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TOWARDS EMBRACING A CRITICAL LOVE ETHIC IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM NICARAGUA

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TOWARDS EMBRACING A CRITICAL LOVE ETHIC IN COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM NICARAGUA

PATRICK BARNOSKY

MAY 2016

A MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester,
Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in the department of International Development, Community,
and Environment

And accepted on the recommendation of

Jude Fernando, Chief Instructor

ABSTRACT
TOWARDS EMBRACING A CRITICAL LOVE ETHIC IN COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM NICARAGUA

PATRICK BARNOSKY

This research is based on a community sanitation project from Cuajchillo Dos, Nicaragua, in which I served as a field volunteer for Walu International and simultaneously conducted interviews and focus groups with project participants. The goal of this research is to determine to what extent dialogues that took place in this project were based on an ethic of critical love, which has two primary components: relationality and critical social consciousness. The main findings from this research were that the essential components of dialogue based on a critical love ethic are: listening deeply and sharing openly, building trust and relationships, entering into critical situational analysis and developing solidarity. Additional implications include the importance of a clearly defined community development model and time to develop relationships in community development.

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"The most important thing for me is that we treat the families, or human beings, equally and that we all benefit equally, in a way that is equitable and shared and just and responsible, and also transparent and honest.¹"

— Julia, Interview, July 2015

I. Introduction

On my second day in town, Julia took me to visit some of her neighbors, who are all either close friends or family. We walked all day, up and down the lush Nicaraguan hillsides, but Julia never lost an ounce of the spark that constantly lights up her face. At one point, late in the day, we arrived at the house of Sra. Angelita, a sarcastic, strong-spoken woman, who complained to us about her broken cook-stove, which was spewing smoke into the tight quarters of her kitchen. She was saying that they didn't put enough concrete in the mix and was disappointed in the project, which had been funded by a local NGO. Julia spoke to her in such an understanding and compassionate way that you could feel the love. They started brainstorming ideas, exchanging such quick back-and-forth responses that I felt I was listening to the streams of their consciousness. Julia humbly offered her suggestions and Angelita countered with the reasons they would not work. They never did arrive to an agreement on what exactly to do about it, but they both agreed in the end that continuing to breathe in the thick smoke, day in and day out would be bad for Angelita's health. They made a pact to fix the stove in one way or another and Julia said she would send over the construction specialist who had built the stove. I learned that day the power of entering into dialogue based on a critical love ethic:

¹ Julia: "Lo más importante para mí es que tratemos a la familias, o los seres humanos, por igual y que todo nos beneficiemos por igual, de una manera equitativa y compartida y justa y responsable, y también transparente y honesta."

expressing care and compassion for others while being critically reflective, in order to foster loving relationships and solidarity around issues and actions.

Julia truly exemplified for me how to embrace a critical love ethic in dialogues surrounding community development issues, as well as in everyday life. She cares deeply about her neighbors and the community as a whole. She openly expresses her concern for others, and respects their perspectives. She honestly shares of herself - her time, energy, and opinions - and remains open to others, while staying true to her values.

Julia knows what she stands for - social, environmental, economic and political equity and justice - but always remains, first and foremost, oriented towards one underlying principle - a love of humanity. She is receptive to different perspectives, but seeks to unify people around the issues she sees as important to her community.

During the two months I lived with Julia in Cuajachillo Dos, she taught me, through the way she lives and works with people, how to employ a critical love ethic in community development. I was there as a Field Volunteer and Researcher for the U.S. based Non-Governmental Organization, Walu International, to learn about the water and sanitation situation and organize with people around related issues. Walu had never worked in Cuajachillo Dos before, and first learned about its water and sanitation needs from another NGO involved in the planning of a water system project there. I went with the intent to facilitate dialogues regarding water and sanitation needs, opportunities to work collaboratively on these issues, and to coordinate a pilot project, if time permitted.

Simultaneously, I was conducting research in the for my Master of Arts degree in International Development and Social Change at Clark University. The primary purpose of this research was always to advance the community sanitation project. However, this

study is also intended to contribute to ongoing conversations among scholars and practitioners regarding our roles as community development practitioners and the importance of employing a love ethic in these spaces, as well as our everyday lives.

This is a study of how people involved in this project, including myself, experienced and perceived the processes of needs and resource assessment, project planning and implementation. I attempt to present to what extent participants perceived the dialogues that took place to be based on the principles of a critical love ethic and its relational and socially consciousness components: deep listening and honest sharing, trust and relationships, critical situational analysis and solidarity.

The objective of this study is not to quantify responses in order to represent the general population, but rather, to allow people to speak for themselves through in-depth dialogues and interviews. This is intended to provide a deeper understanding of the particularities of each participant's perspective.

Through this process, I gained insight into how the participants of this project experienced and perceived the developing project plan and the planning processes of which they had been a part. This was used to adjust practices during the needs assessment, project planning and pilot project phase and this study will be presented to Walu International for consideration regarding future practices involved in the planning and implementation of the project.

II. Methods

This research is based on data gathered from a community sanitation project in which I was involved, as a Field Volunteer/Researcher for Walu International, in the rural community of Cuajachillo Dos, Nicaragua from June 3 – July 31, 2015. I served as a co-facilitator, along with others from the community, in the needs assessment, project planning and pilot project phase of this ongoing effort.

Methodology

This research is based on the principles of participatory-action research. Participatory action research is a collaborative and action oriented approach to research in which knowledge is co-created through group dialogue and collaborative action (Bailey, Hutter and Hennink, 2010). This methodology is rooted in an epistemological stance which holds that "valid knowledge is produced only in collaboration and in action" (Torre and Fine, 2006, 271). The validity of knowledge is intimately connected to its basis in experience and collective efforts to transform the world. This research is intimately connected to the advancement of the ongoing community sanitation project in Cuajchillo Dos, Nicaragua. The purpose of this research was to collaboratively conduct a needs and resource assessment, form solidarity around issues of shared interest, plan a project to address determined needs and implement a pilot project. This research was also designed to assess the methods and processes of facilitation and coordination with project participants.

The philosophy behind this approach is heavily influenced by the principles of 'Black Feminist Epistemology,' as espoused by Patricia Hill Collins (1990), which values

lived realities as significant sources of knowledge and dialogue as an important form of knowledge creation (208 - 212).

Knowledge based in our experience and interpretation of the world is highly subjective and only represents a partial truth. However, as Kim England points out, we can only understand the world through our own analytical lens, based on our subjectivities, which are highly influenced by our identities and social positions (1994, 248). As such, we must be reflexive and honest about how this influences the questions we ask, how we conduct research and how we analyze data. In this research, I seek to present my observations, as well as the perspectives of other participants, through my own subjective analytical lens.

Site and Participants

The town of Cuajachillo Dos (Map in Appendix 1) is located about fifteen kilometers from Managua, Nicaragua's capital city. Yet, despite its proximity to the political and economic hub, the residents of Cuajachillo Dos do not have access to basic services such as domestic water connections and sanitation facilities for the proper disposal of human excreta. This town has been adversely affected by a lack of economic resources and opportunities (World Bank, 2014), political neglect, as well as the consequences of drought (Start Network, 2015), and the Chikungunya virus epidemic (Pan American Health Organization, 2015.)

From the research conducted: the residents of Cuajachillo Dos are primarily mestizos, a combination of indigenous and European descent; the average family size is 5 and families often live with their extended families, or in different homes on the same

property. Many residents have levels of educational attainment below the high school level, especially older residents. The primary sources of income generation are: agriculture, construction and small businesses. These livelihoods have been strained by economic, political, social and environmental factors, including colonial legacy, imperialism, political and economic marginalization and climate change.

There are one hundred and fifty families in Cuajachillo Dos. Of the forty families that participated in our needs analysis in June 2016, seventeen families expressed that they have limited access to sanitation facilities. These families currently practice open defecation or share a latrine with up to four other families.

The participants of this project were all members of the community of Cuajachillo Dos. Some were community leaders and concerned residents, and some were representatives of families that do not have any sort of sanitation facility or have a facility that requires renovation.

I was first introduced to Julia, the matriarch of the family I lived with during this time, through Emily, a local NGO worker. Julia introduced me to many of the other participants of this project. I then met many of the other participants through these contacts and in the public meetings we publicized to nearly every house in the town.

Role and Positionality of the Researcher

In this project and research, I tried to constantly reflect on my roles, positionalities and subjectivities in order to be open, transparent and mindful of their impact. I was both a researcher and a project facilitator from outside the community, representing a U.S.-based NGO, as well as my own research interests. Furthermore, I am

a white, college-educated, heterosexual male who is a U.S. citizen. Due to the social positionalities attached to these identities, I inhabited positions of power and privilege. Furthermore, I had little local knowledge and only one local contact in the beginning. As such, I had to take time to develop relationships and rapport and learn about the community and its people. Furthermore, I was a field volunteer and researcher for Walu International, which is a U.S. based NGO. I was operating under the leadership of a director and board of directors(waluinternational.org/team/). I attempted to actively recognize my privilege as well as to be honest about my limitations in those positions, including the social, political and professional systems within which I was operating.

I chose to conduct research based on this type of work because I believe in the importance of participatory action research and community-driven development projects. I believe participatory approaches can create more humanizing, just and sustainable projects, as well as open spaces for individual and collective growth, empowerment, and organizing.

I wish to openly acknowledge that I am intimately connected to the project examined in this research, and personally invested in the themes presented. I do not seek to present an objective or all-encompassing theory, but rather, seek to represent my partial and subjective perspective as a participant/facilitator and researcher in this study and the project on which it is based.

The Organization: Walu International

Walu International focuses its efforts on water and sanitation projects in places where there is limited access to these basic needs. Walu operates under the model of the

'participatory method,' in which it seeks the participation of community members in planning and implementation of its projects.

Walu International is a recently founded organization with limited funding and only five permanent members, a director, technical specialist and board of directors. All of Walu's staff work entirely voluntarily, without any financial compensation. Walu receives its funding from individual donors and is currently in the process of applying for grant funding from several foundations.

I was initially drawn to Walu because of its mission of 'improving hygiene and sanitation conditions in communities', its rationale 'that clean water and basic sanitation are an inherent human right', and its methodology to 'empower communities' and create 'community ownership' by employing the 'participatory method' (waluinternational.org).

Data Collected

During my time in Cuajachillo Dos, I facilitated several needs and resource analysis and project planning meetings, as well as interviews and focus groups. All of these spaces were designed to work with community members to improve the community water and sanitation situation. In these dialogues, interviews and focus groups, community members and I discussed the local sanitation situation and its social, economic and political context. We discussed sanitation problems and opportunities for improvement, as well as strengths and resources that could be leveraged for the project. In interviews and focus groups, we additionally discussed the planning process of the project, the effectiveness of group dialogues and activities related to the needs assessment and project planning processes, in order to improve them. I initially focused my

interview and focus group questions more on the processes, structures and methods of dialogue facilitation and participant involvement in group meetings. I continued to ask these questions in all of my interviews and focus groups, however, after my first interview, I began to ask more about sanitation needs, resources and feasible action plans for the project. I realized these conversations could be important spaces for us to continue to enter into dialogue, analyze the sanitation situation and plan collaborative efforts.

I conducted five interviews and five focus groups with a total of twenty-two community members who participated in the project planning. These interviews and focus groups lasted on average one hour and were recorded using a digital audio recording device. I also conducted participant observations of four community meetings, with a total of sixty-three attendees and daily informal dialogues with community members, as well as local community development practitioners.

In interviews and focus groups, I used an interview guide (Appendix 3) very loosely, to focus on the main themes of my research. However, I attempted to foster a conversational, relaxed environment. The themes I asked about gave direction to these conversations, however, I also attempted to remain present to the responses, tones and energies of my interviewees. When they indicated strong opinions about certain topics, I asked clarifying questions and probed for more in-depth responses. In this way, the interviewees also heavily determined the direction of our conversations.

Additionally, I took diligent field notes to create a thick description of the proceedings of most dialogues, interviews, focus groups, and the project implementation

process, in which I described significant events and topics, using concrete details, including the setting and individuals involved.

Data Analysis

The data analysis I employed in this study is based on the principles of the extended case method, detailed by Michael Burawoy (1998). The extended case method suggests we use case studies to illustrate existing theories. Under this model, theoretical frameworks shape and give relevance to individual cases. Each case can contribute to existing theories by challenging them, or adding complexity or nuances.

In this study, after conducting and recording the interviews, I transcribed the audio files. I then employed line-by-line coding to identify important themes that arose out of the data. I simultaneously conducted literature reviews and developed an initial theoretical framework, which continued to evolve throughout this process. I then re-coded my data in light of the themes I drew on from the literature. According to the extended case method, I used my data from Nicaragua as a case study to support the theoretical framework which I had developed. The themes that emerged from the case study then added complexity and nuance to the theoretical framework.

III. Theoretical Framework

“Unlike other movements for social change that require joining organizations and attending meetings, we can begin the process of making community wherever we are. We can begin by sharing a smile, a warm greeting, a bit of conversation; by doing a kind deed or acknowledging kindness offered us”

—bell hooks (2000, p.143-144).

1. The Critical Love Ethic

I believe that we should strive to approach community development work with what bell hooks calls a *love ethic*. Hooks defines love as an act, rather than a feeling, in which we "openly and honestly express care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust" (2000, 14). The underlying principles of this love ethic are relationality and critical social consciousness. Relationality is a worldview that all of humanity is interconnected, and which embraces compassion, collectivity and humanizing treatment of others, and rejects individualism and instrumental treatment of others. Critical social consciousness is a process of seeking awareness of social power structures, how they affect our individual lives and our behaviors.

Relationality entails commitment and service to communal causes, compromise and sharing resources, both material and immaterial (i.e. privilege, power, networks, skills, time and energy). The purpose of community development is for people to come together for the benefit of a collective, and as such is an act of love and an affirmation of our relationality. However, as bell hooks makes clear, in order to operate from a true love ethic, we must also "critically examine our actions to see what is needed so that we can give care, be responsible, show respect and indicate a willingness to learn" (2000, p. 94). Thus, the love ethic requires us to develop a critical consciousness, in order to think and act in a critically relational manner.

I believe that in order to be fully critical, we must acknowledge our interconnection with the rest of society, and for community development efforts to be true expressions of the love ethic, they must be connected to larger-scale movements for social change. Margaret Ledwith advocates that we embrace "a critical approach – situating local practice within the wider political picture. In other words, unless we have an analysis of power, of the structures of oppression in the world that reach into our local communities and impact on personal lives, our practice is likely to be tokenistic at best." (2007, p. 3). At the same time, we must acknowledge the complexities of communities as overlapping social webs and work strategically with others, within the confines of our situations. Peter Westoby and Gerard Dowling also connect community development to larger scale paradigm shift, but suggest that we "not start with the toughest problem, for example the 'root' cause of social disintegration within a community, but to start with what people are ready and able to do, based on the strong connections that already exist." (2013,16).

I believe community development efforts must be oriented towards creating a more loving and just world on the macro level, but must be grounded in the creation of open dialogue, trusting relationships, communities and genuine solidarity on the micro level. Employing the love ethic in everyday life is an important part of linking our community work to larger efforts for social change and justice. While joint actions for social justice can be concrete expressions of the love ethic, they must be grounded in a relational and socially conscious lifestyle.

The love ethic implies that we work to carry out the principles of love in every moment of our lives. We must make a conscious effort to be oriented towards an ethic of

love in every interaction, and also join together to act upon the opportunities available to us to contribute to social justice causes. We must start by first making a commitment to love and justice in our everyday lives and our micro-politics, as well as in public spaces. It is only in this way that social change efforts will be grounded in and directed towards the creation of love and justice.

For the purpose of this research, the 1) critical love ethic is based on two fundamental principles: 1.1) critical social consciousness and 1.2) relationality. I believe that one fundamental way to enact these principles is through 2) dialogue, which entails: 2.1) listening deeply and sharing honestly 2.2) trust and relationships 2.3) critical situational analysis 2.4) solidarity.

1.1 Critical Social Consciousness

Community development should be oriented towards creating a more just and loving world - and we must take our individual lives and relationships as a starting point towards realizing this goal. In order to build new types of relations and communities based on the principles of the love ethic, we must be aware of societal power dynamics and how they are reproduced in the micro-politics of all social spaces.

Societal values, norms and narratives impact our perceptions and also influence our behaviors. In order to take control of our lives, we must first acknowledge and struggle to unlearn our socially ingrained predispositions and prejudices. As Audre Lorde put it, “we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are the result of those structures” (Sister Outsider, p.123). We must

seek critical awareness of our conscious and subconscious subjectivities and biases, in order to truly act from a love ethic.

We must constantly strive for greater awareness of ourselves and society in an attempt to break free from the social conditioning that goes against the principles of love. This process must be a continual struggle to identify and grapple with ourselves and our identities. Sociologists such as George Herbert Mead and Charles Cooley can help us understand society's influence on our identities and behaviors as "formed in relation to the values, symbols constructed by our cultures" (Hall, 1996 597). Stuart Hall (1996) further proposes that the 'post-modern subject' has no fixed identity, but rather is constantly changing as the structures and institutions of our cultures change (598). Societal structures predispose us to think, feel and act in certain ways, and we must question ourselves through deep reflection and critical analysis of ourselves in the context of a larger societal perspective. In this way, we can begin to better understand ourselves and reorient our lives towards our ideals. As Paulo Freire (1998) says, "We are conditioned beings, but not determined beings" (37). We are not fixed in our thinking or behaviors, but are in 'a constant state of becoming' and must critically embrace this in order to make the conscious effort to embrace a love ethic.

In order to employ the love ethic in our lives, we must first identify the social structures that stand in opposition to the love ethic and deconstruct societally prescribed ways of interacting that reinforce unequal power dynamics. Margaret Ledwith (2011) makes the political impact of our behaviors clear with her assertion that "in the very language we use, dominant knowledge that reinforces power differentials is implicit in every encounter, in every spoken or written word, even in body language that remains

silent. However, these sites also provide the key to interventions that create counternarratives that challenge dominant narratives." (147). Our words and actions create narratives and we must be aware of their effect on others, and their implications within each particular social situation. Though we cannot alone change or reduce power differentials that are socially entrenched, we can humbly strive to act from relational love rather than individualistic and instrumental treatment of others.

In our interpersonal interactions, we can begin building new types of relationships and communities that reject dominance and embrace love. Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) suggests that in order to engage with others in ways that go against what he calls 'colonized social norms', based on hierarchy and oppression, we must "rethink encounters with others in ways that rearrange the hierarchical symbolic orders that produce the very differences that make those encounters legible. This involves "creatively" engaging with others in unexpected and perhaps even inopportune ways that might rearrange the symbolic content of human exchanges..." (56). We can do so by first recognizing prescribed ways of interacting based on hierarchy and oppression and acting in ways that go against the norm. In this way we can attempt to disrupt socially determined roles and find space to renegotiate power dynamics in these moments.

In community development, as in any other social space, there are always dynamics of power that exist between people from different social positions based on gender, race, sexuality, nationality, socioeconomic status, etc. We can work to make a statement against these power dynamics by acting from a love ethic and building relationships based on mutual respect, care, trust and honesty.

Community development practitioners working with organizations connected to resources inherently occupy positions of power and privilege.

These unequal power dynamics are exacerbated by differences in race, gender, socio-economic status, formal education level, among others. It is even more crucial for development practitioners to reflect on this because of the power they hold in community development projects, which directly affect people's lives and livelihoods. There are many roles and behaviors that serve to reinforce these power differentials, which we should work to disrupt in an effort to create new types of relationships and social dynamics based on the principles of love. These behaviors include acting as a dialogue facilitator, decision-maker, project coordinator, etc. Practitioners can work to create new relationships by becoming aware of these behaviors and acting in ways that are honest about power dynamics and break down roles and behaviors that reinforce or exacerbate power differentials. Practitioners must be self-critical and identify their positionalities, as well as the socially conditioned behaviors in order to replace them with honest, loving behaviors that embrace equality, mutual respect, care and commitment. Acting from a love ethic is the only way to interact in a truly humanizing manner and create the conditions to form relationships and communities based on love, which must be the basis of any collaborative effort to create a more loving and just world. However, we must also acknowledge the danger in using this concept of a love ethic as a cure-all solution that can be interpreted as a way to overcome systemic and structural oppression. We cannot change these systems alone, but acting from a love ethic creates the conditions for others to act in this way. When groups of people together act from a love ethic, they set the foundation to build communities based on the love ethic. When everyone begins to

reject oppression, domination and systemic inequity, and embrace the love ethic, we can work to dismantle these systems and rebuild a global community based on love and justice. A first step towards this ideal is to begin to build communities of love with those around us by entering into loving communication, building solidarity and then working together to combat injustice on the bigger scale. Based on my experiences in community development work, often times community practitioners are seen as the experts in the community development industry. The systems and social dynamics in place reinforce the power and status that community development practitioners hold. This is a dangerous paradigm that we should acknowledge as a fallacy that we should openly reject and work to disrupt. I think that in community development work, it is important to create spaces for all voices to be heard in a more equitable manner. This involves practitioners humbly acknowledging their limited knowledge and the need to listen and take into account what communities see as their needs. In my practice, I attempt to employ this ethic by allowing my authority and knowledge to be challenged. I believe that opening up spaces for conflict and disagreement to take place can allow us to renegotiate power dynamics and achieve a more honest collective understanding and goal.

1.2. Relationality

Living with a love ethic requires that we be critically reflective about ourselves and our positionalities in the complex web of human society. I believe this must begin by recognizing our interconnectedness with the rest of humanity. As Martin Luther King (1963) Jr. famously declared, “We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly”

(p. 77). We are connected in many historical, social, physical and metaphysical ways and the individualistic worldview that pervades our society is merely a social construct that both separates us and prevents us from achieving our full human and social potential.

As Martin Buber (1958) taught, the individual can only be defined in relation to other people and things, and therefore our self-conceptions are inter-dependent and ever evolving (11). This insight allows us to see ourselves as dependent upon others for our sense of humanity. It also allows us to see each other as fully human subjects, and treat each other as such. This understanding should move us to treat others with love and respect, and come together in communion in order to engage our shared humanity. The currently dominant individualistic worldview in modern western society allows for an instrumental view and treatment of others. However, as Buber suggests, we cannot realize our full humanity until we embrace a relational worldview and treat others humanely.

Kenneth Gergen (2009) further points to the inherent contradictions in what he calls the 'individual bounded self', which is a culturally constructed concept that only has meaning because of mutual understanding. He suggests that all meaning and understanding, including that of ourselves, is dependent upon its social context.

While an individualistic ethic facilitates domination and oppression, a relational ethic of love rejects domination of others in all social spaces. Our everyday lives and more formal interpersonal spaces are the fundamental places to create social change. In order to build communities based on love, we must start by taking control of the micro-politics inherent in all social spaces and treating others in a humanizing way, for as hooks says, "Domination cannot exist in any social situation where a love ethic prevails...When

love is present the desire to dominate and exercise power cannot rule the day” (2009, 98). This notion is based on Carl Jung's theory that "where love reigns, there is no will to power; and where the will to power is paramount, love is lacking." (1966, 53). However, Jung did not believe that the will to power must be completely shunned. He promoted a healthy balance of the two for the sake of the advancement of love. I think this theory of love is best complimented by Martin Luther King Jr.'s (1967) teaching that “power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

In community development, we must strive to foster love and justice in the world, which includes equity, non-discrimination, and humanistic treatment for all. We must leverage individual and group power, yet we must realize that this work is rooted in human relations. As such, we must be aware of the micro-politics reproduced in every encounter and strive to align our interpersonal interactions with the goals of creating a more just and loving world. When we reject the oppressive forces of individualism and opt rather to act with care, respect and commitment to others, we can begin to build the foundation for larger scale joint efforts for social change. In order to embrace this love ethic and affirm relationality, we must strive to free ourselves from the socially conditioned attitudes and behaviors that facilitate the domination of others. For example, in the case study examined in this research, while coordinating the construction of an eco-latrine, I had a conflict with Carlos, one of the project committee members. This conflict was resolved through the creation of a space for us to both share our perspectives and listen to each other, in an attempt to find a mutual understanding. The creation of

this space was an affirmation of respect for each other, despite our different views and a willingness to work to develop a realer and deeper relationship. In this way, we acknowledged that this tension could be a space for us to grow and build our collective trust. This episode allowed us to connect on a more personal level, become more committed to each other and our collective effort to build the eco-latrine. In the end, Carlos was one of the people who gave the most effort, time and sacrifice to the construction of the eco-latrine.

2. Dialogue: a Method to Employ the Love Ethic

"The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination." - Paulo Freire (1970, p. 89)

One of the ways to employ the love ethic in community development is by entering into dialogue with others. For the purpose of this research, dialogue is defined as a "mutual and critical process of building shared understanding" (Dowling and Westoby 2013, p. 5). It is also space where "a group of people can explore the individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs and feelings that subtly control their interactions"(Bohm, Factor and Garrett, 1991, p. 2).

Dialogue is a disruption of self-orientation in an effort to understand the perspectives of others, as well as the social factors influencing our own perspectives. In these ways, true dialogue is an expression of both relationality and critical social consciousness, and in turn, the love ethic.

Dialogue can allow us to come to greater unity by fostering a deeper understanding of shared meanings, within our differences. In order to realize this goal, we must enter into dialogue in both group settings, as well as one-on-one conversations, in flexibly structured and facilitated formats, as well as informal conversations.

Some of the key components of this type of dialogue, which are explored below, are: 2.1) listening deeply and sharing honestly 2.2) trust and relationships, 2.3) critical situational analysis, 2.4) solidarity.

2.1 Listening Deeply and Sharing Honestly

In dialogue, we must strive to listen deeply and share honestly with each other in order to participate in the joint exploration of ideas and recreation of knowledge.

According to Bohm, Factor and Garrett (1991), dialogue is based on "listening - not only to others but to oneself. Suspension involves exposing your reactions, impulses, feelings and opinions in such way that they can be seen and felt within your own psyche and also be reflected back by others in the group. It does not mean repressing or suppressing or, even, postponing them. It means, simply, giving them your serious attention so that their structures can be noticed while they are actually taking place" (p. 6). In order to build collective understanding, we must authentically be present to ourselves and others, and authentically discuss our reflections.

In dialogue, we must listen deeply to thoughts and feeling, in order respect the totality of human lived experiences. We must respect people's experiences, emotions and perceptions as valuable sources of knowledge and recognize that they can complement rationally derived knowledge in important ways. As Patricia Hill Collins points out,

"talking with the heart" and "connected knowing" are fundamental to expressing both authenticity in one's beliefs and empathy for others (1990, 215-216), which are both key components of sharing honestly and listening deeply.

Emotion is intimately connected to experience and 'inner truth' in ways that are often difficult to express in language and rational arguments. As Kathleen Weiler (1991) points out, emotion can be seen as "a guide to a deeper truth than that of abstract rationality" (Weiler,132-133). Of course, all experience, like reasoning, is "socially constructed in the sense that we can only understand it and speak about it in ideas and terms that are part of an existing ideology and language." (Weiler, 136). However, others, such as Bernice Fisher, propose that "society only partly shapes our emotions, leaving an opening where we can challenge and change the responses to which we have been socialized." (found in Weiler, 133). Weiler and many other feminist thinkers stress that rationality has historically been the domain of socially dominant groups and has often been used to silence, devalue and dehumanize marginalized groups. I do not suggest that we reject rational thinking, but that we also value other forms of knowledge. As Audre Lorde (1984) famously declared, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," which implies that analysis framed in the dominant discourse cannot address the root structures of power.

In spaces of dialogue in community development, we must be mindful and present to others' and our thoughts and feelings. Westoby and Dowling (2013) refer to this approach as a soulful orientation, which "invites hospitality towards other people and places and other ways of being, doing and imagining. It requires community practitioners to be both attentive to and engaged with community in 'another' way, one that demands

heart, emotion and will. In a sense soul can be contrasted with spirit, with a spirited practice focused on vision, ideas, exchange and ethical imperatives. In contrast a soulful practice is focused on slowness, intimacy, ordinariness and memory” (p.13). I believe that we must strive to interact in a humanizing manner to build mutual understanding. According to Bohm, Factor and Garrett (1991), this includes holding "one's own opinions more loosely so that there is space for what the other is saying, and includes seeing from another's point of view, which is an exchange of meaning." (1991, p.13). By engaging in dialogue, listening deeply and being honest with others, we can together explore topics, recreate knowledge and form collective understanding.

However, as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) warns, an overemphasis on 'unity' through dialogue can be oppressive, as it can homogenize the diversity of our experiences and allow for socially privileged and powerful voices to be dominant while others are silenced (106). As Ellsworth suggests, solidarity is only possible by recognizing our differences - different experiences, perspectives and stakes. Ellsworth further states that power dynamics inherent in all social spaces can be managed if they are grounded in mutual respect and trust and used for common goals and we are reflexive and open (99). I believe that sometimes spaces of honest, respectful and truthful dialogue can arise organically over time, but other times it is advantageous to create what Thomas-Slayer (2009) calls “open discussion, structured opportunities for hearing all voices...” (343).

In these spaces of dialogue, we must explicitly address our opinions and political agendas, for all our words and actions have political implications. We all have political agendas, whether conscious or subconscious, that are informed by our subjectivities and positionalities. As Freire and Shor (1987) point out, “Dialogue does not exist in a

political vacuum. It is not a “free space” where you may do what you want. Dialogue takes place inside some kind of program and context. (102).” Antonia Darder (2002) further clarifies this point, that “the particular questions that are posed are intimately linked to the direction that knowledge production will take and the ideological interest that will ultimately be preserved or challenged by such a direction.” (113). Furthermore, as bell hooks suggests, “keeping secrets is usually about power, about hiding and concealing information”(2000, 45), and when our subjectivities are kept hidden, they will generally surface later in a dominant way.

Social power dynamics and the hierarchal relations they create are very entrenched and impossible to completely eliminate individually. However, we can acknowledge the types of relationships, roles and behaviors that reinforce hierarchy and together attempt to renegotiate social spaces. The only way for us to come together in dialogue to co-create knowledge, and understanding, despite the inherent barriers, is by listening deeply and sharing honestly.

2.2 Trust and Relationships

Trust is a key component of mutual engagement in dialogue. In dialogue, people must be vulnerable and extend themselves to one another through sharing and listening. This requires mutual trust, which is intimately connected to relationships. As Bohm, Factor and Garrett (1991) points out, “Increasing trust between members of the group - and in the process itself - leads to the expression of the sorts of thoughts and feelings that are usually kept hidden” (p. 5). Trust between people creates the conditions for more

honest and open sharing in dialogue, as well as respectful and humanizing listening. Trust is also built through the process of listening and sharing in dialogue.

As Nana Akua Anyidoho(2010) suggests, people develop trust by sharing time and experiences, and building a 'shared narrative' together (326). Akua Anyidoho stresses that "the absence of the kind of concerted engagement that engenders trust among members results in confusion about other people's intentions and them" (p. 326).

In community development, it is important to build trust and personal relationships in public spaces and project related activities, as well as in more intimate settings. As Dowling and Westoby (2013) suggest, "Relational community work focuses on the subtle, dynamic and at times conscious processes of valuing and nurturing relationships between people" (24). Building trust and personal relationships begins by treating people holistically and acknowledging that people have lives outside of projects. Akua Anyidoho points to the importance of this personal-level trust and understanding, in addition to discussing shared interests and working together, in building solidarity (326). Additionally, Akua Anyidoho makes the practical connection that people's personal lives, including socio-cultural contexts and personal histories, influence their community-project related interests and decisions (2010, 321). Thus, personal relationships based on trust are important to create mutual understanding in dialogue and build solidarity around issues of shared interest in community development.

2.3 Critical Situational Analysis

In order for dialogue to remain oriented to the recreation of knowledge and the exploration of the factors that influence our thinking, it must include critical situational

analysis. Critical situational analysis is a way of understanding of the larger social and political context in which we live. This begins by examining our own lives and realities, to identify structures and systems of oppression that affect us, as well as potential actions to create change.

As Margaret Ledwith (20011) suggests "people make critical connections when they link cultural, political social and economic issues with their everyday life experience."(p. 58). Critical situational analysis in dialogue provides spaces for people to identify the important issues in their lives and examine the factors that impact them. This allows us to gain greater understanding of the complex web of societal systems within which we live, and be better informed regarding possible courses of action.

This type of dialogue can be fostered through group activities to promote critical situational analysis. Some of the tools Richard Ford offers in *The Wealth of Communities* (unpublished) can be useful in situational analyses, including : community mapping, institutional analyses, ranking of priority issues, gender calendars, historical trend lines, focus groups, stakeholder interviews and dialogues as helpful steps to creating a collective situational analysis. Ford proposes identifying collective issues and possible solutions through these activities. He frames these activities as a form of conflict mediation that allows people to conceptualize the community as a whole and act collectively to plan and implement community projects. I believe structured activities and dialogues, as well as informal conversation, are extremely useful to develop the critical consciousness that is necessary to remain oriented towards social justice in community development. In the case study presented in this study, we used group dialogues, as well as activities such as small group presentations and the 'problem tree'

(Appendix 2), which is a visual aid we used to identify the main problems, root causes and resources in the community.

2.4 Solidarity

Through dialogue, we build solidarity through a process of building mutual understanding. Solidarity is what Paulo Freire (1998) calls 'unity within diversity' (p. 87). Freire (1970) further states that “Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary” (p. 49). Thus, building solidarity is a process of orienting oneself to others and understanding their realities, for the purpose of unification, which are key components of dialogue.

Freire believed we must enter into a joint struggle to transform ourselves and the world in order to be liberated from the forces of dehumanization (87-88). This type of solidarity is possible through dialogue in which we examine the underlying social factors that have created our different realities and beliefs. We must enter into dialogue about our different experiences, perspectives and positionalities in order to raise our individual and collective consciousness and unify around our shared humanity. Westoby and Dowling (2013) echo this sentiment, that “solidarity requires entering into dialogue with those people, listening to them, and learning about their social, political, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual realities.” (12). In this way, we can build mutual understanding that is the basis of true solidarity through dialogue.

The basis of this type of dialogue lies in a relational worldview. As Gaztambide-Fernandez (2012) states, "To think of the pedagogy of solidarity as relational is, first, to acknowledge being as co-presence, by deliberately taking as a point of departure that individual subjects do not enter into relationships, but rather subjects are made in and

through relationships" (52). In order to re-create knowledge and consciousness through dialogue, we must be present to one another and use dialogue to build understanding of ourselves, as well as others, and build a collective.

IV. Findings

1. Listening Deeply and Sharing Honestly

In the planning of the community sanitation project in Cuajachillo Dos, project participants engaged in many dialogues regarding the sanitation situation within the community, as well as ways to ensure access to sanitation facilities for all.

Many of the participants expressed in interviews that they felt that these dialogues were spaces where participants listened to each other and shared their opinions and feelings honestly.

For example, Pilar stated that she and I both shared openly with each other in dialogues, when she expressed in an interview, "well, I gave my opinion on many things, I expressed my ideas and you also became involved in the practice, and in the matter."² (Interview, 2015, p. 2). Pilar made clear in this example that our dialogue consisted in mutual and reciprocal sharing.

Participants also suggested that our dialogues were spaces where people listened to one another and valued each other's perspectives. In an interview with Julia, she stressed that in these dialogues "we are always respecting the spaces of everyone else and telling them 'speak, participate, give your opinion.' I don't like to silence anyone because one shouldn't do that and always if I'm in a group I'm saying to the others 'speak,

² Pilar: "Bueno, en mucho porque di mi opinión, expresé mis ideas, y tu ibas también incluyéndote en la práctica y en el asunto..."

participate, don't be quiet, speak what you feel, what you want,' and in that way I am always involving people."³ (2015, p. 4). This quote demonstrates that in our dialogues, Julia was encouraging others to speak, valuing their opinions and listening to what they have to say. Julia stated repeatedly in our interview that we must listen deeply to each other in these dialogues. She stated that we must "take them into account, always, always, always take into account the decisions of each family, of each participant"⁴ (2015, p. 6). Julia made clear in this quote that truly deep listening involves taking people's opinions into account in collectives, in a way that mutually recreates knowledge builds collective understanding.

Other dialogue participants also noted the importance of recreating knowledge collectively in these spaces. For example, Sara, a local primary school teacher, echoed this point when she told me in an interview, "that's what the public meeting is for, to debate, to talk, even about the design, everything"⁵ (2015, p. 3)." She went on to further explain the purpose and importance of listening when she said dialogue exists "for the exchange of ideas because sometimes people know more than oneself, if you don't listen to them, you're not going to know what it is that they think, or maybe they say to us that we're crazy and we don't know that either (laughing), so you have to listen to them to

³ Julia: "Bueno nosotras siempre estamos respetando los espacios de los demás y diciéndole 'que hablen que participen que opinen.' A mi no me gusta callar a nadie porque no se debe y siempre si yo me quedo en un grupo yo les estoy diciendo 'que hablen que participen que no se queden callados, que hablen lo que sienten, lo que quieren,' y de esa manera yo siempre me estoy involucrando a la gente."

⁴ Julia : "Y tomarle en cuenta siempre, siempre, siempre hay que tomar en cuenta las decisiones de cada familia, de cada participante."

⁵ Sara: "por eso esta la asamblea para discutir para hablar incluso el diseño todo."

know what they think about you"⁶ (2015, p. 4). Sara emphasized that the purpose of dialogue is to learn about other people's perspectives, as well as to learn about ourselves.

Pilar also suggested that sharing honestly in dialogue can allow people to explore their own thoughts and feelings, when she stated that "you give us free opinion, so you are opening the path for us to confront ourselves because we express ourselves, we talk about everything" (2015, p. 1).⁷ In this quotation, Pilar implied that the open and flexible structure of our dialogues, created an environment in which she was able to talk about any topic and explore her thoughts and feelings in the process. In this interview, Pilar went on to state that she thought the spaces of dialogue were suited for the recreation of knowledge through this open exploration of themes, when she stated: "well, I like it...it's an open meeting to open the mind, to express ourselves, without fear of anything, because you really give us the freedom to speak"⁸ (2015, p.1). Pilar indicated that the dialogues were conducive to open and honest sharing.

The participants I have quoted here all agree that listening and sharing took place in this project. These are important components of dialogue. However, in order for true 'recreation of knowledge and mutual understanding' to occur, we must share *honestly* and listen *deeply*, taking people's opinions into account, as Julia stated.

One significant barrier to fostering true dialogue in this project was that Walu international had significant power over the direction and scope of the project. Sara drove this point home in an interview when she said:

⁶ Sara: "Para el intercambio de ideas porque a veces la gente sabe mas que uno si no la escucha, no va a saber que es lo que piensa o tal vez le dice a uno que estamos locos y no sabemos también (riendo) entonces hay que escucharlos para saber lo que piensan de uno."

⁷ Pilar: "No no porque nos das libre, libre opinión entonces vos nos estás, este, abriendo el camino pues para confrontar a nosotros mismos porque este nos expresamos, hablamos de todo."

⁸ Pilar: "Bueno, me gusta...es una asamblea para abrir la mente, para expresarnos, sin temor a nada pues, porque vos realmente nos das la libertad para hablar."

Sara: You brought a project and you knew that it was latrines and you knew that it had to be an ecological latrine. In a subtle way you guided the project...

Pat: Then was the whole process in vain?

Sara: No, no, no, because it was the decision of the families where to hold the public dialogue, where to do the first latrine, for meetings, all the activities, all of that is not in vain.⁹ (p. 2)

Sara suggested that despite the value in the spaces created to discuss the details of this project, these conversations were inherently limited to Walu's organizational mission and vision for the project. These discussions were restricted, from the outset, to water and sanitation themes.

Another example of the inherent constraints in our dialogues is regarding our needs assessment meetings, during which participants determined that water was their most urgent need. However, after a discussion of Walu's funding limitations, the participants decided we should focus on latrines in this project. We identified our constraints and decided a course of action based on an analysis of the opportunities available to us, using an activity called the problem tree to facilitate the discussion. In reference to this process, Sara said, "you all asked very well and everyone ended up in consensus, the problem tree worked really well and created a consensus in the assembly"¹⁰ (2015, p. 3). Thus, while she noted that decisions were made according to consensus, and based on the principles of dialogue, she still believed that the project was predesigned and not completely democratic.

⁹ Sara: "Tu has traído un proyecto también sabía que era letrinas y sabía que tenía que ser ecológica la letrina. De manera sutil va guiando el proyecto..."

Pat: Fue en vano todo este proceso entonces?

Sara: No no no porque las familias fue la decisión de ellos donde hacer la asamblea, donde hacer la primera letrina para reuniones, las actividades todo eso no es en vano..."

¹⁰ Sara: "No, ustedes preguntaron muy bien y todos salieron de acuerdo el árbol de problemas funciono muy bien y hizo consenso con la asamblea."

Similar limitations were apparent in decisions regarding other aspects of the project, including the latrine model, the project funding structure and the location of where we would build the first latrine as a pilot project. We had discussions about all of these important aspects of the project, yet were limited in scope by the contribution Walu offered. Walu's financial contribution to the project, the community contribution Walu required, as well as the latrine design, were negotiated in ongoing conversations between myself and Walu's director, as well as conversations with project participants. I served in the role of intermediary between Walu and these community members, and attempted to listen deeply and share honestly in each of these spaces. However, it was clear that Walu had considerably more power to direct these conversations.

1.2 “Confianza”: Trust and Relationships

Many of the people I interviewed pointed to the importance of trust and personal relationships in dialogue, and emphasized the comfort necessary for productive working groups. In my interview with Carla and Isabel, they expressed that they preferred small groups of known people to work with. When I asked Carla if it was because she felt more comfortable speaking openly in small groups, she replied, "Yes, because we are all from the same region and I think there's no embarrassment or anything with them. It's better than in a big group because the bigger the group, the less it works."¹¹ (2015, p. 3). Carla is suggesting here established relationships were important to her being comfortable speaking and working with others in group dialogues. An important implication of this statement is that communication and collaboration are dependent on

¹¹ Carla: "Sí, porque somos las mismas de la comarca y pienso que no hay pena ni nada con ellos. Es mejor que un grupo grande porque entre mas grande es el grupo, menos trabaja."

human relationships, which often develop in more intimate settings. Loving communication that cares for and respects people as holistic human beings is essential to developing the trust and comfort necessary for open, and honest dialogue.

In several of my interviews, project participants stressed the value of private conversations, time spent together and the relationships we developed as important to the success of the project. Doña Laura, for example made clear that our mutual understanding was developed over time when she said "I understood what you said because we had already met and we had talked. I don't think with one time, two times, that when we arrive, we will understand each other..."¹² (2015, p. 19). Doña Laura continually brought up the importance of our relationship to developing mutual understanding in this interview, and suggested that the times we met and spoke outside of public spaces of dialogue were important to understanding one another.

Mutual understanding develops over time. Listening deeply and sharing honestly are the means by which we recreate knowledge, but it is always an ongoing process. Olivia, also suggested that mutual understanding comes over time, and in personal settings, when she proposed, "explaining to them is not the same as when you are chatting with me, drawing in the air until I see it."¹³ (p. 3). Olivia suggested that sometimes ideas are better conveyed over time through informal conversations and ways of engaging with topics.

Lucia also proposed that meeting with people individually is important to creating the conditions for clear, open and honest, dialogue. She explained that "it's different

¹² Doña Laura: "Yo entendí lo que usted dijo porque ya habíamos reunido alla y habíamos hablado. No creo que con una vez con dos veces que a la hora llegamos que nos vamos a entender."

¹³ Olivia: "explicarle no es lo mismo que me estás platicando me estás dibujando al aire hasta que lo viendo."

when one participates publicly than when one does so in private...people unite with the majority and don't say what they want"¹⁴ (p. 7). Lucia is suggesting that people may not always honestly express their opinions in public dialogues, and will usually feel more comfortable opening up in intimate conversations.

I believe that personal relationships are essential to community development work and informal, loving interaction is one of the key ways to develop trust and solidarity over time. Over the two months I was in Cuajachillo Dos, I built many personal relationships through everyday interactions that helped develop solidarity around this sanitation project. Pilar made the significance of our personal relationship clear when I asked her in an interview what the most important thing for the project moving forward would be and she responded: "first of all, don't lose contact, because you are now a way of giving us trust [*confianza*] because we know each other so now you are our point there that we have support from the foundation so to stay in touch, most of all."¹⁵ (Pilar Interview, 2015, p. 6). She uses the word *confianza*, which can be translated as trust or confidence, to describe the role of our relationship in the larger schema of this project. While Pilar knows that I am a representative of Walu International, this organization remains a distant and largely unknown entity for her. It is our personal relationship that gives her the confidence and trust to work in collaboration with Walu in this project.

I think this type of personal connection is paramount in community development. We must seek to build mutual understanding, trust and solidarity in order to work with

¹⁴ Lucia: "es diferente cuando uno participa públicamente que cuando lo hacen en privado... lo une a la mayoría y no dicen lo que quiere."

¹⁵ Pilar: "Primero que todo no perder el contacto verdad porque ya que vos sos una manera de dar nos confianza porque nos conocemos entonces ya vos sos nuestro punto allí de allí que tenemos de apoyo de la fundación entonces seria mantenernos en comunicación, mas que todo."

others in a truly collaborative manner. In this project, I build the strongest trust and relationships with those whom I spent the most time with, and some of the most powerful moments of building solidarity occurred not in the public dialogues, but in private spaces such as the one described in my field journal entry below:

Planned a meeting with the project committee for the Cantera Huertos Familiares project from Cuajachillo to discuss a latrine project. Came back with Julia just before the rain and rayos and before the power went out with the bang of a thunderclap. We sat drinking cafecito and dipping sweet bread and discussing different NGO models - grants, loans, community contributions, etc. And how to go about a latrine project. We decided to try to work with the huertos committee to plan a project to work on improving latrines and building latrines for those who don't have any type of facility. The committee seems interested but I'm worried they may have higher expectations than we are able to provide in terms of financial support. Julia understands fully my idea of everything being locally sourced and driven by a local project committee but we will have to explain this in the meeting on Sunday for the seeds. We need to make meetings open to all and include as many as possible but still have a project committee" (Field Journal, 6/8/15).

1.3 Critical Situational Analysis

In spaces of dialogue in community development, we must critically analyze local realities in the context of their socio-political situations and identify possible opportunities for action. In this project, the other participants and I entered into critical situational analyses in order to conduct a needs and resource assessment and plan a project to improve sanitation facilities in Cuajachillo Dos.

Julia stressed the importance of critical situational analysis in dialogues, when she said "you have to understand the families, the situation that we are living in, the economy, and you have to take the people into account, more than anything, and not exclude them, you have to look for the manner and the benefit of how they can be part of

the project and how they can benefit, no, participate, and also how they can pay for their latrine in the future."¹⁶ (2015, p. 29). Julia suggested that in dialogue, we must take into account the individual situations of each participant.

Throughout our dialogues and interviews in this project, financial hardship surfaces repeatedly as a factor that adversely affected people's lives. In my interview with Carlos, he pointed out how financial troubles are the cause of the lack of sanitation facilities in Cuajachillo Dos. He emphasized that with low income levels, people must prioritize their expenses, when he says: "Here there are families that don't have latrines but to avoid spending 1,000 Cordobas [\$35 USD], on a latrine, they are going in the hills, and that is the root problem."¹⁷ (Carlos, 2015, p. 3). He goes on to address this root cause as due to limited opportunities for financial gain when he says "in this region, there is no market, everybody works temporally, they work a week, then spend two weeks, a month, two months without work...you have to prioritize. I don't earn much but, you know, from my job bringing people water I earn the money for rice. Many times it makes it hard."¹⁸ (p. 3). Carlos further added that this financial situation makes it difficult for him to contribute to community projects, because he must necessarily focus on his own livelihood. Referring to his limitations due to financial difficulties, Carlos said, "many times goodwill requires a bit of sacrifice and sincerely that's what it means. Because they say we receive what we give, but truthfully I tell you that I do things for myself and not

¹⁶ Julia: "hay que comprender la familia la situación que estamos viviendo la economía pues y que tomar la gente en cuenta mas que todo y no excluirla hay que buscarle el modo y el beneficio de cómo pueden ser parte del proyecto y como pueden beneficiar si, no, participar y también como pueden pagar en un futuro su letrina."

¹⁷ Carlos: "Aquí hay familias que no tienen letrinas pero por evitar gastando 1,000 cordobas en una letrina, están yendo al monte y eso es el problema de raíz..."

¹⁸ Carlos: "en este sector no hay mercado, toda la gente trabaja temporalmente, trabaja una semana queda dos semanas, un mes, dos meses, sin trabajo....hay que priorizar. Yo no gano bien pero sabes por mi trabajo de echar agüita gano dinero para el arroz. Muchas veces se hace duro."

for the rest."¹⁹ (2015, p.1 - 2). Carlos suggested that it is difficult to give his time and energy to collective efforts because he must focus on himself, his family and their livelihood. These socio-economic factors are important to acknowledge in critical situational analyses, and community development projects, in order to explore and question the social factors that influence how we experience the world.

1.4 Solidarity

In my interviews, many people alluded to the importance of solidarity in community development dialogues. In order to recreate knowledge and build mutual understanding, we must come together in solidarity.

Olivia, for example, brought up the collective nature of dialogue in community development when she said, "I think it is not thinking solely in me...I think that in this case we have to think about the community...it's not just what I want"²⁰ (2015, p. 9). This perspective is oriented towards others.

Lucia, also discussed the importance of solidarity in community development, when she said in an interview, "the collective is going to be the strength...it means that we've united as a team, not as a group, as a team we go towards the same goal. Obviously, collectivity is super..."²¹ (2015, p. 8 - 9). Lucia stressed the importance collective orientation towards the same goal, in solidarity. Lucia also points out here that

¹⁹ Carlos: "Son bien dificles te hablabas vos de la voluntad pero muchas veces la voluntad requiere un poco de sacrificio que sinceramente de eso se trata. Porque dicen que damos como recibimos esa es la palabra pero verdaderamente yo te digo que yo hago las cosa por mi no por los demás, el problema que tengan otros es que no quieren apoyar."

²⁰ Olivia: Creo que es no pensar solo en mi... yo pienso que en este caso hay que pensar en la comunidad...no es solo lo que yo quiero

²¹ Lucia: "la onda va a ser la fuerza...significa que hemos unido y todo como equipo, no como un grupo, como equipo vamos hasta el mismo fin. Obviamente la colectividad es super..."

we have much more power together in solidarity. I believe this collective orientation solidarity is created by building mutual understanding in dialogue.

In this project, it was clear that mutual understanding and collective orientation was built among the participants. For example, during a focus group with the project committee, the group decided that we would start with those who did not have any sort of sanitary facility and later make repair to the existing latrines. Fernanda made this clear when she said "So that is what we are going to do first, those who do not have anything, and those that want to improve theirs, we will discuss when we have finished those first"²² (2015, p. 4). This was accepted by everyone as a reasonable path and those who had latrines in repair were willing to wait until the collective was able to organize the construction of new latrines for residents without any facility. In a separate interview, Carla echoed this sentiment when she said "Oh yes, it's fine, since Elena doesn't have anything, that they give her the opportunity. It's better with the people who don't have anything because they need it more"²³ (2015, p. 4). The decision to start the project with community members who do not have latrines was supported by all participants, even though it would have been cheaper to start with repairs of existing latrines, some of which were in unsanitary and hazardous condition.

V. Discussion

The data I collected in this study demonstrates that through the course of this project, dialogue spaces were created that allowed for deep listening and honest sharing,

²² Fernanda: "Entonces eso es lo que se va a ver primero, el que no tiene de todito y el que quieren mejorar que hable cuando ya hayan terminado los que tiene."

²³ Carla: "Ah si que esta bien como Elena que no tienen nada, que le den la oportunidad. Mejor con la gente que no tienen nada porque necesitan mas."

trust to be built, critical situational analysis to take place and solidarity to develop.

However, there were also many barriers to employing true dialogue, that emerged in this research, including time, power differentials and Walu's community organizing method.

This research made clear the importance of listening deeply and sharing honestly in dialogues in community development. Listening deeply was shown to be a method of orienting oneself towards others, expressing relationality, as well as learning about the experiences of others, building critical social consciousness. Sharing honestly is also a key component of building mutual understanding and collective consciousness.

Another significant theme from this research was the importance of trust and relationships in community development dialogues. Trust and relationships foster comfort in spaces of dialogue and create the conditions for deep listening and honest sharing. Participants also professed that comfort working with others was enhanced by intimacy. This intimacy is achieved by working with smaller groups and also by developing personal relationships with people. This research project revealed that an important factor in community development is breaking down the public/private life divide. This can be done by meeting with people in their homes or outside of work-related activities. Time and experiences spent together can be powerful in building deeper relationships, mutual understanding and solidarity.

This research also demonstrates the importance of entering into dialogue regarding socio-political and economic contexts. This is important to better understand the social, economic and political systems that affect our lives and experience of the world. Critical situational analyses should be conducted regarding community members, communities, as well as community development practitioners and organizations.

The importance of solidarity in dialogues for community development was also made clear in this research. Solidarity is a necessary component of building mutual understanding and collective orientation through dialogue.

VI. Implications

One of the most interesting implications was that although decisions taken in this project were based on the principles of dialogue, they were not entirely participatory or democratic. While Walu claims to support projects 'led by the community' through 'the participatory method,' it also only supports certain types of projects and determines many of the details of its projects. Employing the language of 'participatory method' and 'community-led projects' implies that the community is involved in all decision-making processes in a democratic manner. However, this discourse can mislead community members to believe they have power over decisions that they do not have. Walu's community organizing model should be more accurately reflective of these realities. Rethinking this community development model would be beneficial to Walu and the communities with which it works. Perhaps there should be an explicit process of outlining the decisions that are available to the local communities and the project details that are predetermined.

Another important implication was that significant time spent together is essential to building trust, mutual understanding and solidarity. These are important factors in community development that are largely dependent on deep relationships, which can only be developed over time. Walu does not have a constant presence in Cuajachillo Dos, and as of now has only visited twice: my initial stay of two months and the director's one-

week stay in which she conducted monitoring and evaluation and meetings with the local project committee. Thus, it would be highly beneficial to Walu and this project to establish more permanent presence in Cuajachillo Dos, in order to develop deeper relationships, mutual understanding and solidarity with project participants from the community, in order to implement more collaborative projects.

VII. Summary

This research was an exploration of dialogues in community development and how we can seek to infuse them with a love ethic, based on relationality, critical social consciousness. Some of the methods for implementing dialogue rooted in an ethic of love were found to be listening deeply and sharing openly, building trust and relationships, entering into critical situational analysis and developing solidarity. Many of the themes that emerged from the literature were supported in this study. Additionally, several of the theories found in the literature were discovered to be insufficient to encompass all the nuances and complexities of this work. Important emerging ideas were that Walu International's community organizing method should be reconsidered and made more explicit, and that time is a key component of developing the trust, relationships and solidarity essential to dialogue.

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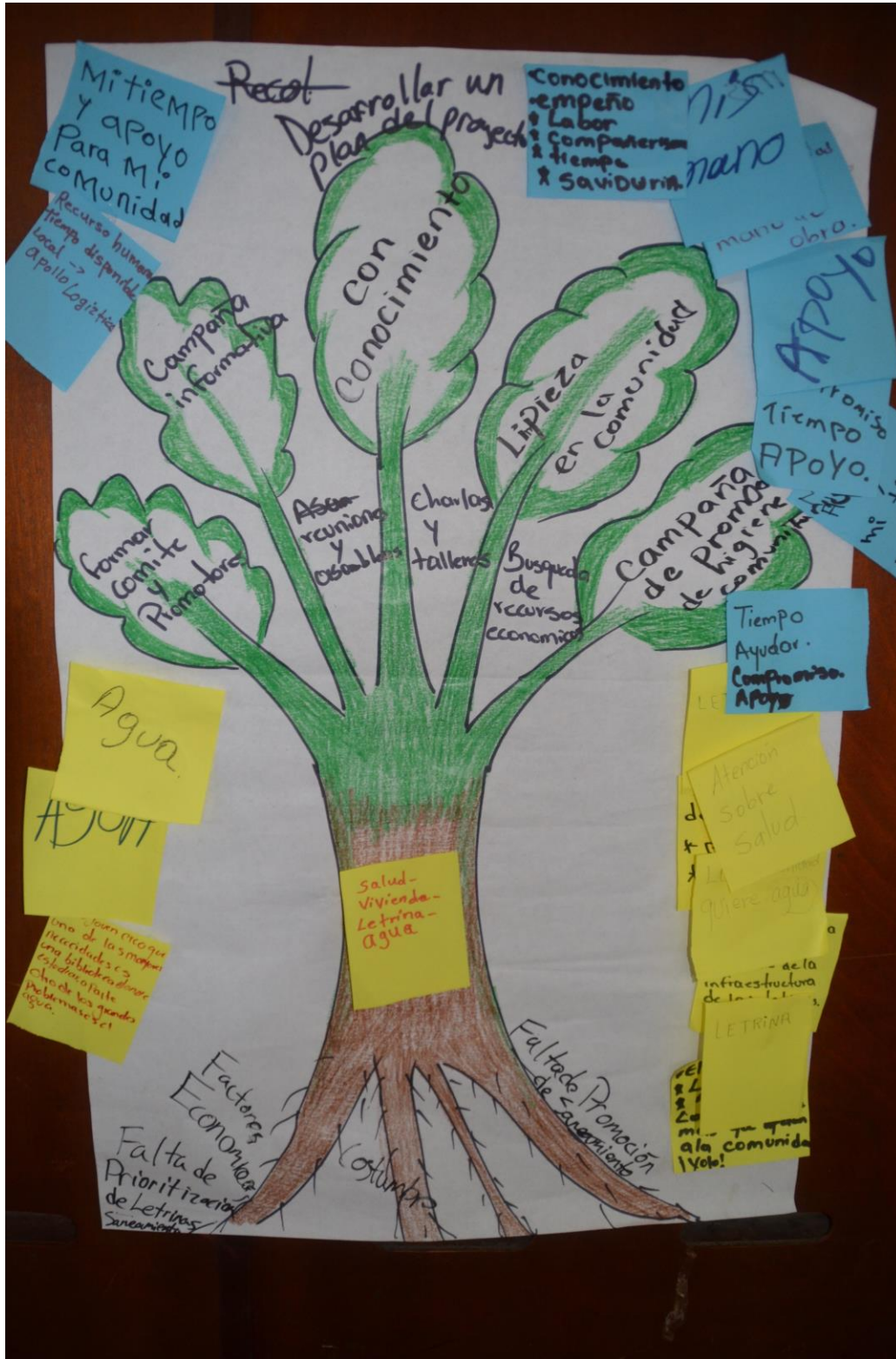
Appendix 1:

Map of Cuajachillo Dos (Comarca Filos de Cuajachillo)



Appendix 2:

Problem Tree Dialogue Facilitation Activity



Appendix 3:

Walu International Participatory Community Development Project Research
Interview Guide

1. How did you find the process of community project planning?
2. How often and to what extent did you participate?
3. To what extent do you feel you were able to openly voice your opinions in this forum?
4. To what extent do you feel that your opinions were taken into consideration in this process?
5. How often and to what extent did the other people present participate?
6. To what extent do you feel that the people present arrived at a consensus?
7. To what extent do you feel that the decisions taken were based on consensus?
8. To what extent do you feel genuine open dialogue took place?
9. To what extent do you feel the tools used to generate dialogue and an action plan stimulated and guided the conversation to be productive and organized?
10. To what extent do you feel the tools used to generate dialogue constrained the conversation?
11. What tools did you find most useful?
12. What tools did you find least useful?
13. To what extent do you feel the conversation was limited by the facilitator's position as an outsider to this community?
14. To what extent do you feel the conversation was enhanced by the facilitator's position as an outsider to this community?
15. What could have been improved in the process of facilitating a process of participatory community project planning?
16. Do you have any other thoughts or feelings regarding the process of participatory community project planning?