customary greeting of brushing cheeks and take an empty chair within the circle. Murmured Kaqchikel and Pedro's quiet conversation with Rosa, one of the group's oldest members, occasionally break the silence. I sit uncomfortably fiddling with my notebook waiting for the meeting to begin.

My interview with the church's women's group was very difficult because of the language barrier. Also the format of the meeting took a turn very different than what I expected. After Pedro's introduction of my case study and me, the women gathered around and tried to understand my questions. There was utter confusion when I finished asking a question. The women would turn to each other their *listones* (head wraps) bobbing in uncertainty as they tried to work out my sentences amongst themselves. Then, when they could no longer unravel my questions themselves, they asked for help from the Father. This is somewhat strange because he does not speak Kaqchikel and he

would simply rephrase my questions in a direction framed towards the interests of the church. For example, when I asked how the group had influenced their lives, he asked how the church had influenced their lives. In general the responses were yes or mumbles or agreement, unless he called a woman out individually and asked for specific examples or experiences. For example when I asked if the women felt a special bond between each other through their group membership, Pedro called on Carolina to speak about her friendships within the church. Carolina answered the question but constantly looked to Pedro for affirmation of her answer. The role and influence of the church was apparent and consistent in all the responses even without Pedro spoon-feeding them their answers.

The women explained or rather agreed with Father that they come to these meetings to be with people who understand and want to be with God and Jesus Christ. In this group they are able to identify as Evangelicals and share a common place of spirituality. The group creates a place for friendships among the women and place to express their voices. Even though they could not articulate it, they did consent that their lives had changed for the better by being a member of the group. They agreed that their role in helping members of the community who are suffering gives them a sense of power in their own lives. Additionally, it was unanimously established that these things come when one accepts *Dios* (God).

Following my questions the Father read an anecdote from the Bible about two women: Marta and Maria. Marta is very hard working and Maria is as well but makes time in her life for God; therefore she is more content with her life. The father's point was that the women of his church need to "*sacar tiempo por jesus*" (to take time for Jesus) because "*el tiempo que se dedican a dios es tiempo importante*" (the time that you

dedicate to God is important time). In general the meeting seemed to be more of a Bible study and a forum for the preacher to lecture the women of his church. It also seemed to be a time for the group to pray in addition to the time spent during church services. However, I believe it is controversial to have a man leading a women's group, especially one who does all the talking.

The next week after another meeting I had the opportunity to interview Pedro. His false smile remained on his face the entire interview and he answered each question emphatically. He explained that the church has groups for everyone because it is difficult when one feels alone in the world. If you are a member of a group then you have a community. Additionally, if you are a group member you work with others to focus on the community; he stated that "*la unión hace la fuerza*" (union creates strength). An example he gave was the youth group as their membership is essential because the youth are generally "lost." However, a group allows these youth to look for their identity within a space that is influenced by the church. Because of this church persuaded identity, groups are created to include everyone. Pedro also emphasized that when one is part of a group their voice and vote can be heard, especially in relation to the church. The goals of these organizations are to promote this and also solidify the common belief of the church. This is because groups work better when everyone believes in the same thing, which creates unity and a feeling of belonging within the group. However, this unity is hard to obtain and takes time because as Pedro states, "*cada cabeza es un mundo*" (each mind is a world). On this note he suddenly began directing questions at me, asking me what my religious upbringing was and if I was still active in my church. The negative trend in my answers was less than pleasing to Pedro and he turned his line of questioning to my

investigation. It was upon his suggestion that I ask to conduct a personal interview with Rosa.

I visited Rosa's house on one of the few rainy days that month. Water rushed off the mountain and into people's doorsteps so that the usually open doors that wound up the mountain remained firmly shut. Upon my first cautious knock Rosa answered her door immediately. I wasn't sure quite what to expect because, even though Rosa had been one of the more vocal women in the group, she was still comparatively quiet. As she beckoned me through the front room of her house Rosa explained that she has been a member of the Evangelical women's group for ten years. The floor is cement, high quality given the common practice of sod for floors in most of Santa Catarina's houses. While Rosa re-braids her hair she explains that her group represents the church in its ability for women to help those in need. The group specifically works with women who need food and support because they don't have enough income or too many mouths to feed. In these benevolent acts Rosa says her group of women represents the church, she also states that they can do more good united in a group than on their own.

Before switching the topic Rosa pulls the kettle off the stove and offers me yet another cup of overly sweetened black coffee. Rosa then begins to talk about conversion. The group's unity gives them the ability to persuade more conversions. United she and her companions have a much stronger voice and are able to convince many more conversions than if she was alone. This common goal creates a sense of familiarity between members of the group. Also saving someone gives Rosa the power of loving and helping someone in need and the capacity to raise him or her from their struggles. Here Rosa pauses almost as if she is unsure she can confide in me. She looks into her coffee,

uncrosses her legs, and then re-crosses them. Looking at the floor, Rosa murmurs that before she joined the church group she couldn't solve her own problems. Suddenly she picks her head up and looks at me, "now" she tells me "not only can I find a solution to my problems but also I can help others with theirs." When I ask Rosa where this strength comes from Rosa attributes this not only to her faith but also to the voice she has gained from being part of a group. It is clear that this profound statement is meant to end our conversation and on my walk home I am left to ponder the intense impact of the church.

Las Mujeres Mayas: A "Top-Down" Organization

Lidia, though she is a year younger than me, can command the attention of a room even though her physical presence is slight. She is the legal representative of Santa Catarina's first legalized women's group the *Asociación de Mujeres Mayas* (the Association of Mayan Women) or ADMMAPA, and is always busy. As I sit on her bed, which is really just corn husks bagged in burlap, she moves seamlessly from barking into her phone, talking to me, and shuffling through documents that are spread in disarray across the floor. After several interviews with Lidia, I have gotten used to this perceived inattentiveness. I have received numerous phone calls that leave my ear ringing from Lidia's enthusiastic voice as she lists more women who I can interview and new ideas for my case study – she is completely invested, just over-committed. During our first meeting Lidia explained to me that the group was formed because of the strong sense that the women of Santa Catarina didn't have a voice or role in the community; essentially they didn't leave their work inside the home. Many of these women didn't understand or believe that women could exist with a united voice and specific role in the community.

Now the group works with the Guatemalan government and different outside organizations to complete projects that are needed within the community. Recently, the group became legalized by the municipal so that they can now make greater connections as a recognized and formal organization. This group allows women to share their ideas, vote on group actions, and raise their voices as a representation of community needs. They exist in the solidarity of the same vision and goals. This incredibly articulate explanation came as a relief to me after my brief answers from the Evangelical church. The amazing thing is that Lidia firmly believes every word she tells me and her ability to express these beliefs is as eloquent as if she were an American university student delivering a talk on the importance of women's empowerment.

Lidia admits to me that at first she did not believe the group would form because the government had repeatedly denied their constant requests for legalization. In addition Lidia said she felt a very heavy cargo when she was appointed the legal authority of the group with little to no experience. She could not fathom how to organize such a mass of people. But, the women were persistent and found unity in their desires to be heard. In this way they gained the attention and recognition of the municipality.

During the organization's creation the *directiva* (board of directors) decided amongst themselves to make their conception of an official women's group a reality. They went about this by making phone calls and house visits to the women of Santa Catarina to see if there was interest. In general the community responded positively; however, there was a slight conflict between this proposed legal group and an unofficial women's group that already existed. In the end this tension still exists and it is difficult because both groups are working towards similar goals. However, the contacts that the

directiva made during their first years are still very supportive and helpful today. The *directiva* chooses the projects that the group will participate in and their decisions are guided by the voices of the individual group members. One of the organization's great triumphs is the creation of a space where one can voice her needs and discover a solution with the support of others. Additionally, the group gives women a forum where they can enjoy themselves socially.

However, the creation of such an organization does not come without difficulties. Generally the group votes on needed projects and creates a solid outline of execution for the institutions that accept the project. But, some institutions will not accept the group or will want to modify the proposal to fit their own vision of what the community may or may not need. It's difficult to negotiate with these outside organizations because ADMMAPA needs their support and funding. One such example of these difficulties is the recent troubles with the thread project. ADMMAPA decided by vote that the majority of the women in Santa Catarina needed thread to continue their weavings. They presented the project to the government and the First Lady of Guatemala approved it. However, after the group had honored the First Lady and prepared to receive the thread they encountered confusion within the system. The thread went to the wrong women's group. In response the group sent the *directiva* to Guatemala City to present their case to the First Lady in the hopes of some resolution. The *directiva* was told that such is the process of bureaucracy and that nothing could be done. Lidia says that these are the continual frustrations that the group faces, and while it is unacceptable it is their reality.

Within the first week of meeting Lidia I was granted the opportunity to participate in one of the organization's meetings. Walking into the barren schoolroom I saw a few

women sitting in deadly quiet waiting for the meeting to start. Most had brought their children of varying ages along and one little girl sat with her feet dangling over the edge of her chair, her somber face a mirror image of the older women around her. She looked very old for her four years and smiled knowingly at me. Soon voices began to echo outside the silent room, and the only boy jerked his nodding head upright while his mother muttered threats at the back of it. During this time a sporadic stream of women had been trickling into the room so that their numbers had grown to something close to thirty. As the *directiva* started to take attendance the room began to reverberate with the chatter and laughter of women teasing and joking with each other. It was clear that the women enjoy the social dynamic that the meeting offers.

After the meeting, I had the opportunity to engage in a dialog about the importance of a women's group with the *directiva*. I experienced a surprising feeling of intimidation as I sat in front of these four women, two of them younger than myself, who have achieved so much for the women of their community. However the intermingling of easy laughter, articulate answers, and simple tangents soon created an atmosphere of flowing conversation. One thematic response from the *directiva* was that women are constantly exploited and as a consequence suffer the injustices of gender. Because of these two issues the creation of a women's group is essential in order to provide a community and support system for women so their voices can be heard. The first factor in forming a group is placing importance in the creation of a "safe place" where women experience confidence and respect in their relations with other group members. From this first stepping-stone a group can begin to grow and move towards community action, but the feeling of *confianza* (confidence, trust) is essential.

In the natural pause that follows such an insightful explanation Lidia points out that the role of a leader is also an important factor in the creation of a group. Lidia explains that it is imperative to understand that they are all types of women: quite, loud, shy, talkative, aggressive, and passive. With all these different characters it is essential to present the same persona to each one in order to be a consistent leader. She says you can never let someone come over you; a difficult thing as you are working to empower the individual. It is a very fine line that a leader walks between the relationships she creates with the women in the group and her role as one of their leaders. On the other hand Sandra, 19 and the youngest member of the *directiva*, likes the cargo of her position. She says it gives her the ability to actually carry out her desires to help the community. Before she was a voice without an audience and didn't have the power of an organization behind her nor her role as a community leader. Now she has a new found independence.

At one point during my weeks in Santa Catarina, Lidia led me to Alma's house. During our walk down the main street and up into the mountain Lidia explained that Alma, one of the voices that I heard during the meeting, has been on the peripheries of Santa Catarina's organizations for the past nine years. However, when the first women's group became official she really began to take an active participatory role. After a very rushed introduction Lidia left me sitting on the outside steps of the Alma's house with her daughter playing with their chickens. Alma, from inside her house, explained that she was just re-heating some coffee and that the chickens wouldn't hurt me. Trying not to seem disappointed at the prospect of another cup of overly sweetened coffee I began try and befriend Alma's daughter and the chickens. Before I could make much headway on that front, Alma appeared carrying two steaming cups of coffee and folded herself onto the

steps. At this point I had gotten used to conducting interviews in all manner of places and settled myself a little more comfortably on the concrete.

Alma joined the ADMMAPA because she realized that in her culture women do not leave the house. Instead women spend their lives inside four walls cooking, doing laundry, and raising children. These women don't learn or experience the outside world. Alma didn't want this; specifically she didn't want to be like her mother, who admits that she was kept in the house by her husband and never did anything with her life. In contrast Alma, through her participation in the ADAMPPA, learned Spanish and began to engage in the outside world. Inside the house there did not exist opportunity, now being a member of a women's organization she knows, understands, and can articulate her rights to this opportunity.

Alma explained to me that that she feels sad having spent so many years not knowing she had a voice for her needs. Being part of the group has given her an environment of solidarity amongst women who have become her peers. These women place value in their lives outside of the house and thus escape the generation of their parents. The organization gives Alma a family and opportunities to learn outside of her house and pueblo. Also the meetings offer a place to converse and pass along to others the understanding that she has gained. Alma now has a voice which the *directiva* listens to and a forum where there exists a mutual understanding of womanhood. She no longer is afraid to express herself nor is she afraid of men. Additionally, she has gained a voice inside her own house that her husband respects and listens to.

To prove this point Alma tells me a story about a personal victory she had with her husband. It seemed that every time she went to a meeting, she returned home and was

berated by her husband's criticisms. This confused Alma, as her husband had not banned her membership with the organization. Upon further questioning she discovered that the real root of the problem was that many of the meetings occurred during mealtime. Alma explained to her husband the importance of her meetings even if they occurred during mealtimes and that her attendance at them was greatly valued. However, to compensate for her absence she taught him how to make scrambled eggs, which even he admitted taste good. Looking into my eyes to convey the enormity of this experience, Alma says that if it hadn't been for the organization she would never have known how to ask her husband about his misgivings let alone come up with a solution to the problem. Now, as she continues her participation in the group, her new goal is to change the expectations for women that have become the norm so that her daughter can have every opportunity available to her.

Analysis & Conclusion

"The goal of analysis is to develop a well-supported argument that adds to the understanding of a phenomenon, whether the understanding is phrased in descriptive, interpretive, or explanatory terms" (Dewalt 2002:164).

My hope for this investigation was to discover results akin to those found by the authors of the above articles. Namely, that participation in an organization generates feelings of empowerment which in turn cause individuals to continue acting as engaged members of the organization. In addition I wanted to investigate the proposition that the feelings of solidarity which drive such organizations are more important than the physical gains that being a member of an organization might bring. For example, working as part of a weaving cooperative may or may not generate a financial benefit to an individual.

However, the social gains that are created by participating in said organization are found to be more valuable.

Through my interviews and observations I did discover a general feeling of empowerment held by all the women with whom I had the opportunity to talk. Generally, they could not articulate these feelings or label them as empowerment, because that word was foreign to them; yet they were able to convey these feelings to me by describing their experiences. Much like the articulation that Bayard de Volo received during an interview with a Nicaraguan woman who stated, “being organized is a beautiful thing because you have support... You meet people, interact with them, making friends. And if you aren’t organized, this doesn’t happen because you don’t leave the house, don’t meet people,” I felt that the women I interviewed voiced similar opinions (Bayard de Volo 2006:161). Their participation in their respective groups gave each of them a voice that before had been suppressed from them and a forum where they could freely express it.

One factor that I had not anticipated which members from all three organizations articulated was the concept of service. The idea of helping others is central to the feelings of empowerment that the women experienced. For example Patrona took pleasure in knowing she was helping the women who worked for her. In contrast Carmen felt a sense of power knowing she was helping Patrona further the vision of her business. The concept of service is even more explicit in the Church as much of its work was based on helping those in need. Rosa was able to articulate that when she helped someone in need she felt a sense of power in the most basic sense because it meant she was in a position to lift someone up; her problems were smaller than those in need. Las Mujeres Mayas is built on the concept of helping women find their voice within their own community. One

way of doing this is by creating and participating in projects that help others. By doing service these women discover that they can offer even the smallest amount of solidarity to others in need. As Bayard de Volo explains by means of her observations of the Nicaraguan women's group,

“addressing the problems of others and looking for way to improve their work raised many women's own self-esteem. Thus, these women felt a sense of self-fulfillment through participation in a communal response to problems...[and the] collective identity and the self-realization and discovery that they entailed.”
[Bayard de Volo 2006:162]

Bayard de Volo's explanation makes sense and is irrefutable in the responses of the women to whom I talked.

The idea of service corresponds nicely with the notion of Latin America's “new feminism.” Aid is brought to the woman in her home and delivered to her in order to help her manage her duties as mother and caretaker. Thus, women such as Rosa, who participate in service as part of their group membership, are helping to assist and support the ideal of the mother. These organizations, through their actions and the services that they provide, all acknowledge the mother in some way. From Patrona, whose cooperative creates financial gains for her weavers who can then better support their families and feel pride in that ability, to Alma who feels comfortable enough in her role at home to challenge her husband to share some of the matronly home duties. The empowerment of these women through service, community, or solidarity all factor into the role of these women as the mothers of their homes, thus supporting the power of “new feminism.”

In addition to these discoveries, I hoped to be able to see differences between organizations that were founded from dissimilar perspectives. I thought that an organization that is created from the “bottom up” would be more successful in fulfilling

the goals of the people who founded it, as they are members of the community. On the other hand, I thought that an organization created from “top down” strategies would have more power as they have connections and influences outside of the community. But, I felt that such a strategy could allow for the outside organizer too get caught up in their own agenda and not truly see the desires of the people similar to the implications of Fisher’s article. If this proved to be true I think there is great potential for members of this type of organization to feel less empowerment than from those who start their own organization.

In reviewing my field notes it became apparent that the difference between the groups’ structures played a pivotal role in empowerment the women felt. For example Patrona talked about her cooperative with utter confidence as it was her own creation and depended solely on her. On the other hand, Las Mujeres Mayas, although a grassroots movement founded from within the community, only exist through the interests of outside organizations. Unfortunately, as the disastrous thread project proved, the commencement of their group actions are essentially in the hands of an outsider, who in this case lacked crucial community understanding. Though the women feel empowerment because of their membership in the group, they are frustrated by the system which sustains them and also on which they are simultaneously dependent. This catch twenty-two does not help raise one’s feelings of empowerment but rather reveals how certain things are out of their control.

Additionally, it became evident that the difference between the groups’ structures played a fundamental role in the non-material benefits that the women received. In terms of Patrona’s cooperative her organization offered her workers the comfort of job security and a sure income. These feelings of security are essential in order to feel a sense of self-

dignity and power. The women's group of Asamblea de Dios offered each member a sense of solidarity within their faith. The feeling of community created by this group in their union of beliefs caused each woman to feel a sense of belonging, also a crucial element to empowerment. In a similar vein Las Mujeres Mayas offer a forum where women can gather to socialize and share their ideas. This space that the *directiva* created is indispensable to the success of their group and their work towards liberating the women's voices of Santa Catarina.

In general my basic hypothesis, that there is an important link between the structure of an organization or type of organization and the subjective experiences of empowerment, was confirmed. The fit between data and hypothesis was very exciting. Though I struggled with language barriers and concepts, I feel strongly that along with my anticipated results I learned about many aspects of community organization that I had not before considered. The one point of contention that I cannot reconcile is the location of empowerment. I cannot refute that these women are empowered and that their empowerment is a consequence of the organizations in which they participate. However, while these organizations empower women within the spaces they create for them, is there movement out of these spaces? That is to ask; once any one of these women leaves the community of their respective organizations does that empowerment follow them throughout their daily interactions? While I can say this is true of Alma and her scrambled eggs, Lidia in her desires to confront the government, and Rosa in her efforts to help others I wonder if these anecdotes evidencing empowerment are really only moments and not widespread. Perhaps my concerns are unfounded as maybe the

successes of these organizations are defined by moments. Moments and moments that eventually grow to become way of life in the everyday lives of rural Guatemalan women.

Bibliography

Afflitto, Frank M., and Paul Jesilow

2007 The Movement Is Fragmented by the Peace Accords. *In The Quiet Revolutionaries Seeking Justice in Guatemala*. Pp. 129-48. Austin: University of Texas.

Alvarez, Sonia E.

1998 Latin American Feminisms "Go Global": Trends of the 1990s and Challenges for the New Millennium. *In Cultures of Politics/politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, eds. Pp. 252-92. Boulder: Westview.

Barrig, Maruja

1996 Women, Collective Kitchens, and the Crisis of the State in Peru. *In Emergences: Women's Struggles for Livelihood in Latin America*. John Friedmann, Rebecca Abers, and Lilian Autler, eds. Pp. 59-78. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publication.

Bayard De Volo, Lorraine

2006 The Nonmaterial Long-Term Benefits of Collective Action: Empowerment and Social Capital in a Nicaraguan Women's Organization. *Comparative Politics* 38 no. 2: 149-67. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20433987>>.

Berger, Susan A.

2003 Guatemaltecas: The Politics of Gender and Democratization. *In Struggles for Social Rights in Latin America*. Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley and Susan Eckstein, eds. Pp. 193-208. New York: Routledge.

Blondet, Cecilia

1996 In No-Man's Land: Poor Women's Organizations and Political Violence in Lima's Neighborhoods. *In Emergences : Women's Struggles for Livelihood in Latin America*. John Friedmann, Rebecca Abers, and Lilian Autler, eds. Pp. 79-90. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publication.

Bose, Christine E., and Edna Acosta-Belén

1995 Colonialism, Structural Subordination, and Empowerment. *In Women in the Latin American Development Process*. Pp. 15-36. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

Bourque, Susan Carolyn, and Kay B. Warren

1981 Women of the Andes: Patriarchy and Social Change in Two Peruvian Towns. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Chinchilla, Norma Stolz

1993 Gender and National Politics: Issues and Trends in Women's Participation in Latin American Movements. *In Researching Women in Latin America and the*

- Caribbean. By Edna Acosta-Belén and Christine E. Bose. Pp. 37-54. Boulder, Colo: Westview.
- Costantino, Roselyn
2006 "Femicide, Impunity, and Citizenship: the Old and New in the Struggle for Justice in Guatemala. *Chicana/Latinia Studies* Fall 6 (1):108-21.
- DeWalt, Kathleen Musante, and Billie R. DeWalt
2002 *Participant Observation: a Guide for Fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira.
- Europa World Plus
2010 Guatemala. *In* Europa World online. London, Routledge. Carleton College. Retrieved 02 November 2010 from <http://www.europaworld.com/entry/gt>.
- Fischer, Edward F.
2001 The Rise of Pan-Mayan Activism. *In* *Cultural Logics and Global Economies: Maya Identity in Thought and Practice*. Pp. 83-114. Austin: University of Texas.
- Fisher, William F.
1997 Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26:439-464. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1601284>.
- Feijoó, María Del Carmen
1996 Women Confronting the Crisis: Two Case Studies from Greater Buenos Aires. *In* *Emergences : Women's Struggles for Livelihood in Latin America*. John Friedmann, Rebecca Abers, and Lilian Autler, eds. Pp. 31-46. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publication.
- Green, Patricia
n.d. Field Notes from Santa Catarina Palopo, Municipio de Sololá, Guatemala. February 15th -March 7th 2010.
- Guatemala
N.d. Europa World Online. <http://www.europaworld.com/entry/gt>, accessed October 11, 2010.
- Hainard, Fracois, and Christine Verschuur
2001 Filling the Urban Policy Breach: Women's Empowerment, Grass-Roots Organizations, and Urban Governance. *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 1: 33-53. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1601284>>.
- Hallum, Anne Motley
2003 "Taking Stock and Building Bridges: Feminism, Women's Movements, and Pentecostalism in Latin America." *Latin American Research Review* 38, no.1: 169-68. <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/lar/summary/v038/38.1hallum.html>>.

Hooks, Margaret

1991 *Guatemalan Women Speak*. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations.

Langer, Erick Detlef, and Elena Muñoz

2003 Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala. *In Contemporary Indigenous Movements in Latin America*. Pp. 169-86. Wilmington: SR.

Lavrin, Asunción

1993 Women in Latin America: Current Research Trends. *In Researching Women in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Edna Acosta-Belén and Christine E. Bose, eds. Pp. 7-36. Boulder: Westview.

Luciak, Ilja A.

2001 Gender Equality and the Central American Peace Accords. *In After the Revolution: Gender and Democracy in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala*. Pp 32-64. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

Mattiace, Shannan L.

2005 Representation and Rights: Recent Scholarship on Social Movements in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review* 40, no.1: 237-50.
<<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/lar/summary/v040.40.1mattiace.html>>.

Postero, Nancy Grey, and León Zamosc

2004 Beyond Victimization: Maya Movements in Post-war Guatemala. *In The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America*. Pp. 81-104 Brighton: Sussex Academic.

Safa, Helen Icken

1995 Women's Social Movements in Latin America. *In Women in the Latin American Development Process*. Christine E. Bose and Edna Acosta-Belén, eds. Pp. 227-41 Philadelphia: Temple UP.

Schild, Verónica.

1998 New Subjects of Rights? Women's Movements and the Construction of Citizenship in the "New Democracies." *In Cultures of Politics/politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, eds. Pp. 93-117. Boulder: Westview.

Stephen, Lynn

1997a Introduction: Gender and Politics, Experience and Structure. *In Women and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from below*. Pp. 1-28 Austin: University of Texas.

1997b The Politics of Urban Survival. *In Women and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from below*. Pp. 111-48. Austin: University of Texas.

1993 Anthropological Research on Latin American Women *In* Researching Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Edna Acosta-Belén and Christine E. Bose, eds. Pp 77-98. Boulder: Westview.

Warren, Kay B., and Jean E. Jackson

2002 Voting Against Indigenous Rights in Guatemala: Lessons from the 1999 Referendum. *In* Indigenous Movements, Self-representation, and the State in Latin America. Pp. 149-80. Austin: University of Texas.